

BELLEVILLE TIMES

NEWS FROM BELLEVILLE TIMES & NORTHJERSEY.COM

Thursday, August 18, 2011

TRIBUTE TO 'THE DUKE' AT BELLEVILLE CHARITY GOLF OUTING

By MIKE LAMBERTI
Special to the Times

There was never a time, at least in my early life as a writer for this newspaper, that Canio Constantino wasn't a major influence in Belleville High School sports.

He was combative, yet caring. He was passionate, yet considerate. He was direct, yet fair.

Canio was a Belleville man, through and through. He raised his family in Belleville, never missed an athletic event, and was always there for his children, Kathy and Ken, as well as his wife, Grace.

On Aug. 30, 2001, Canio Constantino, known to many in town as 'The Duke' passed away at the age of 69.

"It was right before 9-11," recalled The Duke's son, Kenny, about his dad's passing. "I can't believe it's been 10 years already. Wow."

Canio's passing inspired his family to begin a golf outing in his memory.

"My dad loved sports and was a golf nut," said Ken Constantino, a 1981 graduate of Belleville High School, where he was a star football and baseball player. "He was at Hendricks Field just about every day he could, to play. He also had a passion for kids and wanted them to be happy and healthy. I'm pretty sure this tournament would be exactly what he'd want his legacy to stand for."

Ken Constantino, himself a very successful businessman today, has been more than proactive in making The Duke Classic Charity Golf Outing a special event as it prepares to celebrate its tenth outing on Oct. 6, 2011 at Hendricks Field in Belleville. The tournament began a year after his dad's passing.

"We're returning to The Duke's home course to celebrate our tenth outing," Constantino said. "We've been fortunate to have some (sports) celebrities like Bruce Harper and John Starks play throughout the years. But this is about local people, who knew my dad and love Belleville, who come together to make this very special."

The event will once again support The Embrace Kids Foundation, which provides pediatric cancer research, along with support and services to children and families throughout the greater New Jersey area. The young patients range in age from infancy to young adulthood and encompasses all ethnic and social backgrounds.

"Embrace Kids operates on a very small budget," Constantino said. "They offer their services at no cost, and never turns a child, or family away. It's a foundation I'm deeply committed to and I'm so glad we've been able to help. I believe our donations go a long way."

Constantino, the Chairman of the Tournament, is hoping that 2011 will mark a milestone in the tournament's progression.

"Thanks to so many people's generosity, The Duke Classic has donated \$90,000.00 to the cause," Ken said. "And this year, we hope to blow past the \$100,000.00 mark."

Constantino noted his dad's passion for children may have come at a relatively young age.

"My dad was literally laid up for nearly three years with Rheumatic Fever," Ken said. "I believe a part of his childhood was taken away by an illness and I think that's why he was so committed to children."

For those who wish to play, the cost is \$175.00 per golfer, which includes greens fees, power cart, Continental breakfast, contest prizes for longest drive, Closest to the Pin and a \$10,000 cash prize for a hole in one, barbeque lunch and beverages on course, which will be catered by The Chandelier and a banquet dinner and cocktail hour following golf, at The Chandelier.

Tee/hole sponsorships and signage are available for \$200.00 each and are 100 percent tax deductible. Prize donations and other contributions are gladly accepted and appreciated.

For more information, contact Ken Constantino at dukeclassic@comcast.net, or call him at 908-867-7096.



Ken Constantino and his father, Canio 'The Duke' Constantino on Hendricks Golf Course.