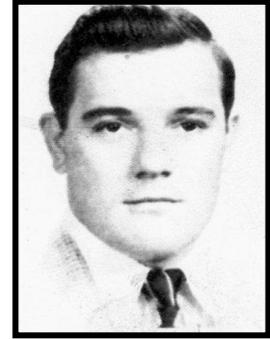


JOHN SEAL



From a shy ninth grader whom the girls nicknamed “Baby” to a scholarship football player at Virginia Tech to a pioneer in the development of high school wrestling in Central Virginia – such was the path taken by John Seal, now a retired teacher, coach, and athletic director, with over three decades of service to Amherst County.

Seal’s introduction to sports came in the form of football, as the Director of City Parks in Roanoke encouraged him to participate. He became an All-District lineman, second team All-State, with the Jefferson Senior High “Magicians” team that played the biggest schools in Virginia.

His high school line coach, who doubled as the wrestling coach, encouraged his trying out for wrestling, leading him to ultimately place in the state meet. Wrestling enabled him to travel to distant schools, with one venture giving him his first view of the ocean, leaving him in awe.

John Seal’s ability in football earned him a scholarship to Virginia Tech, a Southern Conference team at the time, where he teamed with his high school friend, George Preas, who had a 10-year NFL career on Baltimore Colts championship teams. His college years were interrupted by service in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper with the 11st Airborne, with whom he made 24 jumps, training in Alaska for the harsh conditions in Korea, with the conflict ceasing before his deployment. Returning to Virginia Tech, he played football and also joined the wrestling team as an undersized heavyweight. The highlight of his wrestling experience was a victory over a West Virginia wrestler whom he described as being “almost twice my size.” Seal’s speed and agility overcame his opponent’s only weapon, sheer strength.

Coming to Amherst County, first at Madison Heights High School, then Temperance and Clifford Elementary Schools, Seal started at ACHS in 1964 as a business teacher, also serving as assistant football coach on some of Amherst’s most successful teams. His most lasting impact was in inaugurating the wrestling program and serving as coach until 1979. His team first won a district championship, as did the football team, in 1965. The booster club cited him for his service as a pioneer in wrestling in Central Virginia. His ACHS teams won 29 consecutive dual matches, boasted 3 state champions, and placed second in the regional and state tournaments in 1970. He is the first inductee in the ACHS Wrestling Hall of Fame.

He also served as ACHS athletic director, leading the school program into the era of multiple additions to the sports program, for both boys and girls, as well as several changes in district and regional assignment, from AA to AAA and back again.

John R. Seal, Jr. – December 10, 1931

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Jefferson Senior High School – Roanoke VA: Football (1948-51) – lineman, 2nd team, All-State; Wrestling (1948-51) – placed in state tournament
- Virginia Tech: Football (1952-53, 1955-56); Wrestling (1955-56)
- Military: 1953-55, U.S. Army 11th Airborne
- ACHS: Wrestling (1964-79) – program founder, 29 consecutive wins in dual matches, 3 state champions, 2nd in regional and state tournaments (1970), Wrestling Hall of Fame, #1 inductee; Football (1960s-70s) – line coach, district championships; Athletic Director