

# **Rich Koegel**

## **Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame Inductee**

### **2009**



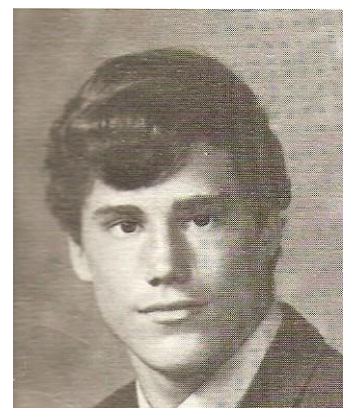
**Rich 2009**

Rich Koegel was born on June 27, 1954 on Long Island in Minneola, NY to the late Peter and Dorothy Koegel. His family, including brothers Peter John and Warren moved to Saugerties when Rich was in the eighth grade. He fell in love with Saugerties and has lived here ever since. We note that the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame Club is glad that he did.

It is nearly impossible to tell the whole story of Rich Koegel and what he has done and continues to do in the Saugerties sports history books. Before we do, we would like to reflect on his family and a very special friend. First and foremost in his life is his love of family. On June 9, 1979, Rich married his wife of nearly 30 years Valerie (Crist) Koegel. They now have three children Kristin Joy, Daniel Richard and Michael Bond Koegel. During his life Rich has made many friends in the Saugerties sports scene. He developed a special friendship with the late Michael Bond, who is also a Saugerties Sports Hall of Famer. They played as Co-Captains and friends on the Saugerties High School Varsity Football Team. This friendship was so meaningful in Rich's life that he named his youngest son Michael Bond in honor of his friend.



**Rich, Valerie, Michael, Kristin and Daniel**



**Special friend Mike Bond**

Throughout his life Rich has been inspired in sports by his two older brothers, Pete and Warren. Pete played Major League Baseball and Warren played in the National Football League. As a

youngster Rich started his sports participation in the Seaford Little League. As previously mentioned he moved to Saugerties in the eighth grade and began one of the most storied careers in Saugerties sports history. At SHS, Rich was a man of all seasons. He spent the fall on the gridiron, winters on the hardwood and the spring on the diamond.

On the football field, Rich was a quarterback and safety. As a senior he served as co-captain with his good friend Mike Bond. Together they led the Sawyers to a first place tie in the DCSL their senior season. His leadership and his will to win were documented in the November 23, 1971 edition of Jack Keeley's column, Keeley's Korner, in the Post Star which stated, "Here it was, an entire season on the line on just a single play. The fourth quarter of the last game and the Sawyers have a 4<sup>th</sup> down on Roosevelt High's 3 yard line. Time is running out and it is obvious that this is it. Cover those nine feet and we tie for the League Championship-fall short and we lose 15-12 and drop to 5<sup>th</sup> in the standings of the tightly packed DCSL. John Bach snaps the ball to quarterback Rich Koegel. There is a moment of hesitation...pass or run? Is the thought that flashes to the mind of every person in the huge crowd. But now Koegel is sprinting to his left, he's going to try to sweep that end. But he's barely to the line of scrimmage and he's hit by a green jersey. Another one moves in and makes contact, but the rangy kid is still moving, he's driving toward that goal line and carrying his tacklers with him. A pile of bodies momentarily obscures the view, but there's the official's arms stretched aloft. It's a touchdown! He made it! We did it! Saugerties is Number One!! That was perhaps the most dramatic, most thrilling moment to ever occur on a local gridiron-and that's saying something. Saugerties has a long and glorious history of football." The column went on to say "Rich Koegel was the Johnny-on-the-spot and it capped off a great performance on his part. His passing was never better, he ripped off huge chunks of yardage on the ground and he kept the Sawyer churning on their uphill battle.

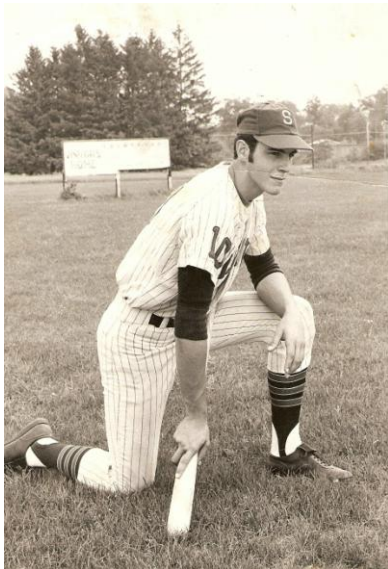
As center for the SHS basketball team he also excelled. As a junior he was co-captain with fellow 2009 inductee Tom Whitaker. As a senior Rich put up some outstanding numbers in just 19 games. He made 148 of his 289 field goal attempts (51%) and 107 of his 160 free throw attempts (67%) for a total of 403 points (a 21.2 per game). He also had 345 rebounds (18.2 per game) and 47 assists. These impressive numbers resulted in the Kingston Freeman Player of the Year honors and League Player of the Year honors.

