

Craig Swanson Excelled On Diamond In Both Baseball And Softball

Frewsburg Central School athletic star, the late Craig "Swanny" Swanson, who excelled in three sports during his high school career, will be one of four inductees who will be honored at the 20th annual Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame induction dinner on Feb. 19 at the Holiday Inn.

The other inductees will be former WJTN sports director Pete Hubbell, Edward "Bud" Erickson, who was the former executive director of the Ladies Professional Golf Association and Jamestown High School football coach, Wally Huckno.

The guest speaker at the event will be Rod Woodson of the AFC champion Baltimore Ravens.

Swanson was born on June 10, 1965. He quickly developed an affinity for baseball and, by the age of 5, began participating in the Farm League in 1970, followed by Little League play in 1976-77. By the age of 11, he was already making headlines as an all-around player, but showed exceptional promise as a talented left-handed pitcher.



CRAIG SWANSON

In 1978, Swanson helped lead his Vac-Air team to the division title in East Lake Babe Ruth action and, later on, was also was the starting pitcher for the 1983 16-18 Upstate New York tournament team that finished in second place.

During his high school sports career at Frewsburg, Swanson's name became synonymous with success and leadership while

playing football and basketball for the Bears, in addition to building his reputation as one of the area's top baseball players, both in pitching and as a first baseman and he was an all-league selection and an all-star performer every year until his graduation with high honors in 1983.

Also during that time span, Swanson participated in the all-star baseball game at the old War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo in 1983 where he pitched two scoreless innings while striking out four. Additionally, he named as an all-star in the Lions-Toppis All-Star Football Classic during the same year. Prior to that, Swanson was named as the Offensive Player of the Year in football in 1982.

He was offered an opportunity to play baseball for Jamestown Community College, but instead chose to accept an athletic scholarship to Canisius College, where he excelled on the mound for the Golden Griffins from 1984-87. He earned most valuable player honors in the 1985 St. Bonaventure Fall Classic and

also had the opportunity to play in the regional playoffs in Rhode Island.

In addition to his success in college, Swanson also produced more memorable performances while playing in the County-Grape Belt league from 1985 to 1991 and was named a league all-star every season.

He also was an outstanding softball player from 1984 through 1991 and played for several teams, including the Nic-L-Inn, Ecko Tool, VFW and the Keg Room.

After graduating from Canisius, Swanson joined Chase Lincoln Bank and was elected as a bank officer and also served as a senior sales coordinator at the Falconer branch office. He was also a member of the Board of Governors of the American Institute of Banking and the M.E.D. Banking Network.

He also active in the community and was a volunteer for the United Way's Pacesetter campaign and the Chautauqua County Fund for the Arts, along with coaching Little Hoopers basketball.



Swanson had hoped to coach Little League baseball, but that dream was tragically cut short on Sept. 28, 1991, when he died from injuries suffered in an automobile accident. He was just 26 years old.

To honor his memory, the Craig "Swanny" Swanson Memorial Scholarship Fund was established shortly after his death and every year since 1992, one or two Frewsburg High School seniors who best exemplify Swanson's qualities of leadership, a will to win and gregariousness. The fund is support-

ed by three successful events held each year: a handicap doubles bowling tournament, a "best-ball" golf tournament and a double-elimination softball tournament.

The induction dinner activities will begin on Feb. 19 with a hospitality hour from 6-7 p.m. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. and the program will begin at 8 p.m.

Memberships to the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame include tickets to the induction dinner and are available in three types.

A contributing membership for \$50 includes two induction dinner tickets and a voice on the board of directors.

A patron membership for \$100 includes four tickets and a voice on the board while a sustaining membership is \$200 which includes eight tickets and a voice on the board.

For membership information, contact Marilyn Hale at 484-0298.

Individual tickets are available for \$30 at the Jock Shop or by contacting Hale.