

THE MEYER SPORTS WIRE



Oceanside sports namesakes: Molifua, Johnson, Christopher

Fall high school sports have finished and we had a rainstorm in November. It must be winter.

At Oceanside and El Camino High Schools winter means basketball, soccer and wrestling. And a lot of time at the Oceanside High Wally Molifua Gymnasium and the El Camino High Ray Johnson Gymnasium.

When you enter these gyms, you see the names of two men who were outstanding coaches, teachers and mentors. And even better people.

Wally Molifua

In 2006, Molifua, an Oceanside High School icon, was honored when the renovated OHS gymnasium was dedicated to the first person of Samoan heritage

to teach in the Oceanside Unified School District. Molifua died in 2005 at the age of 53.

Molifua played football at Oceanside High and graduated in 1969. He attended MiraCosta College and received a football scholarship to Brigham Young University. He came back to Oceanside and his alma mater in the late 1970s.

Molifua taught several subjects, including science, physical education and driver education and coached a variety of teams and athletes. He was known as Coach Molifua, and many called him “Uncle Wally” at OHS, where he taught and coached for 29 years.

Molifua was inducted into the OHS Foundation Hall of Fame in 2012 in recognition of his outstanding public service in Oceanside.

Ray Johnson

In April 2015, the El Camino High gym became the Ray Johnson



Ray Johnson

Gym in a ceremony honoring its former coach.

Johnson coached 33 years at El Camino, compiling a 763-220 record as the boys coach and an 88-17 record as the girls coach. Johnson's 763 wins are the most wins in San Diego Section history.

Johnson's El Camino boys teams won 23 league championships and played in the CIF section title game 16 times. His teams won eight CIF titles, eight runner-up titles and advanced to the California State Regional Playoffs 14 times.

Johnson also coached the

girls team from 1983-87, winning three league titles, two San Diego CIF championships and a runner-up finish in the 1985 state championship.

His career earned him induction into the California High School Coaches Hall of Fame in 2011. He was the 2004 California State Coach of the Year. He was the Division I State High School Coach of the Year in 2003 and was inducted into the San Diego Hall of Sports Champions in 2002 with the Basketball Coaching Achievement Award.

Johnson coached one year at Fairleigh Dickinson in New Jersey and two years at Loyola Marymount. He is back in the North County as Assistant Coach at

Cal State San Marcos, reunited with 2012 Wildcat graduate, Senior Guard Dayton Boddie.

Bill Christopher

An Oceanside basketball story would not be complete without including former Pirate coach Bill Christopher. It was great to see Coach Christopher at the recent OHS Hall of Fame Ceremony. Christopher, a 1965 graduate of OHS, was inducted into the OHS Hall of Fame in 2015.

Christopher started his career at OHS in 1970 and in 1971 took over as Head Varsity Boys Coach. From 1980 - 1983 Christopher's

teams had a “Home Court Winning Streak” of 42 games that still remains second in the County record books. In 1984, he coached the Pirates to the Southern California Regional Championships becoming the only Division II team from San Diego to reach the California CIF Finals. Christopher retired after the 1986 season. He was known throughout the County as one of the most knowledgeable and difficult coaches to play against.

Back in the days when student athletes played multiple sports, we quickly shifted from football to basketball or wrestling. I was a much better basketball spectator than player, so I enjoyed Oceanside games from the bleachers. Two of my basketball classmates have been inducted into the Oceanside Hall of Fame, but neither for basketball. Thad Bosley in baseball and Willie Banks in track and field.

I remember going to the Palomar College gym to watch the Pirates take on Helix and a tall red head named Bill Walton. On one of our first possessions, Walton blocked a shot and went the length of the court for an uncontested dunk. We were on the wrong end of a rout, but Big Bill put on quite a memorable show.

The local season starts this week. New memories will be made in the gyms named for two men whose legacy of excellence and service make a city proud. See you there. ■

