



The year was 1959 and a young boy from Solvay was trying to decide what path he would take going forward. In that tight knit community, the expectation was that you would compete together in the youth leagues and work your way up to the high school. However, John Baichi had a different idea about his life's path. Already an accomplished athlete at a young age, he caught the eye of then coach Walt Ludovico and he couldn't resist the chance of playing football for the finest program in the area. So John broke tradition and left the safe confines of the west side, a fact that his friends and coaches didn't quite understand.

John was an excellent athlete who had the knack of being able to pick up any sport and be successful at it. In fact, his homeroom voted him most versatile and most athletic of their class. It is easy to see why. John played a sport in each season. In the winter, he played on the hardwoods, earning two varsity letters. He was a member of the 1961 Diocesan Championship team and in his senior year he was a solid contributor several times scoring double figures for the Russ Cusano led Brothers.

He also added track to his repertoire, or let's say that Brother C. James added it for him. I guess it must be a track thing similar to what many of us went through with Coach Riordan. I guess Brother C. James must have been the originator. Any way it was a great fit for John as he competed in the 180 hurdles and teamed with Barksdale and Clinton among others on several champion relays teams. John recalled one of Brother James methods of training/motivation. He said that Brother would drive behind them in his truck, not alongside them, BEHIND them, to help them keep the appropriate pace. Boy I guess that would be great motivation for any athlete. It must have worked because John became the city champion in the hurdles his senior year, running for second year coach Jerry Riordan.

Although John was involved in sports the entire year, his first love was football. From the moment that he started at CBA, he looked forward to the day that he would play for Coach Ludovico. As a sophomore, he was a contributor on the varsity and was part of the 1960 city championship team, a title that the team would not relinquish during the remainder of his time at CBA. He was chosen as an honorable mention all-league selection that year. Things looked bright as he entered his junior year. Not only did CBA move to a new school, there was a great deal of enthusiasm that moved along with it. On the eve of the brand new schools'



dedication ceremony the Brothers opened up their football title defense against Valley and John started the season out with a bang. He scored all three CBA touchdowns on runs of 6, 63 and 69 yards. He ended up gaining 169 yards for the game and helped anchor the defense...even got an interception. For his efforts, he was named back of the week. Coach Ludovico sung his praises... "Baichi played a terrific ball game ... he is one of my hardest workers... and this was his best game for CBA." What a start! As fate would have it, John was injured in the first period of their next game vs. North, an injury that would hamper him for the rest of the season. The team won the league championship and John was again chosen honorable mention all-league. Nevertheless, he couldn't wait until 62 to see what he could accomplish in a full year of football. Before we get into that last season, I want to relay a situation that might put his style of play in perspective. Remember we said that John was from Solvay, well the boys scrimmaged Solvay in the pit his senior year in front of a big crowd. Without going into detail, I guess his intense

style of play did not endear him to the Solvay players and coaches. Assistant coach Pete Vercillo said that in one scrimmage the official came over to him and said that he wanted to throw a flag on Baichi... when asked why, he said because he hits so hard it should be illegal.

That season brought some changes in the CBA football program. Coach Ludovico moved on to Liverpool and a young hard-nosed coach, Frank Cappelletti moved from assistant to head coach and with him brought new training methods. The Brothers had a retuning line with Finnocho, Sindoni, Massaro and with the entire backfield of Baichi, Barksdale Tursi and McElrath returning the Brothers knew they could be on the verge of something special. It didn't take long for Baichi to show he was healthy, actually it only took one play! He scored the first touchdown of the Cappelletti era on a 63 yard run on the first play of the opening game against Valley, actually, he scored the first two touchdowns! His senior year was just like he dreamed about! In the second game against North he scored the only touchdown of the game in the 6-2 win. That year Cortland was the biggest test for CBA. A league newcomer, they brought highly touted star Charles Freeland to what was described as one of the best high school games ever in the area. A crowd of over 4500 fans at McArthur Stadium cheered the purple and gold on to a 27-13 win with John scoring the go-ahead touchdown early in the second half. The rest of the season was easy... VO, Nottingham, Eastwood, outscored by a combined 96 - 13.

When it defeated Central 38 - 7 to end the season, they became the first undefeated City League championship team since the Alex Delucia led team of '55. Co captain Baichi ended his career with a bang, scoring two touchdowns and accounting for over 150 yards on the day. His final numbers were excellent; he ended up second in the league in scoring with 9 touchdowns and rushed for close to 1000 yards on the year. He was honored for his performances, earning first team All City honors called a steady reliable



ground gainer that always ended up with the yards needed and then some.

John did continue his career at Boston College where after a couple of years his hardnosed style of play took its' toll on his body. But, to show how much of an impression John made the coaches, he was actually awarded a partial scholarship AFTER he was done playing....you know John, I hope that wasn't because they were happy to get rid of you! After his college days, John became a successful business man and still is active on the Board of Solvay Bank Today

John, as a player you were proud to represent CBA on the athletic fields. You have shown time and again that you appreciate the important role CBA has played in your life. Tonight it is CBA's turn to show our appreciation for what you meant to our institution. We are honored to have you take your place in the LaSallian Athletic Hall of Fame.