On the diamond, Rich was outstanding. As a sophomore he played third base, as a junior he played second base and as a senior he was the shortstop. His junior season really stands out. He hit a league leading .412 with 2 doubles, 2 triples, 1 home run and 28 runs batted in and played excellent defense. He was first team Kingston Freeman Dream Team All Star as well as DCSL Player of the Year and an All County All Star. His high school career ended with a sectional loss to Poughkeepsie.

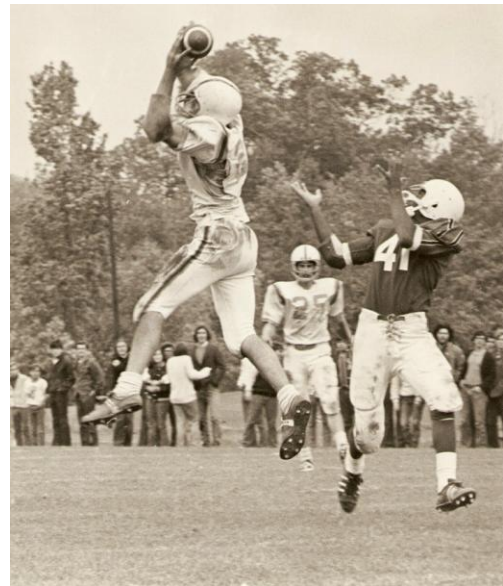
During his high school career Rich spent his summers playing for the Saugerties American Legion Post 72 baseball team. He and his teammates made it to the New York State final held in Cooperstown, NY in 1972. Unfortunately, the Saugerties squad was bested by Utica 11 to 1.

Rich's high school achievements were aptly trumpeted in the Post Star's April 4, 1972 edition of the Keeley's corner column. The column stated, "The recent Booster Club Varsity Athletic Banquet was a fine affair, blessed with a sizeable crowd, appreciated awards, an excellent brace of speakers and a shining highlight. At one point in the program a tall, handsome teenager came to the front of the hall, accepted a gleaming silver cup and then, as he returned to his seat was given a robust standing ovation by the 268 other people in attendance. If ever a Sawyer athlete deserved a standing ovation, this was the time, the place and the boy. Saugerties High may have had a few all-around athletes as good as Rich Koegel but no one was ever better. In his last 3 sports, he was chosen as the League's Outstanding Player. You just can't do any better than that.

In baseball he led us to District honors and has attracted much interest from major league scouts. In football he concluded a splendid season by carrying tacklers several yards to score a touchdown in the closing minutes which gave SHS a share of the title. In basketball he was the league's high scorer, sparked the cagers to their first winning season in 10 years and is considered by former hardwood mentor Coach Smith to be the best hoopster ever to perform for the Blue & White. But 268 people said it better than we are doing here through that heartfelt and much-deserved standing ovation." The column also included this, "If the Varsity Athletic Banquet did not bring together the three greatest superstars in Saugerties High sports history, then certainly it collected under one roof the best of the past 3 decades. There was Sal Misasi, Class of '54, a banquet committee member, Roger Preatorius, Class of '69, guest speaker and Rich Koegel, Cass of '72, the major award winner. The coaches on hand had to be looking at that trio, remembering and dreaming that somehow the sands of time could be shifted around to put them in blue and white uniforms all at the same time."



**Rich during his days at SHS**

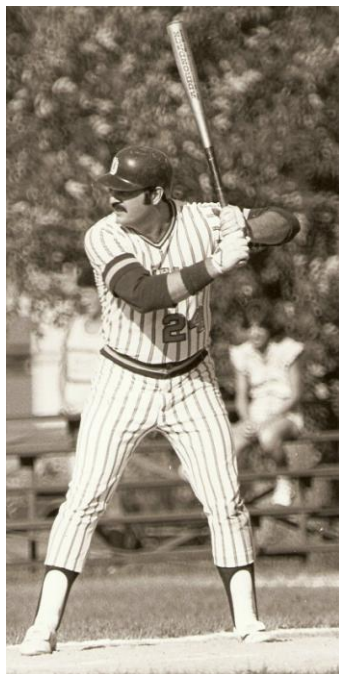


**Rich intercepts a Poughkeepsie pass**

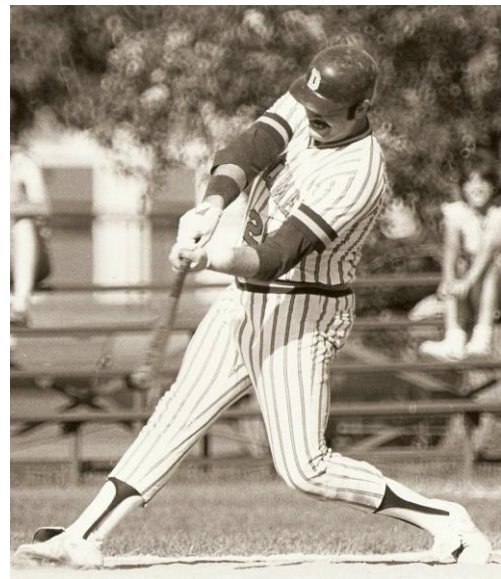
After high school Rich went on to attend Penn State University. In the fall season of 1972 and 1973, Rich played quarterback and tight end for the football team and legendary Coach Joe Paterno and in the spring season of 1974 and 1975, he played baseball. He was a two year starter at first base. As a junior his Nittany Lions fell one game short of reaching the College World Series.

