

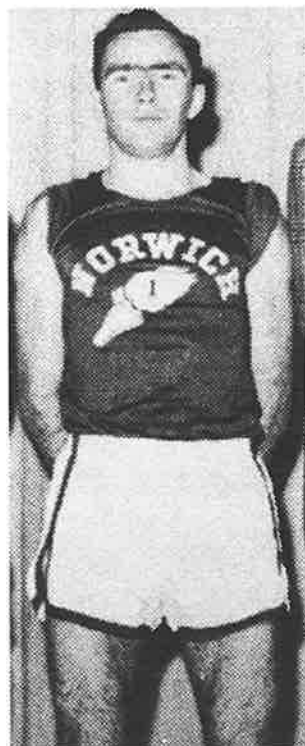
## Dick Harrington, Class of 1957



Fifty-five years ago, future country music legend Kenny Rogers got his entertainer's feet wet when his avant-garde band, The First Edition, hit the big time with their Top 10 hit "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)." That psychedelic, counterculture tune peaked at No. 5 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart on March 16, 1968.

And, like Rogers, Dick Harrington chalked up his own "first edition" hit when he became Norwich High School's initial New York State Public High School Athletic Association-sanctioned champion when he showed his heels to the pack of 80 other hill and dalers at the 1956 Class B state cross country championships. On that Nov. 10 day, he toured the hilly 2.3-mile Baldwinsville High School course with an 11:41 clocking to finish 75 yards ahead of his nearest competitor, Joel Heine, of Malverne from Section VIII.

Although Harrington only ran cross country two falls, because the sport lay dormant until its return in 1955 under the watchful eye of Coach Jim Couden, he lettered four straight years in volleyball and track and field, serving as captain of all three sports as a Tornado senior.



It is because of that inaugural state title in cross country and his consistent achievements in his other two sports, both of which experienced much team success, that he is being honored as one of the six newest inductees into the 11th annual class of the Norwich High School Sports Hall of Fame.

As a senior thinclad, he swept away the competition. He finished in front during both NHS dual meets with South Otselic and Oneonta, and outpaced the field in a triangular outing at Newark Valley with Windsor. Harrington added top honors in the Oneonta and Vestal Invitationals, the latter of which he outdistanced the second-place runner by 100 yards, and captured the Section III title at Proctor High School in

Utica before closing out that remarkable autumn with the state championship.

The year before, Dick nearly matched his senior heroics. Winning all three Tornado duals versus Walton, Dryden and Windsor, he again captured the Section III crown in a meet that featured 40 runners at Baldwinsville. Only twice did he fail to claim the ultimate prize. At the Cincinnatus Invitational on Oct. 28, 1955, he placed second out of 167 runners, and at the New York State championships at Bear Mountain State Park he took third in a field of 92 with a time of 12:25 over the 2.5-mile course, just seven seconds behind champion Vincent McKenna of Arlington from Section I.

While Harrington produced a pair of prolific cross country seasons, he was equally up to the task in the spring when he lettered four times on the Purple cinders. As the team's senior captain, he helped lead the Tornado to a share of the Iroquois League title with a 4-1 dual meet record, first place in the Iroquois League championships at Oneonta and a second-place showing in the 16-team Section III Class B encounter at New Hartford. Overall, Norwich went 4-2 as he swept top honors in the mile run in all those half dozen outings.

In addition to those dual meet firsts, he added another mile-best jaunt at the Norwich Invitational as the local cindermen outdistanced six other competitors at the old Cortland Street track. He saved his best time of 4:44 for the Iroquois Meet in Oneonta, where he was edged out of first by Ralph Carpenter of Little Falls with a 4:37.1 clocking. Along the way, he added a third in the sectional championships, a fourth in the New Hartford Invitational and teamed with Joe Binelli, Allan Breed and Gilbert "Gib" Harrington to secure second place in the season-opening Section III Relay Carnival at Watertown.



Harrington's first taste of track and field action took place on Saturday, May 1, 1954 when he, Ted Hanson, Dave Hanson and Bill Ackerman turned in a fourth-place effort in the Section III Relay Carnival at Liverpool. Over the next four seasons as a miler, he produced 11 firsts, 11 runner-up finishes, a trio of thirds and one fourth. Besides those mile runs, he also won out in the 880 on four occasions, adding two seconds, three thirds and a fourth along the way.

"Dick was built rather low to the ground, measuring in at 5-feet; 9-inches," pointed out track and field teammate and '57 classmate "Gib" Harrington, who as a half-miler was no slouch

either in winning eight races that spring. "He, however, had the heart of a lion as he defeated most all competitors racing in the mile event. His abilities in the mile and at cross country prove that his stride was highly efficient.

"He also had a very quiet and humble personality, despite his athletic accomplishments. Never one to boast, he took his wins with class and was considered a good role model, teammate and friend."

While cross country and track and field are really individual enterprises wrapped around a team concept, volleyball is a collective effort of all those involved. Whether you are a server, setter, outside hitter, opposite hitter, middle blocker or libero (back row defensive specialist), each of the six players are needed for the sport to succeed.

And did it ever during Dick's tenure. No individual statistics are available for those four years of action, but the team soared to ethereal heights. From his rookie freshman winter to his captain-led senior finale, Norwich posted a record of 19-1 in Iroquois League play and an overall mark of 24-3 as the Purple achieved a 100-31 advantage in head-to-head game play.

Twice the Tornado went undefeated – once in 1954 and again in 1956 with identical 7-0 overall and 5-0 league marks. They also won the Iroquois League Tournament in 1955 and 1956, while placing second and third in 1954 and 1957, respectively. In Section III activity, NHS scored two runner-up finishes during Harrington's sophomore and junior campaigns and a third at the end of his senior season. Those two seconds came at the hands of Fabius and Whitesboro by respective third-game scores of 15-10 and 15-14, after Norwich had won the opening game each time.

Following his graduation from Norwich in 1957, Harrington served in the United States Army from 1958 to 1960. Upon returning home, he went to work for the Chenango & Unadilla Telephone Company, eventually retiring in 1997 from Frontier Communications, after working as a telephone installer his entire career.

During his spare time from the telephone business, Dick, who was left-handed, was a more than proficient bowler. Bowling in an assortment of leagues, he consistently averaged in the high 90s. This writer had the pleasure of competing against him in two leagues, the City and the Town & Country. In that latter league, he averaged 199 while bowling for Craine & Mirabito Insurance Agency during the 1994-95 season, along with teammates Bill Labor, Dan Mikkonen, John Murphy, John Roberts and Ron VanPelt.

Sadly, Dick died on Thursday, April 10, 2014 at the age of 76. He is survived by three daughters – Kathleen (Dunedin, FL), Diane (Cortland) and Stephanie (Norwich) – and a stepdaughter, Claudette (Bainbridge).

Former world heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield was once quoted, "It's not the size of the man, but the size of his heart that matters."

That succinct remark might just as well have been Dick Harrington's epitaph. He did not mirror the usual long and lean look of cross country and mile runners, nor was he blessed with that lanky almost octopus-like physique while on the volleyball quadrant. But what he did possess was like the smash 1965 summertime hit by The Yardbirds – a "Heart Full Of Soul."

—Tom Rowe



First row, left to right: A. Breed, G. Harrington, J. Daniels, J. Binelli, D. Harrington, Captain, A. Wiktorek. Second row: Coach Beyer, D. Scott, D. Hansen, D. Wilson, W. Fuller, B. Sheehan, D. Strader, R. Paino, Manager.