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TOP STORY

## Into the Hall: Ted Konetsky

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Submitted photo

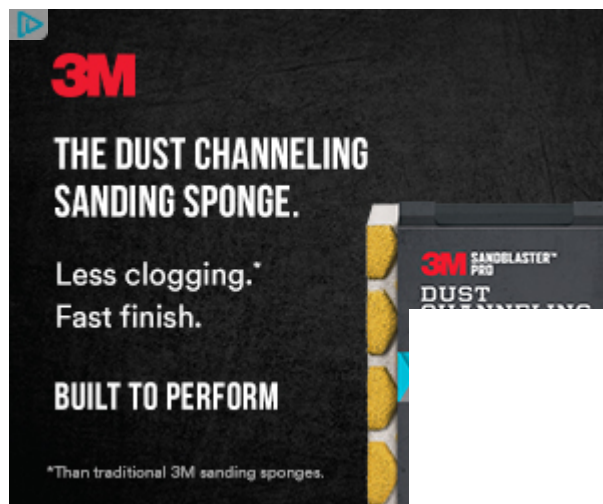
Ted Konetsky starred in football and track & field at both German Township High School and Pitt. He is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

Submitted photo

He was known as Dr. Ted Kell later in life but those in Fayette County, especially in the German Township High School area, knew him better as Ted Konetsky, an outstanding two-sport star for the Uhlans and also at Pitt.

Konetsky was a 1937 German graduate who, in the early 1950s during his career as a dentist, opted to change his last name to Kell in order to eliminate the misspellings and mispronunciations that occurred with the name Konetsky.

No matter what name he is remembered by, he left a large imprint in the area, so much so that he is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.



Konetsky and the rest of the 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.

Konetsky's son, Fred Kell, said he was very pleased to hear about his father being chosen for enshrinement into the Hall of Fame.

"I am and our whole family is, too," Kell said recently in discussing his father's induction on George Von Benko's Sports Line Talk Show on WMBS Radio.

"It was something we thought he deserved."

Konetsky was the oldest of three talented athletes in a family that included middle brother Floyd and younger brother Francis.

Ted Konetsky was a standout tackle for the Uhlans football team and was even better in track & field. Ironically, Pitt would grant him a scholarship in track & field but he went on to have a bigger impact on the football team for legendary Panthers coach Jock Sutherland and later for Charlier Bowser.

There was speculation that Konetsky's football coach at German, former Pitt star Ted Dailey, suggested Sutherland take a look at him.

Konetsky played on German teams that went 4-3 in 1934, 5-3 in 1935 and 8-1-1 in 1936, although a knee injury forced him to miss the first six games of his final season at German.

"I think he liked football better," Kell said. "He didn't talk as much about the track accomplishments but he set records, and one of them is for the discus in Fayette County."

In track & field, Konetsky thrived as a thrower and set a Fayette County record his junior year with a toss of 47 feet, 5 inches in the shot put. A year later he retained that county record and added the discus record with a throw of 123-9.

"Somebody told me that they changed the weight of the discus and they said that will never be broken because of that," Kell pointed out.

Konetsky took home gold medals in both the shot put (47-1 3/4) and discus (127-0) at the WPIAL Track & Field Championships held at Pitt Stadium his senior year, then did the same at the PIAA championships held at State College with throws of 50-1 1/2 in the shot put and 132-3 in the discus.

Konetsky not only was a star athlete at German but also a star student who was the senior class president.

Konetsky went to Pitt thanks to the track scholarship but Sutherland swayed him to join the football team with a scholarship in that sport. Konetsky did so and focused more on football although he remained on the Panthers' track & field team.

The Panthers won the national championship under Sutherland in Konetsky's freshman year with a 9-0-1 record. He earned a starting job as a 200-pound, two-way tackle the following season on a squad that went 8-2 and earned a No. 8 ranking in the Associated Press poll. Konetsky was named to the "All-City College Grid Team" that year.

Sutherland left Pitt to become part owner and head coach of the Detroit Lions after that 1938 season with Bowser taking over as coach of the Panthers who went 5-4.

Konetsky was named team captain for his senior season at Pitt and the team went 3-4-1. Konetsky drew great praise from Bowser, who said at the time, "I do not hesitate to state that he ranks with the best tackles in the history of Pitt."

Konetsky earned several honors his senior year. He was named to the Pitt News All-City Team, the Eastern College All-Star Team (which lost to the NFL's New York Giants at the Polo Grounds) and to several "All Opponent Teams." He also was chosen to play in the first annual "Smoke Bowl Game" held in Richmond, Virginia, on New Year's Day.

Konetsky graduated from Pitt and then entered the Pitt School of Dental Medicine and was elected the president of his freshman dental school class. He graduated from there in 1943 and entered the US Army Dental Corp. Konetsky was commissioned a Lieutenant in November, 1943, and assigned to Fort Warren, Wyoming. He played for and then later coached on the Fort Warren Bronco football team.

While his brother Floyd would make it to the NFL, Ted Konetsky took a different path. He gave up football after fracturing two vertebrae in his back while playing for Fort Warren. He was hospitalized in a full body cast for five months.

"He had some injuries that kind of changed his mind," Kell recalled. "He really wanted to go into the dental profession. He also did some coaching when he got out of dental school and went in the service out in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He coached out there, too."

Kell pointed out that Floyd Konetsky and Francis Konetsky were also both outstanding high school and college football players.

"Floyd played for the Cleveland Rams," Kell said. "He played at the University of Florida. There was the other brother, Fran, he started out playing football down at the University of Florida and then he went into World War II."

Ted Konetsky had a long, successful career as a dentist, retiring in 1977. He and his wife Claire had six children, Connie, who died in 2016, Joey, Tessie, Fred, Teep and Jean, while living in Uniontown. Claire died in 1969 at age 49 and Ted died in 1982 at age 63.

Kell pointed out that while German Township High School is no more, the memory of the school was special to Konetsky.

“It was for him and his family,” Kell said.