As an adult Rich continued his outstanding athletic career. He played in the SAA Men's Softball League and played basketball in the SAA Premiere and Half-court Leagues for many years, winning so many championships and personal awards to mention. He also continued playing baseball and began by playing for the Kingston Braves in the Hudson Valley Rookie League. During his time with the Braves he was one of the league's best hitters. He made numerous All Star teams and won back-to-back league Most Valuable Player Awards in 1976 and 1977. He was one of the Braves clutch performers as evidenced by his two out bases loaded game winning monster home run, off Rick Horton, to defeat the Poughkeepsie Lasers on July 15, 1977. Rich was joined on the Braves by Tom Whitaker, Karl Lezette, Jerry Malgeri and Nick Malgeri. After the 1979 season they left the Braves and established the Saugerties Dutchmen. The Dutchmen began play in 1980 in the Hudson Valley Rookie League and Rich continued to be one of the elite players in the loop. Under manager Dennis Sheehan, also a Saugerties Sports Hall of Famer, the Dutchmen went 15-8 and captured the league title. Rich had an outstanding campaign batting

.394 with 4 home runs and 19 runs batted in during the regular season and in the postseason he hit .421 with one homer and 7 rbi's, which was good enough to capture the league MVP award for the third time. It was a good start to an outstanding Dutchmen career. In 1984, Rich enjoyed a banner year. He batted .457 with 7 round trippers and knocked in 23 runs. His batting average and home runs were tops in the league. His outstanding performance resulted in his sharing the Mohawk-Hudson Baseball League's Most Valuable Player Award with teammate Tom Whitaker. During his tenure with the Dutchmen, Rich put together some impressive numbers. In 163 games he compiled a career batting average of .383. He scored 120 runs, had 193 hits, 31 doubles, 2 triples, 29 homers and 134 runs batted in during league play (includes playoffs). His 163 games are the equivalent of a Major League season. If a major leaguer put up numbers like that, he'd be the MVP. If that weren't enough, Rich was also Player/Manager from 1983 to 1985. He compiled an 81-33-4 record and won league titles in 1984 and 1985. His .711 winning percentage is the best in modern Dutchmen history. He stepped down as manager after the 1985 season, he was replaced by Dennis Sheehan, but continued to play in 1986. The Dutchmen again won the league title in 1986, completing a run of three straight MHL championships. Following the 1986 season Rich retired from the Dutchmen. As of 1999 including exhibitions and tournaments, Rich ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in runs scored, 2<sup>nd</sup> in hits, 5<sup>th</sup> in doubles, 1<sup>st</sup> in home runs, 2<sup>nd</sup> in total bases, 3<sup>rd</sup> in runs batted in, 2<sup>nd</sup> in slugging percentage and 3<sup>rd</sup> in on base percentage. During his Dutchmen experience Rich was able to play with his younger cousin John Jorgensen, and for the first time ever he played together with his brother Pete in organized ball. This was a thrill Rich will never forget.



**Rich ready to strike.**



**The powerful stroke of Rich Koegel**

After his playing days, Rich decided to begin coaching. In addition to his Dutchmen stint, he has coached in the Saugerties Little League for 10 years (where he also served as the Head of Boys Major League division for 7 of those years), the Saugerties Babe Ruth League for 6 years, the SAA Bidy League for 10 years, the SAA Junior League for 5 years, AYSO Girl's Soccer for three years, the Kingston Touch Football League for 5 years (he served as player/coach) and the Saugerties American Legion Post 72 baseball team for 7 years and counting.

In such a long and distinguished career, Rich has many memorable moments including: winning the first Dutchmen championship in 1980, winning a share of the DCSL football championship during his senior season, winning the division in baseball during his junior season with a 19-2

record, playing in the Legion State Finals in 1972, winning the SAA Labor Day Softball Tournament 4 straight years without a loss (20-0), two undefeated seasons as a coach in the Kingston Touch Football League and coaching his Post 72 American Legion team to the New York State Tournament in 2004. His biggest thrill in sports came on Father's Day 2003 while coaching the American Legion Post 72 team, his son Dan hit his first home run. This was a moment between father and son that will never be forgotten.

In Saugerties sports history, Rich Koegel is arguably the greatest all around athlete. There may have been a better baseball player or a better basketball player or a better football player but when you combine his talent and his contributions in all three major sports it is hard to find a better, more well rounded athlete. The Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame Club extends its congratulations to Rich for his induction into the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame. Your accomplishments and contributions have made your family and your community proud.