

Larry Bruno Foundation Hall of Achievement inductees

By Kayleen Cubbal For The Times | Posted: Sunday, July 19, 2015 7:00 pm

Six Beaver Falls sports legends will be inducted into the 2015 Larry Bruno Foundation Hall of Achievement on Aug. 1.

Inductees are Justin Crepp (teaching), Jack Damaska (baseball), Ted Heath (coaching), "Big John" Jackson (community service), Joe Tronzo (sports journalism) and Teri Turconi (gymnastics). Jackson and Tronzo will be inducted posthumously.

Team honorees are the 1975 Beaver Falls High WPIAL championship baseball team and the 1985 Beaver Falls High PIAA championship girls basketball team.

An open house is planned for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the foundation's Hall of Achievement museum in the Carnegie Free Library of Beaver Falls.

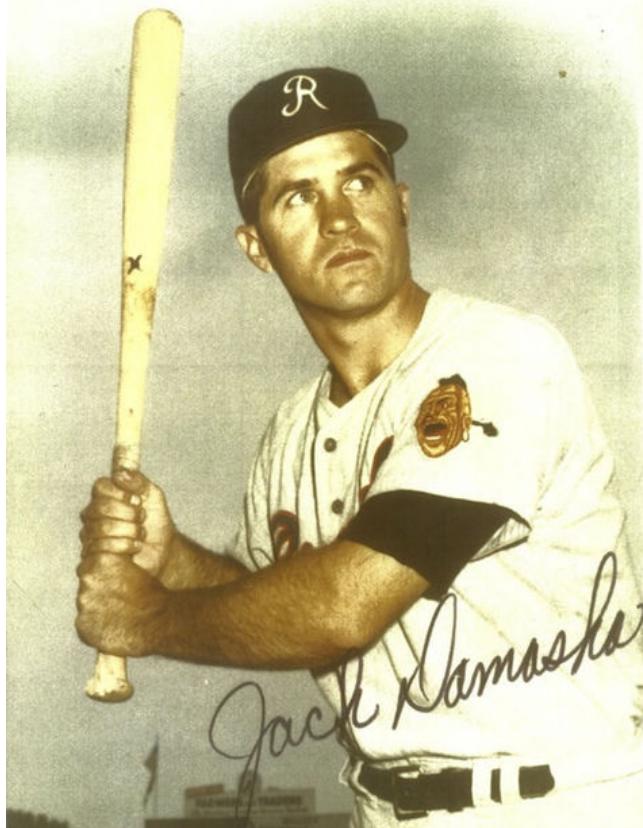
A celebration of honorees dinner will be that evening at The Club at Shadow Lakes in Aliquippa, with a cocktail hour at 5 p.m. and dinner at 6. Beaver Falls sports legend Joe Namath, a driving force behind the hall of achievement, is expected to attend the festivities.

Dinner tickets may be bought by contacting Ed DeRose at 412-298-1430.

A look at the inductees:

Justin Crepp

A 1998 graduate of Beaver Falls High, Crepp was interested in sports, music and art,



Jack Damaska

Jack Damaska

succeeding in anything he pursued. He entered and won local billiards tournaments and at the age of 14, was ranked seventh in the nation as a pool player. In addition, he learned to play piano without having a lesson. In high school, he quarterbacked the Beaver Falls football team and also played baseball. Crepp credits Rodney Bobin, director of technology for the Big Beaver Falls Area School District, for encouraging his interest in science at an early age.

Crepp completed his undergraduate studies at Penn State University and earned a doctorate in astrophysics from the University of Florida. He has completed post-doctoral work at the California Institute of Technology. Crepp recently was named a Kepler Participating Scientist, one of an elite group of 11 in the country tasked to further the research of the Kepler Science Center's mission to discover habitable planetary systems.

As a Kepler Participating Scientist, Crepp played a major role in discovering such systems and developing a new Doppler Spectrometer to help locate and identify them. NASA named him to the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite team. TESS is set to launch in 2017 on a mission to discover thousands of exoplanets in orbit around the brightest stars in the sky.

Crepp is an astrophysicist and Freimann assistant professor of physics at the University of Notre Dame, where he designs and builds adaptable optics systems to detect and measure star companions.

His recent work with a research team at Caltech confirmed the first extra solar planet in a quadruple star system. Crepp provided high-contrast images of the distant objects circulating a planetary system called Kepler-62 and co-authored a paper about the discovery.

