

COACH JIM CONNOR AWARD

Coach Connor influenced the lives of athletes and students who made their journey through Newport Catholic during the 1950's and 60's. Everyone from that era of sports and education mentions Coach Jim Connor as a coach who affected the lives of many and stands tall as a man who dedicated his life to education, athletics and the service of others.

This award is given to an individual who mirrors those values and character; the values of the family that we at NCC strive to teach and live.

JACK KAELIN ~ 1955

There was nothing better than to follow the “Thoroughbreds” of Newport Catholic for John “Jack” Kaelin as he attended St. Stephen Elementary School. He looked forward to the day he would triumphantly climb Wiedeman Hill to that new school on top of the hill. That day finally happened September 1955 when he entered the doors of Newport Catholic High School.



Jack never played sports for his school, but he could always be present at any football, basketball and baseball game involving the ‘Breds. He faithfully listened to every word of his teachers including the words of his Health and P.E. teacher, Mr. Jim Connor. He accepted it to be an honor when he would be asked to retrieve something from the coaches' office when he was in class or in the gym watching basketball practices. He watched with respect the every move that Mr. Connor made, and he often noticed that Coach Connor always taught sportsmanship without ever losing his temper. Coach Connor always carried a strong devotion to his Christian faith no matter if it was attending Mass in the morning or beginning a class or game with a prayer.

Jack graduated from NCHS in 1959 and moved onto Villa Madonna (Thomas More) College for more four years of education. In the fall of 1962, he would return to Newport Catholic to student teach the subject of German under the tutelage of Rev. Robert Klein and Mr. Bob Schneider. After completing the first semester of student teaching, he was given the opportunity to teach German for two hours each day during the second semester for a \$300 stipend. This was big money and he so willingly accepted.

One of Jack's closest friends was Carl Foster, the future principal of Newport Central Catholic. It was always his desire to return to Newport Central Catholic and teach under Carl's direction. However, that desire was never fulfilled. In May 1963, Jack accepted a full-time teacher position at Covington Catholic High School to teach German and Business courses. Often following classes each day, he would go to the gym to watch new head coach, Mote Hils prepare the basketball team for the upcoming season. Mr.

Hils asked Jack one day if he had ever kept a scorebook or would he be interested in doing so. He gladly accepted the added duty and has kept the book for the Colonels from 1963 until the present time. He has also been voted as District scorekeeper for 43 of his 45 years and has kept the Regional scorebook for 29 of his years. In 1972, he agreed to manage the Freshmen Regional Basketball Tournament, a job that he faithfully carried out for 35 years.

In addition to his teaching duties, he was appointed as the cross country coach, a job he held from 1967 until 2001. During those years, he won 14 regional crowns, 5 State Runner-up finishes and 2 State Titles in 1982 and 1994. Although Covington Catholic did not have a track or a stadium until 1978, he coached the track team from 1965 until 1982 and won five regional titles during his tenure as track coach. Since 1982 until last year, he served the state as both a track and cross-country official. He was head referee at the state cross-country meet a total of six times and the state referee in track for nine years. Jack was also nominated as the outstanding track official by the KHSAA in the year 2001.

Today, Jack serves as the Colonels bowling coach for three years and last year won the regional and was the State Runner-up. At the time of this printing, he is coaching the top team with the best record in Northern Kentucky. He was placed into the Covington Catholic Hall of Fame in 1987, into the Northern Kentucky Athletic Director's Hall of Fame in 1988 and into the Kentucky Track and Cross-Country Hall of Fame in 1992. He learned from the master, Mr. Jim Connor, to treat everyday as a challenge that he can overcome if he begins the day asking the Lord for His guidance. It is with great honor and respect that he will continue to live out the remaining years of his life to meet everyone with dignity, respect and honor. He learned how from the master. He feels privileged to receive the Jim Connor Award, named after a man he truly idolized.