



John Blishak

Year of Induction: **2017**

Year of Graduation: **N/A**

The term "all-around" is defined as having many uses or abilities; versatile. Such a term is most appropriate when describing Mr. John Blishak. Throughout his career as an athlete, coach and teacher, Mr. Blishak was the very definition of all-around.

Athletics has always played a huge role in John's life. As a student-athlete at Union-Endicott in the mid-1960s, he was a star on both the football field and the track. He was an All-STC selection in both 1963 and 1964 for football, playing for legendary Union-Endicott head coach Fran Angeline. He was the captain of the Tigers' 1964 undefeated team that played in one of the more memorable games in Southern Tier high school football history: a 13-13 tie vs. Vestal in front of an estimated 15,000 spectators! He would go on to finish his senior year being selected to the All-State team and being an Honorable Mention All-American. In addition to his exploits on the football field, John was also a force on the track. He was an All-STC selection in 1965, and his 4x200 relay team placed 4th at the New York state meet. And to further demonstrate his versatility, John was also an excellent gymnast while at U-E. He began exploring the sport in middle school, although competitive gymnastics for young men was hard to find in this area during that time. John would continue to his playing days at Eastern Oklahoma A&M College, where he was an All-Conference running back in his freshman year, before an injury limited his participation.

After finishing college and returning to the area, John began his teaching career at Union-Endicott in 1969. He immediately launched into a coaching career that would span 40 years. He was an assistant coach on the freshmen football team, he led the freshmen soccer team to an undefeated record, and he began the gymnastics program at U-E. All of this experience as a young coach and teacher was a perfect warm-up for John as he became a Wildcat in 1972 upon graduating from the University of Oklahoma with his master's degree. His teaching career in Johnson City would span 37 years, first as a physical education teacher, and later as the leader of the Experience Based Education program. And predictably, John brought his athletic expertise to Johnson City as well.

As would be expected from an athlete as well-versed in so many sports, Mr. Blishak coached four sports at Johnson City over the course of 50 total seasons. He began his Wildcat coaching tenure as an assistant football coach under JC Athletic Hall of Fame Coach Chuck Gottfried in 1972. He would stay on the JC staff under Coach Gottfried for 10 years and then returned to coaching football for another seven years under Coach Cal Rucker from 1986-1993. Throughout the course of his 17 years of coaching football, John worked with some of the best players and teams in Johnson City's history. While he was the head coach of the JV team, John led the Wildcats to back-to-back STAC titles in 1980 and 1981 with a combined record of 17-1. While the falls were reserved for football, John spent his winters coaching the

JC gymnastics team from 1973 – 1978. He turned around the Wildcats' program through his leadership. After going winless in the '73-'74 season, John knew changes needed to be made. After making some difficult decisions with the team roster, John turned the JC gymnastics team into a powerhouse. From the winter of 1974 through the end of the 1978 season, John's teams compiled an incredible record of 54 wins and only four losses! They were STAC champions in three of those years, 2-time Section IV champions, and runner-up in the Section IV meet in 1975-76. When winter turned to spring, John moved on to coaching the varsity track team. He led the Wildcats for 12 seasons from 1976-1988. His tenure was highlighted by four consecutive undefeated seasons in which his teams were STAC Central Division championships from 1981 through 1984. Finally, John's last coaching experience at Johnson City was as the head coach of the Wildcats golf team for 16 seasons from 1993-2009. His teams won five Central Division championships, the Dinunzio championship, were the Section IV runners-up, two STAC championships, and he also coached three golfers who received All-American honors.

Throughout a coaching tenure that lasted four decades and included leading student-athletes in four different sports, John cemented his legacy as one of Johnson City's most versatile coaches. The Johnson City Athletic Hall of Fame is proud to welcome a standout all-around athlete who came to JC and became an exceptional all-around coach, Mr. John Blishak.