

---

## A Tribute to John A. Scalzi, Jr.

by MOE MAGLIOLA  
SPORTS EDITOR, STAMFORD ADVOCATE



The late John A. Scalzi, Jr., official and executive in sports, proved a leader in the advancement of the Stamford Old Timers' Athletic Association. The history of successful dinners and clambakes and progress of the organization is marked by the dedication of the great sportsman. That is why tonight's 20th annual winter event is held in memory of an outstanding member.

As a boy Johnny demonstrated leadership, directing his gang from the Pacific Street area against teams of other districts of Stamford. He was in command, both on and off the field.

Collectively speaking, Scalzi was probably the greatest competitor in Stamford history. Others were more successful in individual sports, but Johnny was a master in three sports—baseball, football, and basketball. He could boast as many letters as any athlete to perform at Stamford High, for he was an eligible student over a five-year period, with the only rule in his time being that a boy be under 21. Scalzi entered Stamford High at 14 in the year of 1922.

National fame was Scalzi's as a Georgetown University athlete. He gained headlines in a dubious way in 1930 when he stepped out of the end zone attempting a punt in the mud at Yankee Stadium, causing a safety and Georgetown to lose to NYU, 2-0. His miss by inches on a 47-yard drop kick attempt later in the game was a highlight of the series between the schools. He turned in some heroic days with the Hoyas, the peak effort developing against Fordham in 1928 when he tossed a 62-yard scoring pass to Johnny Toniani to snare victory for Georgetown. This action occurred in the days when NYU, Fordham and Georgetown were rated nationally as gridiron powers.

In the first night game ever played in Washington, D.C., 1930, Johnny returned the opening kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown and later intercepted a

pass and raced 78 yards for another score, as the Hoyas routed West Virginia, 67-12.

Johnny played baseball at Rice School here as a boy, captaining the team. He starred for five years at short-stop under the late Mike Boyle at Stamford High. Among those he played with included Bill Hagan, Eddie Hunt, Johnny Mahon, Bill Murphy, Hugo Giovannuccia, Jack Birmingham, "Whitey" Czescik, Allen Ungemack, Paul Kuczo, Morris Raven, and Jack Hogan.

A captain in his freshman year, Scalzi starred for three seasons on the Georgetown varsity nine, being the varsity captain in 1931. His ability attracted major league scouts and he signed for a cash bonus with the Boston Braves in 1931. Bonuses were rare in the depression-hit thirties. He played at Hazelton of the New York-Penn. League and with Albany of the Eastern League. His teammates included Red Rolfe, all-time Yankee third sacker and Joe Glenn, who later managed the Stamford entry in the Class B Colonial League of which Scalzi was president. Scalzi called it quits professionally as a player when his arm gave him much trouble in 1933.

Stamford High did not have a basketball team in 1927, thus Johnny played but four years at the sport as a schoolboy. Frank LiVolsi, Red Hein, Maurice McCarthy, and Connie O'Connell formed a good Stamford five with Scalzi. The freshman captain as a Hoya, he was a letterman in his collegiate sophomore year. An appendectomy kept him off the Georgetown basketball squad in his junior year. The court play of the Stamford great is best remembered here for his performances with the Stamford University Club teams which held forth at the Stamford Armory. The team played in the Eastern Athletic Club League with success, bringing some of the best collegiate fives of the East to Stamford for exhibition tilts. Scalzi was team captain for five years.

The University Club basketball produced the best in Stamford amateur sport. Coached by the late George Taylor, the team drew tremendous response from the fans here, with large followings travelling with the club. No Stamford basketball buffs of the era can forget the games at the Penn A.C. in Philadelphia, or at the New York A.C. and the Crescent A.C.

*(Continued on page 13)*

---

**A TRIBUTE TO JOHN SCALZI (continued)**

Area players with the University five included the late George Hein, Dartmouth star; Bill Meyers, Savage; Laddie King, Springfield; "Whitey" Czescik and Jack Birmingham, both from Villanova; "Skeets" Fitzpatrick and Ed Conroy, Villanova; Frank McGrath, the Greenwich all-around athlete, and a host of others of collegiate fame, a few of whom were Al Bean, Yale; Dick Bracken, Providence; the late Johnny Acropolis, Colgate; Fran and John Walsh, also of Colgate; Paul Dillon, Georgetown; Pop Sweetman, Fordham; George Bean, North Carolina; George Van Cott, Wesleyan; Milt Reinhardsen, Swarthmore; Joe Van Pelt, New York Aggies, and Richard Haggerty, NYU.

A schoolboy gridder with such men as Paul Kuczo, Stamford High Athletic Director; "Chubby" Duffy, who made it big with Notre Dame; Jack Birmingham, the Villanova star, and Joe Franchina, present Stamford Superintendent of Schools, Scalzi developed as a kicking and passing star, attaining the heights as a collegian. He benefited from the coaching of Lou Little, Tommy Mills and Tommy Murphy at Georgetown. It was assured that Johnny become a professional, and he was with the Brooklyn Dodgers in the National Football League in 1931 and 1932, he then coached and played with the New Rochelle Bulldogs in the American Association for the next six years. He worked as assistant backfield coach under Little at Columbia and with Herb Kopf at Manhattan. His final venture was promotion of semi-pro football at Mitchell Field in Stamford. His team gave an eager veteran of the Pacific Naval wars an opportunity to play football prior to entering Arnold College. That athlete is Andy Robustelli, the star defensive end of the New York Giants, who doubles as defensive coach.

Johnny also played and promoted professional basketball with the teams sponsored by Paddy Moruke, the Sheriff, who is one of our honored Old Timers tonight.

The son of a retail-wholesale paint dealer with a rapidly growing business and committed to growing of the venture, Scalzi worked with his brothers Len and Sam to that end. But sports and athletics were his great love.

A top college basketball and football official, Scalzi umpired in the Class D Pony League in 1940 and the International League in 1941 as a professional arbiter. Replacing Ken Strong as president of the Colonial League in 1947, it was his individual effort which kept the league going in financial drought through 1950. His work gratis for the Twilight League as President and as a team manager, etc., contributed highly to the over 30 years of continuous operation. He found time to serve diligently as a member of the Stamford Park Commission, a contribution which is to be recognized with the floodlighted baseball and softball field at Woodside Park as, John A. Scalzi Field.

The Stamford sportsman died in his 55th year, just when he was sinking his teeth into a new career. As district scout for the New York Mets of the National League, his zeal and ability was recognized by the young major organization. On the day of his death, he had worked with boys who had gained attention of the Mets in a tryout at the Polo Grounds. He was in constant attendance at the baseball games, spent hours at work with youths eager to benefit from his baseball experience. All this, despite his being saddled with the demands of the Scalzi Paint stores as the firm's president. He had capacity for many things.

---

*Compliments of*

**Telesco**  
**FUEL AND MASONS' MATERIALS**

*Best By Test*

**Office and Plant: 40 Meadow Street**  
**Tel. 3-1111**

**Branch Plants**  
**Danbury and Brookfield, Conn.**

•

*Compliments of*

**"A Friend"**

•