Jack Damaska

Damaska had one of the longest professional careers of any Beaver Falls sportsman: 17 years as a professional baseball player and manager from 1957 to 1974. In his major-league career, he played with and against some of the most famous players in the game.

Damaska's major-league stint was a masterpiece of bad timing: His first at-bat was against Sandy Koufax, and the first time he got into a game on defense, it was as a substitute for Stan Musial. One day, he replaced Julian Javier in a Cardinals infield that featured Ken Boyer, Dick Groat and Bill White.

After a long minor-league career as a player, coach and manager, Damaska finished his baseball years in 1974 in South Carolina, as manager of the Kinston team in the

Montreal Expos farm system.

Ted Heath

The Beaver Falls High graduate is much-traveled as a coach.

He studied at Western State College (where he was a defensive tackle and offensive tackle on the football team), Washington State University and Temple University.

He began his career in 1965 as a defensive coordinator at Capital High School in Idaho before becoming head coach at Centerville Community College in Iowa. Stints followed at Kansas State, Louisville and Tulane, with the Ottawa Rough Riders and Saskatchewan Roughriders of the CFL, the Nevada Aces of the PSFL and New Orleans Night of the AFL. He then became defensive line coach at the University of Central Florida before moving on to Temple University, the New York Dragons of the AFL and Ottawa High School in Iowa. In 2010, he landed at Iowa Western Community College, where he currently serves as assistant defensive line coach.

"Big John" Jackson

Jackson was a respected and beloved icon in the Beaver Falls community.

A standout athlete for Beaver Falls High School in the early 1940s, Jackson excelled at basketball and football, going on to become a semiprofessional football player. He returned to his hometown, joining the Beaver Falls police force on Oct. 22, 1951. He walked the beat for 20 years, until he was promoted to captain, then served as a deputy for the Beaver County Sheriff's Department from 1977 until his retirement in 1984.

Jackson also took great pride in his involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the Civic Improvement League of Beaver Falls and the Fraternal Order of Police. He is fondly remembered for being one of the most trusted, fair and honest officers in the community.

Joe Tronzo

Tronzo was an iconic figure in Beaver County sports. He was a fixture in both the Beaver Falls High and Geneva College press boxes doing what he loved best — covering sports. A newspaper man for more than 60 years, Tronzo wrote his first column for the Beaver Falls News-Tribune at age 12, joining the sports staff in 1947 and becoming its editor in 1960. He served in that position until 1979, when the paper was bought by The Beaver County Times.

Tronzo continued to write a column, "It Happened Here," a feature that looked back at personalities and events in Beaver County. A lifetime Beaver Falls resident and World

War II veteran, Tronzo was a walking encyclopedia of sports and had a great sense of humor, which he used in many of his columns.

Many of those playing organized sports in the Beaver Falls area probably received their first line of ink from Tronzo, who claimed he couldn't write anything bad about a kid who was giving his all. But Tronzo did more for local sports than simply write about them. He was instrumental in organizing many of the youth leagues and booster clubs throughout the Beaver Valley.

In one of his last columns before his 1999 passing, Tronzo mentioned how his heroes were "kids in sports." Because of his passion for youth sports, the Joe Tronzo Award was established to recognize inspirational student athletes each year. His career and life were dedicated to chronicling and honoring athletes in the Valley and singing the praises of Beaver County.

Teri Turconi

Turconi helped her Beaver Falls High team win the first PIAA gymnastic championship in 1977, and WPIAL and PIAA titles in 1978 and 1979 while earning WPIAL and PIAA championships as an individual. Turconi won United States Gymnastics Federation titles in the bars and floor exercise, and placed top in the 1980 USGF all-around competition and first in the uneven bars in the 1980 Nation's Cup.

She went on to the University of Florida, where the Lady Gators claimed three consecutive SEC titles (1981-84), the NCAA South Regional Championship (1984) and the AIAW Championship (1982), while finishing in the top six of the NCAA for three consecutive years. Turconi was All-SEC in the uneven bars, floor exercise and the vault, placing fifth at the 1981 AIAW Regionals and winning All Region honors.

She earned a master's degree in sports psychology from the University of Virginia in 1986 and, for the last 26 years, has worked in the pharmaceutical and biotech industry. Turconi works for Indivior, specializing in the disease of addiction. She is a member of the Beaver County Prescription Drug Abuse Coalition, helping to raise awareness on the current epidemic of prescription painkiller abuse.