

Ron Tyler, '53



Conceptualized in 1933 during the bowels of The Great Depression, the radio series "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy" was created by General Mills to bring the downtrodden citizens of the United States some much-needed optimism, if only for an hour a week. Approximately

one year later, Ron Tyler, the second of three children to Ken and Esther Tyler, was born in South Otselic. And, by the time he graduated from Norwich High School, he would epitomize the hero of that Wheaties, sponsored serial to the max.

Tyler, who along with his family moved to Norwich in 1936, not only exhibited outstanding athletic ability in three sports throughout his Tornado career, but found time to serve as a class officer two years—vice-president his senior year—and as a member of the student council three years. The handsome Purple prodigy, who exuded a wholesome nature, also served on the NHS athletic council, as well as on the boosters club. All of these factors contributed to his induction into the fourth class of the Norwich High School Sports Hall of Fame.

A resident of the south side of the city, Tyler's first introduction to organized, competitive sports came as a member of the YMCA Reserves and later as part of the Y Juniors basketball teams, basically seventh and eighth graders.

"As a young lad, he was a part of the famous Jones Avenue gang," recalled teammate and now fellow Hall of Famer John Stewart. "He certainly was the most handsome, blond-haired, blue-eyed student/athlete of the time."

After serving as manager of the junior varsity football team, Tyler enjoyed his first taste of high school sports competition on the jayvee basketball squad. But, it was in the spring of his freshman year when Tyler's legacy began to bloom as a member of the baseball nine. He and fellow frosh Don Chirlin both earned varsity letters—the first of four each would earn. The highlight of that season was Norwich's 5-4 victory over Oneonta, the Yellowjackets' only loss of the year. This triumph set up an interesting scenario for the next three years as the Tornado won five straight games versus their Route 23 rivals, with



the 1953 Purple team, that went 11-1, suffering their only loss to the Yellowjackets by a 3-1 count. Paybacks are always just around the corner.



As a sophomore, Tyler captained the junior varsity gridgers, as his overall athletic skills and leadership qualities began to be showcased in his ability to play superior pass defense. He was among the leading scorers on the jayvee cage team that went 14-3, and he closed that sophomore campaign by earning his second varsity baseball letter.

With the dawn of the 1951 football season, Tyler was in the starting defensive backfield with Chirlin and Stewart. That trio put on a record-setting performance, as they intercepted 16 aeriels while allowing only 13 to be completed. And, on offense, he got his chance to start midway through the season. He scored Norwich's only touchdown in a 7-0 victory over Cortland, while adding 10 tackles and two interceptions. The Tornado wound up 5-2.

That stellar play followed through into winter as Tyler won the Albert Foster Award as the basketball team's Most Valuable Player. His outstanding defensive play and overall passing and shooting skills enabled the Tornado to post a 12-6 record during Coach Jim Flynn's inaugural season and the final one in Section 4 before joining the Iroquois League the following year. And, when spring finally sprung in 1952, Tyler was behind the plate as the Norwich catcher. That season would be impressive for not only Tyler but Norwich, too. The Purple signal caller boasted a team-leading .400 batting average to lead his club to an 11-1 record. Those efforts resulted in him receiving the Luke White Memorial Award, which went to the team's MVP. Thus in back-to-back seasons, Tyler, still only a junior, was named the Most Valuable Player in two sports, accolades that had never been achieved before at Norwich.

"He was a good friend and great teammate. He was perhaps one of the best all-around athletes to come out of Norwich," said Stewart. "Without him, we might never have had the successful teams of the '50s. He made everything look so easy. People didn't appreciate how really good he was."

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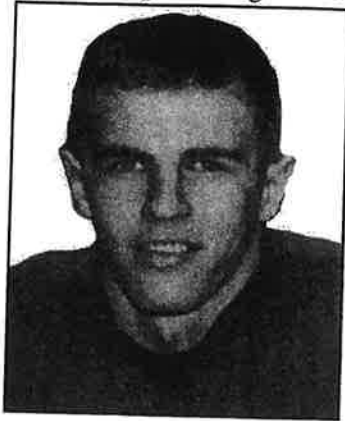
Saving his best for last, Tyler's prowess and athletic skills shone brightly during his senior year as Norwich compiled a gaudy 40-4 record over the football, basketball and baseball campaigns. The gridgers went 8-0, the Purple cagers posted a 20-3 log in winning the Section 3 championship and the baseball nine compiled a 12-1 record as they captured the inaugural Iroquois League title.

Tyler jump started the 1952 gridiron campaign by scoring two touchdowns and pilfering three passes as Norwich stunned a strong Whitesboro team, that was enjoying an 11-game winning streak, 39-0 on Saturday afternoon, Sept. 20. As the Tornado's starting fullback, Tyler racked up 31 points to tie Stewart for second place as the Purple rang up a record-setting 271 markers that fall. Tyler, along with Chirlin and Stewart, continued their stellar performances in the Norwich defensive secondary by intercepting 22 passes to lead their team to its first undefeated season in 15 years.

His outstanding leadership and game performances continued over into the basketball campaign as he captained the Tornado to that aforementioned Section 3 championship, Norwich's first in 33 years. The deciding game was played at Colgate University's Huntington Gym against Watertown. Deadlocked at 38-38 at the end of regulation, Tyler was at his best in the three-minute overtime as he scored four of the Purple's five points in the 43-40 victory. At season's end, he and fellow cager Stewart were selected to the newly-formed Iroquois League's all-star team.

Tyler closed out his Norwich athletic career by leading the locals to another Iroquois title by hitting close to .400 as the Tornado went 12-1 on the baseball diamond – that lone blemish coming at the hands of Oneonta. At year's end, Tyler shared the prestigious Dave Lee Award with teammate Ed Ackley. That award was given annually to the Norwich athlete judged to be the best in his graduating class. And, 1953 marked the first time it was given to two athletes.

Following his days at Norwich, Tyler earned a full football scholarship to Syracuse University. Freshmen at that time did not play on the varsity, and junior varsity action was limited to three games and much practice against the varsity. But, he



continued to impress his coaches, especially the legendary Ben Schwartzwalder, with his defensive secondary skills, and earned two varsity letters for the Orange when he was elevated to the starting varsity squad.

"Ron Tyler and I participated as friends and teammates from the time we were little boys with (Bob) Van (Tine) at the Y; throughout high school as football, basketball and baseball players; to 'old man's golf' at Canasawacta and Endwell Greens," said Chirlin. "He was the ultimate teammate. He was the best blocker and tackler on the football field, the quickest on the basketball court and the best all-around player as catcher and hitter on the baseball field. He was a coach's dream, because he never complained, did all the little things and led by example."

Later in life, he became an avid golfer and was a charter member of Endwell Greens Country Club. Sadly, we lost Ron on Aug. 7, 2010. He was predeceased by his wife, Charlotte (Sally), of 40 years, and is survived by his four children – Kim, Mark, Tom and Wendy – and three siblings – Richard, Robert and Sylvia.

Jack Armstrong obviously would have been proud of Ron's many achievements, but so would have Saint Thomas More as he truly was "A Man for All Seasons."

—Tom Rowe and Ed Ackley

