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TOP STORY

## Into the Hall: Adam Donnelly

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Submitted photo

German Township High School football coach Adam Donnelly (right) talks with Mickey Tippet. Donnelly is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

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Fayette County coaching great Adam Donnelly is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

Inductees and representatives will be recognized at a Hall of Fame Golf outing/Luncheon/Social starting at 9 a.m. on June 25 at Pleasant Valley Golf Club in Connellsville.

Donnelly, who passed away on May 7, 2004 at the age of 92, left a large imprint on coaching in Fayette County. He was a longtime assistant football coach at German Township High School before being named the head coach in 1964.

His nine-year record while at the helm of the Uhlans was 45-38-5, including a 10-0 mark in 1969 when he led the team to the WPIAL Class B Championship. German blanked Coraopolis in the final, 8-0.

Known as a great disciplinarian, Donnelly earned the respect of his players, most of whom saw him as more than just a coach.

“A true honor for a great man,” said Tony Tokish, the “monster man” on the Uhlans’ vaunted 1969 defense, who spoke about Donnelly on George Von Benko’s Sports Line Talk Show on WMBS Radio. “He was a man of many hats.

“He also was a Dean of Men at the high school. He offered a lot of advice to a lot of young men and put them in the right spots to make good choices for life. Adam wasn’t a man of many words but when you needed him he was always there for advice or anything you needed to talk about.”

Football wasn’t the only sports program Donnelly guided at German.

Donnelly also coached the Uhlans in basketball and won one section title.

Sam Sims, who scored 2,138 points at German, was one of Donnelly’s standouts in basketball.

“He’s a legend in this whole area with German Township,” Tokish said. “People still talk about him and how great he was. If they had the 3-pointer back then, who knows how many points he would’ve scored.”

Donnelly coached track & field until German dropped the sport and he produced several top-notch sprinters in the 1950s.

Tokish recalled Claude Parnell from Lambert as an “unbelievable” track & field legend who was coached by Donnelly.

“Track wasn’t really publicized back then much,” Tokish said, but noted Parnell “dominated all around here.”

Donnelly was able to get the most out of his athletes, according to Tokish.

“I think the way he communicated with his players,” was one of the keys to Donnelly’s success as a coach, Tokish said. “He seemed to care for you on the field and off the field and that made you feel good about him and made you want to play for him with that kind of attitude he brought to the game.”

With Tokish leading the way on defense during the 1969 football season, German allowed only 66 total points in 10 games.

Tokish recalled a key play in the third quarter of the Uhans’ win over Coraopolis in the 1969 football championship game, and Donnelly’s reaction to it, with a chuckle.

With German facing a fourth-and-5 on its own 40-yard line, Mose Parnell went back to punt for the Uhans, but instead took off running.

“It wasn’t planned either,” Tokish remembered. “He dropped back to punt and I was a wideout going down the field. I’m looking for the punt up there and I don’t see it. The next thing I know Mose comes flying past me going to the end zone.

“They were like hitting and releasing real quick and he noticed that in the punts before. Adam didn’t have any idea he was doing that. I can remember, I said, ‘Mose, what did Adam say to you?’ He said, ‘I’m glad you made it.’

“After the game we were teasing and standing around talking, and Adam just looked him at him and shook his head.”

Donnelly was a good athlete himself.

“Another thing about Adam, he played for Waynesburg College, football,” Tokish pointed out.

In fact, when the Yellow Jackets defeated Penn State, 7-6, at Beaver Field in 1932, Donnelly’s extra-point kick was the difference in the game.

Tokish has discussed Donnelly’s induction into the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame with many of his old teammates and other former German athletes.

“I want to thank the Hall of Fame ... for doing such an outstanding job,” Tokish said. “Everyone I talked to said it’s a well-deserved honor and they’re very glad he finally made it in.

“They talk more about his personality with the kids and the school than the coaching to tell you the truth, the way he treated people. He seemed to want to take care of anybody who needed help. He was there for you.

“A great person.”