

Hall of Fame: BC3 inducts first All-American, first female, precise pitcher and scorekeeper who's seen it all

Stars now shine in portraits dedicated in Field House

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Dr. Andrew Matonak, Robert Wilson, Missy (Haney) Schnur and Walter Fitzpatrick hold plaques Saturday, May 6, commemorating their induction into BC3's Charles W. Dunaway Pioneer Hall of Fame. Matonak played baseball, Wilson ran cross-country and Schnur played volleyball for BC3. Fitzpatrick was honored for his longtime service to BC3 as a scorekeeper for various Pioneer teams.

(Butler, PA) The 5-foot-8 “runt kid” from Chicora with six older brothers stepped into those size-8 white shoes with the half-inch metallic cleats and pointy toes and was herded, with 270 other runners, toward the starting line of the 1970 National Junior College Athletic Association championship meet.

Bob Wilson recognized that a mid-November drizzle had dampened the 4.174-mile golf course that served as the cross-country circuit in Vincennes, Ind., and chilled its Saturday air to 39 degrees.

“It was a little muddy with the rain and a little goopy out there,” said Wilson, a Butler County Community College speedster who had won every meet that season. “It wasn’t sloppy, but the ground was a little soft.”

It was the hard-left turn he never saw coming.

Wilson on Saturday joined Dr. Andrew Matonak, Missy (Haney) Schnur and Walter Fitzpatrick as Class of 2017 inductees into BC3's Charles W. Dunaway Pioneer Hall of Fame, which was dedicated in 2015 as part of BC3's 50th anniversary.

Matonak, a left-handed pitcher, posted earned-run averages of 1.08 and 1.16 in the 1973 spring and fall baseball seasons, when he finished with batting averages of .407 and .450.

Schnur helped redirect a fledgling volleyball program into one that would post a combined 37-7 record in 1998 and 1999 and win conference, state and regional championships.

And Dunaway himself acknowledged Saturday that Fitzpatrick, BC3's scorekeeper in numerous sports since 1968, has witnessed more Pioneer athletic events than anyone in history.

Their 9.5-inch by 15-inch portraits and biographies now hang inside BC3's Field House, home to a Charles W. Dunaway Pioneer Hall of Fame that recognizes people who, through their accomplishments, have made significant contributions to BC3 athletics.

Dunaway created the athletic program at BC3 and served as director from 1968 to 1999. He has coached golf, baseball, basketball, cross-country and tennis.

BC3 offers students six intercollegiate sports: baseball, men's and women's basketball, golf, softball and volleyball.

Wilson was known as "The Roadrunner" on the Butler Area Senior High School track team.

"I'd start out slow and every time we'd come out of a turn I would go blowing by whoever I could catch before the next turn," he said. "They asked me if I went 'Beep! Beep!' when I went by them because I was blowing their socks off."

Three-hundred yards after the starting gun sounded, the field in the 1970 National Junior College Athletic Association championship meet came to a virtual standstill, its 270 cross-country runners approaching an unforeseen 90-degree left turn nearly simultaneously.

"That was just too short a distance to have that sharp of a turn with that number of runners," Wilson said. "It was a bottleneck. Everyone tried to go around the corner at 90 degrees. Well you can't all go around that corner at one time. You had to spread out. You don't want to spread out 50 feet to the right if you are making a left-hand turn, but that is basically what you would have had to do. The whole group would have had to stay 50 feet wide to get around that corner. Guys would have had to run four times as far."

Wilson found himself boxed in, and slowing down in the highest-profile race of his life to that point.

"You couldn't make the corner until everyone cleared out ahead of you," he said. "You couldn't get to the corner. It was butts and elbows in front of you. There wasn't anywhere to go. You had to wait until the guy in front of you went out and got free."

Had he and the pack known about the hard left, “It would have been a race to the corner to get out in front,” Wilson said. “You didn’t know that going in.”

As a freshman in spring 1973, during BC3’s second baseball season, Matonak led the Pioneers to the Skyline Athletic Conference Championship. He also fired a shutout against Penn State-Beaver in the conference tournament and was named a Region XIX all-star.

Matonak opened the fall 1973 season with a 13-strikeout win over the Community College of Allegheny-South. He would finish with a 5-2 record for the Pioneers (9-3).

Matonak ended his BC3 career with a victory against Montgomery College in the 1974 National Junior College Athletic Association Region XX playoffs.

“I’d always been a person who was able to control the ball, control all my pitches and be able to keep the batters off-balance,” said Matonak, 62, president of Hudson Valley Community College in Albany, N.Y., since 2005.

His go-to pitch? “Clearly my curveball,” he said, “because my fastball wouldn’t get anybody out. I had a good break and I had a late break on my curveball and so that was always my out pitch.”

Tom Kelly, of Pittsburgh, was a teammate of Matonak’s during the 1974 season. From his position in center field Kelly had the best view of the 5-foot-9 southpaw’s accuracy.

