

Donald Brownlee '40 Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Speech

By William Brownlee

Donald was my older brother, almost five years older; as we were growing up, I tended to look at him and visualize what I would look like in five years. For instance, when he reached 6 ft., 4 in. and weighted 200 pounds, I assumed that I would also be that size and hoped I would inherit just a few of his many personal qualities.

Although the two of us had the same interest in sports, we differed in athletic ability. Donald was a natural; it didn't matter, football in a neighbor's backyard or basketball at the local gym, he always had the upper hand. When Donald went to the Academy, he did it all — played football well enough to make the all-city team, was on the championship basketball teams, and set the high jump record for the track and field team.

Attending Lehigh University, Donald continued to be a three sport athlete. Not eligible to play for varsity teams as a first year student, he did the next best thing and played freshman football, basketball, and track and field. The following year, Donald was in his element and earned a starting position in all three sports at the varsity level.

At the end of his junior year, Donald joined the Army and attended officer candidate school in New Orleans. His commanding officer, a sports enthusiast, realized that he had a group of good basketball players, including Donald, and arranged games with neighboring colleges and other military groups. To keep the team up to speed, players were often excused from military drills to sharpen their skills and prepare for the next game. I used to say that Donald was the only person that I knew who went through OCS on an athletic scholarship.

After serving in the military, Donald returned to Lehigh and played varsity football and track and field. Upon graduation, he was offered a tryout, as a free agent, by the Washington Redskins. However, being career-minded, he accepted a job at Scott Paper Company and declined the offer. Maintaining the desire to compete, Donald played for the Wilmington Clippers, a farm team for the Redskins, allowing him to keep his daytime job and play football on Sundays.

Later in life, Donald became an enthusiastic golfer and jogger. When he came to visit, he and I would go for a casual run and talk about our careers and the life experiences we endured. One story he enjoyed telling was about a company golf outing, just before he retired, when he was seventy one. When he teed it up on the first hole, Donald had the feeling that all the twenty and thirty-year-olds were watching to see if the old man could still hit the ball. As he recounted, "I hit one of the best drives of my life, 275 yards, straight down the fairway." I don't know how he did in the rest of the match, and perhaps that ball went a few more yards every time he told the story. To me, it proved that Donald still had his athletic ability and his desire to compete still intact.

Donald, a modest individual, never spoke much about his accomplishments while attending Harrisburg Academy or Lehigh. However, after he died, the family found, in the night stand next to his bed, his Harrisburg Academy varsity letter and graduation program. Clearly, the Academy was not ever far from his thoughts.

Looking back, athletic success gave Donald the self-confidence he needed to succeed socially and in business world. I am only sorry that he is not here to take part in this very moving ceremony. I know he would be pleased, and on behalf of all his family, I want to thank you for honoring him in this way.

Courtney Kaplan '99 Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Speech

By Jeane Serino

Courtney was in 7th grade when I first noticed the athletic skill of this middle school student. Being a well-rounded athlete, Courtney absorbed the skills necessary to play sports in all three seasons, "a coach's dream," as I noticed the intensity, dedication, and passion that were part of her personality and character. I looked forward to the chance to coach her at the varsity level, realizing the success it would bring and the example it would set for other members of the team.

Courtney began playing tennis at the age of five and never looked back. Her strong desire to compete allowed her to begin playing USTA Tournaments at age seven and many club tournament venues by the age of fifteen. At this young age, Courtney was a year-round athlete, attending several tennis camps each summer and exploring other sports that interested her.

However, Courtney had a unique quality you seldom find in a high school student. With the constant support from her parents and stiff competition during summer tennis camps, Courtney had an inner drive to succeed in anything she attempted. Her middle school coach, Steve Stewart, recalls Courtney well. "At first glance, you might see Courtney as a mild mannered, soft spoken person who probably would prefer avoiding contact sports. As I quickly learned, coaching her, she is, on the contrary, one tough athlete. She has gritty, competitive spirit that brings out the best in her teammates. Courtney was tenacious, determined and worked hard to get it right."

Entering high school, Courtney had an immediate impact on the varsity teams. She played number one singles and doubles in tennis for four years and was awarded MVP in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Her career as a basketball player was no exception. Always willing to work hard in practice and games, Courtney, and was selected to the SIAC League All-Star Team. In her final season as a varsity softball player, Courtney played third base like a pro, was a member of the SIAC League Championship in 1999, and was elected to the All-Conference Team.

Deservingly, in her senior year, Courtney received Harrisburg Academy's most prestigious athletics award, The Sports Club Trophy. That fall she attended the University Of Pittsburgh and played tennis at the NCAA level. A decade later, Courtney was inducted in the 2009 Harrisburg Academy Athletics Hall of Fame.

Coaching Rangsey Van

By George Gonzales

Coaching basketball and lacrosse for a few years, I can vividly remember the first days of classes after a long summer break, trying to spot new students in the Middle and Upper School that could help improve our athletics program. There was no method to this style of recruiting. It was simple; after several friendly conversations, I would ask if anyone was interested in getting involved in our athletics program and if so, did you know anything about lacrosse or see it on TV. "You mean that game with the net on the end of a stick?" asked one student. "That's it," I said with all the enthusiasm I could muster. Before you knew it, I had collected prospective lacrosse players and invited them to a Saturday "throw around" with pizza, beverages and no conditioning that day.

Without hesitation, Rangsey Van was one of those curious students who attended practice, interested in a game that he knew nothing about and welcomed the challenge. As the morning progressed, Coach Heisey and I looked over the group for a quick assessment of what talent was available. As coaches, it's a general rule that you never count anyone out after the first few days of practice, however, one thing was obvious - Rangsey Van was a natural.

As his career in athletics evolved throughout high school, it was clear that Rangsey's athletic skills were just a small part of what he had to offer the teams and coaches he played for. Each day he came to practice he brought an aura of confidence that was contagious to team members and coaches. His willingness to lead by example and accept constructive criticism added to his arsenal of attributes. Rangsey enjoyed the challenges the day would bring, relating to his teammates, and competing against his opponents with a strong desire to succeed.

Steve Pancoski, current varsity basketball coach had this to say about Rangsey Van: "On the basketball court, Rangsey brought a definite charisma to every aspect of the game. From the fundamentals, strategies and team-building in practices to the intense competition with opposing players, and even referees, in games, Rangsey was forever smiling. He was a passionate competitor who respected the game and everything around it. He embodied all the positive qualities that high school athletics were meant to instill in student athletes and he was an extreme pleasure to coach. When Rangsey played, he made the athletic experience better for his teammates, the coaches and the fans."

On October 3, 2009, Rangsey was inducted into Harrisburg Academy's Athletics Hall of Fame. During his speech, he thanked his family and coaches for their support and his teammates for their unwavering friendship. Rangsey, thank you for all you have given to Harrisburg Academy in so many ways!