

Press Release – February 20, 2023

Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame Banquet Set for June 16, 2023

The Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame will hold its 28th annual banquet at St. Spyridon Hellenic Center in Monessen, PA on Friday, June 16, at 5:30 p.m. This year, six new inductees will be welcomed into the mythical Mon Valley Sports Hall of Fame conceived by sportswriters Floyd France and John Bunardzys. With the Class of 2023 the total number of inductees is now 261. The original Mon Valley Sports Writers Hall of Fame started in 1951 with the selection of Stan Musial and Bert Rechichar.

The Class of 2023 is comprised of Charleroi's Fran Celaschi, Elizabeth Forward's Bill Keenist, Ringgold's Mike Brantley, Belle Vernon Area's Jason Murray, Monessen's "Sissy" Cieply Jochmann, and deceased Bill Toprani of Monongahela High. Chairman of the Sports Hall of Fame, Dennis Stitch, called the selections "a representative class with a cross section of Mon Valley athletes who have honored their communities with their dedication to sports."

The MMVASHOF selection committee includes Chairman Brian Herman, Carl Crawley, Jr, Dale Hamer, Tom Jenkins, Bill Kubin, Randy Marino, Jeremy Sellew, Steve Russell, Bill Hughes, Rob Harhai, Dr. Kevin Ryan and Dennis Stitch.

The Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame is one of 30 chapters of The Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame made up of four geographical regions: Central, Eastern, Northern and Western. Organized with its inaugural induction class in 1963, the state ceremonial dinner rotates between the four regions. The Mid Mon Valley chapter has inducted 23 members into the State Hall of Fame. They include: Stan Musial, Bert Rechichar, Jim Russell, Arnold Galiffa, Dan Towler, John Potsklan, Sever J. Toretti, H.C. Carlson, Lou "Bimbo" Cecconi, Armand Niccolai, Bap Manzini, Ken Griffey, Fred Cox, Ron Necciai, Myron Pottios, Bill Malinchak, Sam Havrilak, Dale Hamer, Eric Crabtree, Craig Fayak, Fred Mazurek, Robert "Red" Worrell, and this past year, Bruce Dal Canton.

The Mid Mon Valley Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame is pleased to welcome these 2023 Mon Valley sports inductees:

A 1971 Monessen High School grad, Betty” Sissy” Cieply Jochmann was one of the early female Mon Valley gymnasts to distinguish herself in WPIAL and PIAA competition. She led Monessen High School to four straight PIAA titles beginning in 1968. Betty displayed her individual talent on the uneven bars where she was the PIAA State champion from 1968-1971. She also medaled each year on the vault and was the All-Around State Champion from 1968 through 1971 in both WPIAL and PIAA competition. At Clarion University of PA, Jochmann was a state champion in 1972 in the All-Around competition and on the uneven bars.

A 1974 Ringgold High School grad, Mike Brantley was quarterback Joe Montana’s favorite receiver. Mike had over 100-yards receiving in the comeback against Monessen where Montana took over as quarterback against Monessen in 1973. Brantley earned All Big 10 Conference honors and was named a Big 33 alternate. Brantley’s other sport at Ringgold was basketball where he helped to lead his team to a WPIAL championship in 1973 averaging 18 ppg. Brantley was All Section in basketball. All five starters on that WPIAL team are now members of the local Mid Mon Valley Sports Hall of Fame. The other four inductees include Ulice Payne, Joe Montana, Scott Nedrow, and Mel Boyd. Brantley went on to play football for Indiana State University where he played split end. He was a fluid 6’ 3,” 185-pound receiver who led the team with 16 catches for 241-yards in 1977. An All-Missouri Valley Conference selection, Brantley graduated in 1979. He had a brush with the Dallas Cowboys at a free-agent tryout.

A 1956 Charleroi High grad, Fran “Cheech” Celaschi is remembered as one of Charleroi’s longest serving baseball coaches from 1965 to 1992. With over 300 wins, Fran won 11 section titles. In 1982, he took the Cougars to the WPIAL finals. At California University of Pennsylvania in the early 1960s he was Bruce Dal Canton’s catcher on the Vulcan’s 1962 NAIA District championship team.

A 1957 Monongahela High grad, Bill Toprani ranks as the world’s foremost duckpin bowler. At age 27 he led the nation’s American RubberBand Duckpin Bowling Congress. With over 80 perfect games, Toprani owns every duckpin record in history. Highlights of his career include: his 845 three-game series was not only a personal record, but a world record; on 10 occasions he bowled a series with a score of 800 pins or better; he

compiled 36 games with scores over 700, and 42 games with scores topping 600.

A 1997 Belle Vernon Area High grad, Jason Murray had career numbers at Belle Vernon that are amazing. He was the total package with his power, speed, and agility. He averaged close to a first down every time he carried the football. He rushed for 4,752 on 532 attempts. His yards per carry average was 8.8. He also holds the record for most points in a game at 30. He was a two-time All-Keystone Conference selection. Murray led BVA High to the school's first WPIAL football championship in 1995. At Notre Dame he played in 25 games. He turned himself into a solid blocker and was a big contributor on special teams. He graduated from the Mendoza College of business at the University of Notre Dame with a degree in accounting. He had a tryout with the Cincinnati Bengals. Murray is enshrined in the Belle Vernon Area Football Hall of Fame.

A 1976 Elizabeth Forward graduate, Bill Keenist served the Detroit Lions in various front office positions for 36 years. He was the Lions first team historian, serving from 2018 until retirement in 2021. Keenist prepared along the way with public relations positions with the Washington Redskins, the USFL's Pittsburgh Maulers and the Civic Area. In 1985, he joined the Lions as assistant public relations director. He advanced up the corporate ladder to become vice president in charge of administration and communications. Keenist presently serves as NFL game day representative and co-hosts "Gridiron Wrap", a weekly football radio talk show in Detroit.