“He could actually pinpoint his pitches,” Kelly said of Matonak. “If that catcher called for an inside pitch, it was there. If he called for a pitch outside, it was there. When Drew pitched, it was sort of fun because we did not have that much action.”

Matonak played two seasons for the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, where in 1974-75 he was 8-1 on the mound with a 1.49 ERA and was voted team MVP. He was also an All-Ohio Athletic Conference second-team selection.

The following season, he ended 10-3 with a 1.88 ERA, was again chosen as Wooster’s MVP and was named to the All-Ohio Athletic Conference first team.

Schnur, 36, a 1998 Laurel High graduate who lives in Butler, was BC3’s first female All-American and Saturday became the first female to be inducted into the Charles W. Dunaway Pioneer Hall of Fame.

BC3 had finished 5-11 and 4-12 in the two seasons prior to Schnur’s arrival in fall 1998.

In her first year, Schnur led BC3 to a 15-4 record, and Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference and Pennsylvania Collegiate Athletic Association state championships. She also was named to the WPCC all-conference and PCAA all-state squads.

The following season, Schnur sparked BC3 to a 22-3 record and its first NJCAA Region XX Championship. She was selected to the WPCC all-conference, PCAA all-state, NJCAA Region XX all-region and NJCAA Region XX all-tournament teams. Schnur was named MVP of the NJCAA Region XX tournament, and in November, an All-American.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in exercise science from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania in 2003, Schnur returned to BC3 to obtain an associate of applied science degree in physical therapy in 2005.

The 1998 squad, and Schnur in particular, had an impact on the development of the volleyball program at BC3, said Rob Snyder, BC3's director of student life and longtime volleyball coach with a record of 339-135.

"What we had was a team starting from the bottom with a coach that didn't know anything," Snyder said. "But things turned around faster than I could have ever imagined."

Schnur, he said, was a great hitter and it was her hitting "that carried us to conference, state and regional championships. But what made her special as a player is something that you don't find often in players, particularly at this level. And that's a player who is good at everything.

Schnur said she had a natural ability to play the game, "but it was the great coaches I had throughout the years that helped bring that out. My times at BC3 were some of the most fun and memorable days and I thank Rob and my teammates for that. We weren't just a team. We were a family."

Fitzpatrick, a BC3 social sciences professor for 42 years until his retirement in 2009, has served as scorekeeper of the men's basketball team since its second season in 1968. He has also been scorekeeper for BC3's women's basketball squad and for its baseball team.

"There's no question," Dunaway said Saturday, "Fitz has seen more BC3 sporting events than anyone else."

That, Fitzpatrick said, is likely the case.

"I did attend a lot of the other sports," he said. "I kept score for baseball. I've gone to a lot of volleyball matches. I would think there is a good shot that I have seen more than anyone else."

Fitzpatrick earned a bachelor's degree in history in 1963 and a master's degree in geography in 1966 from the University of Pittsburgh, and was hired by BC3 in 1967. He won multiple Teacher of the Year awards and received the 2007 Outstanding Service Community Achievement Recognition Award along with other honors for his many years of service to BC3.

The 74-year-old Butler resident said he was surprised and shocked to learn he would become a member of BC3's Charles W. Dunaway Pioneer Hall of Fame.

“I am certainly not an athlete,” he said. “To think that I would be inducted into an athletic hall of fame, to me, is mind-boggling. But I am very honored to receive this recognition.”

Serving as a college men’s basketball scorekeeper does not come without peril, he said.

He recalls being seated courtside at the scorer’s table, raising his head after marking the player who had made a basket.

“Boom. The ball hit me.” Right in his face, breaking his eyeglasses.

“I cannot see without my eyeglasses,” he said.

He worked quickly to tape together the frames at the bridge.

“I wanted to continue on,” he said.

The Roadrunner was walking.

“The 10 to 15 athletes who had reached the 90-degree left turn first were out front, running full-speed ahead,” Wilson said.

Added Dunaway, BC3’s athletic director from 1968 to 1999: “It was a mistake in the design of the course. They should have made it so that you didn’t have that kind of turn that early in the race.”

But because of those size-8 white shoes with the half-inch metallic cleats and pointy toes, and endurance and resolve born from his life on the family farm, Wilson would eventually make his move.

Beep! Beep!

“The long pointy toe kind of gave you an extra spring whenever you released off of that foot,” Wilson said. “It would kind of give you a little shove. It helped to make you a little bit faster or maybe have a little bit longer stride. It made me run better.”

After negotiating the turn, Wilson used straightaways and his solid footing to regain lost ground. “I did not give up,” Wilson, 64, recalled Saturday. “I knew there were a lot of guys that I had just passed. I went as hard as I could to the finish line.”

He ended in 21 minutes, 7 seconds – in seventh place, good enough to become BC3’s first All-American.

In 1971, Wilson again qualified for the NJCAA championship meet, held in Danville, Ill.

“The pair of shoes I had the second year didn’t have the long point on the toes,” he said.

He finished 14th. But with his second All-American honor.