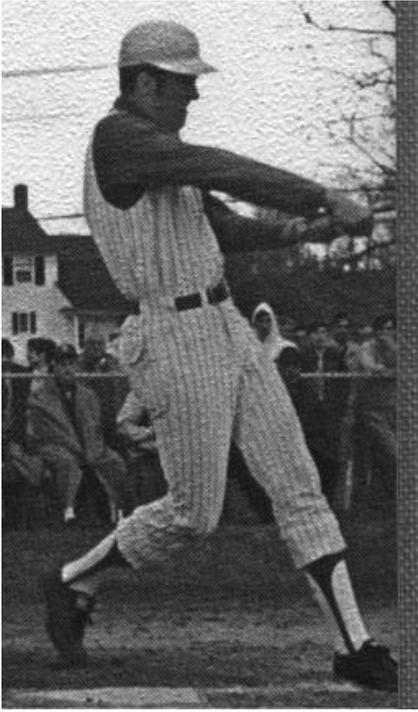


The year was 1966 and the Wide World of Sports for young people was still pretty simple. First, there were very few sports for women. The soccer craze had yet to reach the United States and lacrosse was still the sport they played on Indian reservations. So as youngsters, our sports world pretty much consisted of football, basketball and baseball. Pop Warner football, CYO and youth league basketball and little league baseball were our options. And remember, this was before cable TV, no Sportscenter, no internet. If you wanted to know how your favorite sport team did the night before, you had to gulp.....READ ABOUT THEM!!! The morning or evening newspaper is where you found the scores from the night before and if you thirsted for stories about your heroes or favorite players you didn't google them you read books about them. That was the world that John Erardi grew up in. And for him, although he enjoyed all sports, baseball was by far his favorite. He loved playing the game and couldn't get enough of it. Even when he wasn't playing, he wanted to know more about the game and its' stars. So like many of us he grew up reading books about the game and biographies of its past stars. He dreamed that someday there would be books written about his accomplishments on the field and if that weren't the case, then maybe he would do the writing....

Although John's main sport was baseball he also played football. During his senior year he became the top punter in the CNYCL for first year head coach Pete Vercillo. In fact in a big win over Henninger that season, John averaged nearly 50 yards a punt and directly led to two CBA scores. But his main sport and passion was baseball. Chosen for the varsity by coach Bob Powers as a freshman, he was a role player on the 1967 undefeated league championship team. Over the next three seasons, John was a cornerstone of the team at first base for the Brothers, with an occasional pitching start. During that time he was teammates with Joe Leone, Jason's father, and a pitching staff that included Frank Ricelli and Joe Galante. John was known for his solid fielding and clutch hitting. During his four years on the varsity, his teams amassed a 75 – 14 record including a 19 – 3 senior season. Those teams won two league championships and for his efforts John was twice selected to the All City All Star Team.

After spending his freshman year at the Naval Academy, he took the trek halfway cross country to Kentucky and attended Murray State University. He didn't know much about the school, but knew one thing, he wanted to continue playing baseball and hey, how good could Murray State Baseball be he thought to himself.... Well John, how about a national top 20 program! John played on some excellent Murray State baseball teams and was definitely an asset to the division 1 baseball teams in the 1970's wrote Former Murray State Coach Johnny



Reagan. He was a "blue collar" type player who was a consistent performer on the field. He was also very valuable in the locker room as a team leader....and the players have not forgotten....at our annual baseball homecoming reunion last year, his teammates later expressed to me the thrill it was to get to have a rare visit with John again.

So, following graduation John earned a scholarship to Law School and as he pursued his degree he worked days as a writer for the Cincinnati Enquirer. It looked like his days in baseball were over. He remained on staff even after earning his law degree but in 1985, the paper wanted to commission someone to write the story of Pete Rose and his quest to become the all time hit leader in baseball. Erardi couldn't resist. The enquirer accepted his proposal and he was immediately moved to the sports department, a dream job that changed his life's path. His book on Rose, 'Rose 4192' sold 50,000 copies. Two books he co-authored with Greg Rhodes, 'Crosley Field', a history of the historic park which coincidentally closed 6 days after John graduated from CBA, and 'Big Red Dynasty', were named top five baseball books in the country by Spitball literary magazine and the Society for American Baseball Research. His other three co-written books are First Boys of Summer, Opening Day and his latest book Wire to Wire that was

released in June of 2010. As a sportswriter and columnist, John is one of the most respected sportswriters in the country. He has been selected Ohio Sports Writer of the Year three times and has won the Associated Press Award for best sports feature story in the country. He is currently a member of the Baseball Writers Association of America and is a voting member for the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

I have to make a bit of a confession, Thursday night while I was watching Grey's anatomy at home with my wife and daughter Patti and Alyssa. Patti mentioned to me that Sparky Anderson had died and my first thought, as bad as it is, was to see if John had written a story yet. So I did what any modern day sports fan would do..... **I googled him...** the first result, was from mlive.com which read you're going to get a lot of columns talking about what a nice guy Anderson was. There might not be a better one than John Erardi's for the Cincinnati Enquirer.

John, for years you have been helping to select members for the National Baseball Hall of Fame. I am honored to say that tonight, the CBA Hall of Fame is choosing you. Welcome to your rightful place in the Lasallian Athletic Hall of Fame.

