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B E D F O R D

YORK SCORES PLACE IN HISTORY MEMORIAL HIGH ALUMNUS WINS DUAL RECOGNITION IN HALL OF FAME

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Bedford Bulletin/Joseph Edgerton
Don York of Bedford will be among those inducted into the Manchester Memorial High School Hall of Fame. In addition to sprinting and running the 440-relay team's anchor position, York played as a running back, defensive back and returned punts for the football team.

When Don York was told he would be inducted into the Manchester Memorial High School Hall of Fame, he said, "I'm not the guy you want."

But York, 53, is the guy they want, and on Nov. 25, he will join 28 other honorees at the induction ceremony. The three city high schools – West, Memorial and Central – will honor their alumni this year.

York, a Bedford resident and father of five, does not seek out the spotlight, so the notification caught him even more off guard.

"I was taken completely by surprise. There are just so many people who could have been in the hall of fame that weren't honored," he said. "I'm being inducted for two different categories, and I guess that's never happened before."

A graduate of the class of 1970, York will be honored as part of the existing Red division, which represents the finest athletes in the school, and the newly formed White division, which recognizes graduates who have made contributions to the society outside the school's walls.

The guidance provided by family, teachers and coaches when coupled with his love of athletics, particularly track and football, drove York to excel.

"My parents worked their tails off as clerks and taught me a strong work ethic," he said. "Bob Chabot and Hubie McDonough and my parents taught me the value of work, honor, integrity and discipline. You would do everything you could, but always do it better. These people and my wife kept me focused and kept me from falling through those cracks in life that we all teeter on."

Chabot, who was head football coach from 1961-75, is also an inductee into the hall of fame. He fondly recalled York and his teammates as a different breed of athlete.

"He was an excellent young man and an excellent football player," Chabot said. "He had self confidence, did everything he was supposed to do and more, and if you wanted something special, he was your guy."

Chabot said he doesn't rate any of the players he coached for a few reasons.

"They made their own way. All of my kids, my football players, made themselves," he said. "All the niceties that have come my way are not my doing. They're the doing of my football players."

York's years at Memorial gave him reason to hone his work ethic and focus on community. During that time, he also met his future wife, Gail.

In 1973, York got a job at Indian Head Athletics, which was at the time owned by Gail's father. York and his wife bought the store in 1980, and since then have assisted athletes on both a personal and team level.

"I try to help the programs that are in need, and sometimes individual athletes," he said.

"My main focus is giving back to the communities that need it the most. Sometimes, I feel bad that people have to even ask. I can't say I've ever said no to anything they asked of me, but the people who know me keep it reasonable."

As the proud father of five sons, York said he tries to teach his children the same values in life that his parents instilled in him and, sometimes, they teach him in return.

"A few years ago, I got sick and I thought I was invincible. I realized I wasn't doing my sons a service by making them think I'm invincible," he said. "There's more to life than trying to take on the world alone. My team, co-workers and family all keep me on task by keeping me true to my own principals."

Times have changed since York was a student at Memorial and it was commonplace for 7,000 or more spectators to attend a football game.

"It's harder for educators to reach kids, because kids are preoccupied with a ton of the things being thrown at them," he said. "I was determined to raise them to set aside time to reflect. Going in fifth

gear all the time isn't always a positive thing."

Four of York's five sons – Travis, 28, Evan, 26, Kyle, 23, and Tyler, 18, have graduated from West High School. Three were football captains, and all were named All-Staters. Dylan, 11, is a fifth-grader at Bedford Memorial School.

York said watching them grow and seeing their reaction to his nomination inspired him.

"Three things about this nomination are important to me," York said. "The people who voted are people that I respect. I respect the two coaches who are being inducted because they helped guide me through my vulnerable teenage years. Seeing my kids get excited and involved about the process; these are things that have influences on the way you live your life."

West will host an inductee ceremony on May 13, with Central marking its 160th anniversary and hall of fame ceremony on May 27.