



Joe Papaleo grew up on the north side of the city of Syracuse. Back then, the north side was made up of mainly Italian families and unlike other parts of the city where the traditional sports of basketball and baseball were king, the sport of soccer was not only played with skill and grace but also with passion. The Henninger high school soccer program reaped the benefits of this love of the game and was traditionally a Central New York powerhouse. It seemed natural the young Papaleo would join the fellow soccer players in his neighborhood and wear the black and gold of the Black Knights.

However, Larry and Lucia Papaleo had a different dream for their son. They were devout Roman Catholics and sent him to Holy Trinity school and envisioned Joe continuing his education at one of the catholic high schools in the area. Their hope was that young Joe would attend Christian Brothers Academy where he could not only continue his Catholic education but where the Brothers would prepare him for college and beyond. When Joe was given the choice, he did choose CBA although he learned much later, as many of us CBA grads did, that his parents had already made that decision for him.

That was 1975 when soccer was not a very widespread popular sport. In fact the CBA Soccer team had only been formed a few years earlier when a young teacher named Myron Kotch took on the challenge of starting a program for all of the non football players. When Joe entered ninth grade, the Brothers had never achieved a winning season in its history. The young goalie came to CBA with a great list of credentials. He had spent most of his time playing with the older Northsiders and become a very talented netminder. He was accustomed to turning back shots from some of the areas finest players and had honed his craft on the fields of Schiller park on hot summers days. However, even though they had one of the best goalkeepers in the area, the team itself still struggled in the win loss column. Joe became the starting goalie his sophomore year and led his team to a stellar 0 - 10 - 2 record. Despite the poor record, Joe was chosen as a first team all CNYCL selection, the first of 3 such honors bestowed on him during his high school career. Even as a sophomore, Joe was constantly receiving individual accolades for his performance in the nets and was considered one of the best netminders in the area.

By his senior year, Joe had made a name for himself in the soccer world. He was chosen to represent the East in the National Sports Festival and had scholarship offers from several schools throughout the country. During his senior year, he led his team to a 7 – 3 - 2 overall record, which was the first winning season in school history and CBA’s first berth in the sectional playoffs. Even sweeter for Joe though was a victory that season over his home district school of Henninger. Joe became the first CBA soccer player to be chosen as a high school All American and accepted a full scholarship to play his favorite sport at Syracuse University where he would reunite with childhood friend Marcello Vitale to lead the Orangeman.

Papaleo’s career at Syracuse University can be summed up as outstanding. Joe was named to the All East team during three years of his tenure on the hill. His senior year he was also named to the All American team. Although graduating in 1982, Joe still holds several records at Syracuse University. He led the orange to their first ever Big East Tournament Championship in 1982 and in 1983, Joe was chosen by the New York Cosmos of the then North American Soccer League as their first pick and the fifth pick overall in the draft.

After the 1994 season, Papaleo was still at the top of his game. His team had finished as the runner up in the MISL playoffs and he was still considered one of the leagues premier goalkeepers. But Joe was looking to the future and he was able to secure a job with New Process Gear and moved back to Syracuse away from the professional sports scene to settle down. It just so happened that the spring that he moved back into the area, CBA just happened to be looking for a Varsity Soccer Coach. Now Joe had truly come home. In his first year, he led his team to a final four appearance losing in a shootout in the state semi finals. In 1996, his



team became the first soccer team in school history to win a state championship. The following year, in spite of being moved up a class from B to C, they repeated the feat. In his 6 years as coach, Joe has compiled an unprecedented record of 132 - 6 - 4. In the process his teams have won six consecutive league and sectional championships, advanced to the State Final Four 5 times and have made four appearances in the State final. His teams have consistently been ranked at or near the top of the state polls and the last two years have

achieved national recognition by being ranked in the top 20 in the USA Today poll, reaching as high as #2 in 1999. Joe has been named CNY coach of the year twice and this year was honored as NYS Private school coach of the year.

Coach Papaleo has distinguished himself as a player and a coach. More importantly he is a great role model and a fine person. Joe thank you for all that you have done for CBA and its athletes. It is fitting that you be included in this inaugural class in the LaSallian Hall of Fame.