

Southington Sports Hall of Fame

The Mighty Mackie

Scott Mackie anchored the Knights on his way to the College World Series

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SPORTS WRITER

Scott Mackie tossed the bat toward the dugout and sprinted to the outfield as if he was trying to beat a throw to first base. You couldn't tell by the look on his face that the Southington batter was hitless for the day. You couldn't see any stress on his face after three strikeouts even though he knew a South Carolina scout was studying him from the stands.

The Blue Knights were in the middle of a dogfight in Plainville in the early 1980s, so Mackie wasn't really worried about anything but the game. College could wait. The scouts could wait. The outfielder wasn't going to let down his team.

Hall of Fame

"After the game was over, I went up to the scout, and I told him it was too bad that Scott had that kind of a game," said former Blue Knight baseball coach John Fontana. "He said that he was still going to call him. They were still going to offer him a full scholarship. He could see that Scott was a player by his mannerisms and the way that he ran out to the field."

It's no surprise to those who knew him. Mackie only played at one speed, and it was a speed that few players could match. Even on a bad day, Mackie was one of the

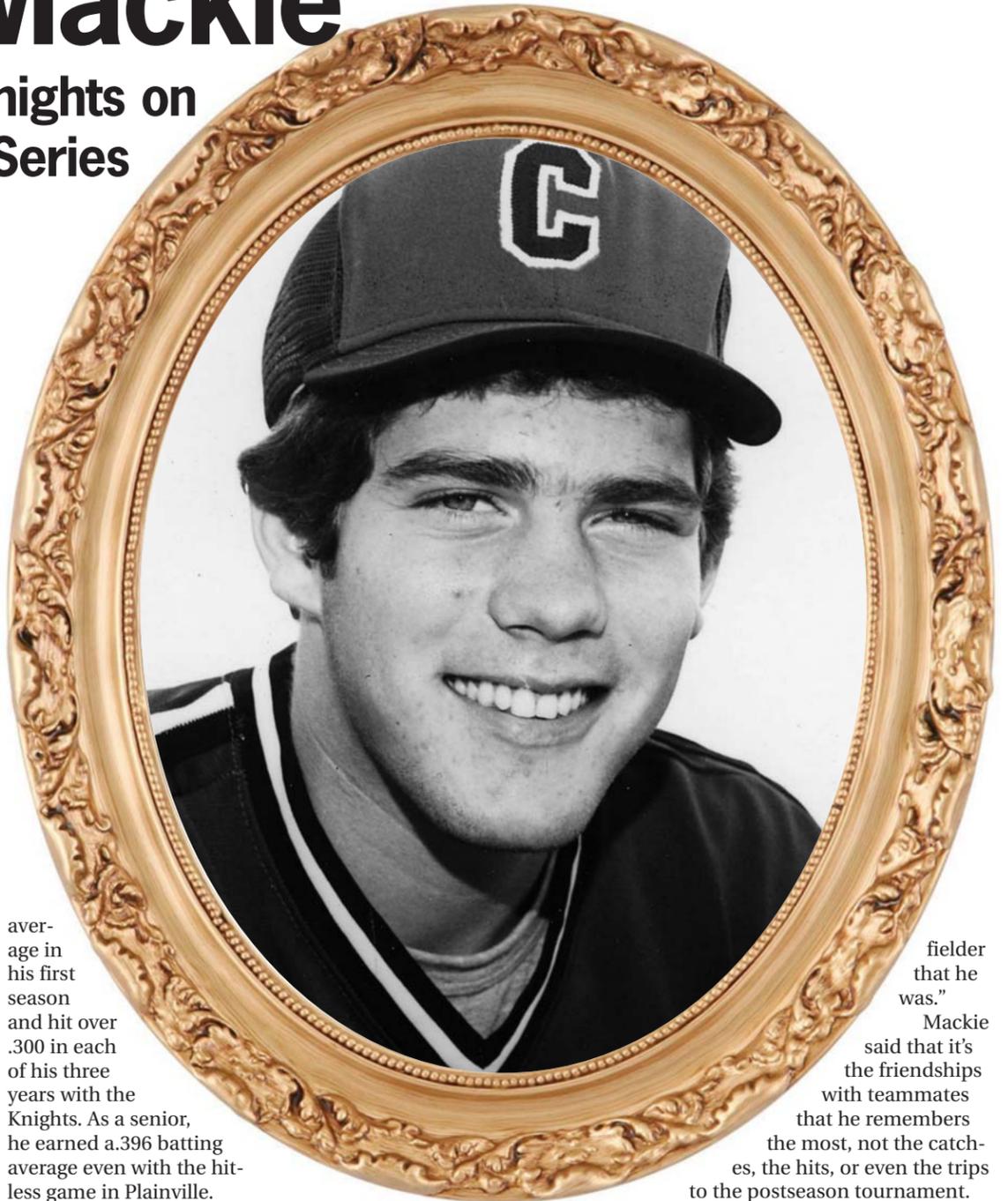
best.

"He was a hell of a player. There's no question," said Fontana. "He was probably the best fielding outfielder that I've ever seen in high school. Could he hit? Yes, he could hit, but when you saw him play ball in the outfield he was extra special."

Mackie didn't come up through the Southington little leagues. He didn't graduate from local sports camps and clinics, but when he moved from Massachusetts at the beginning of his freshman year, it was no accident that his family landed on Southington's doorstep. Baseball was Mackie's love, and his family knew about Southington's strong tradition.

"It seemed like a nice, suburban town—kind of similar to what I came from," he said. "My dad was kind of picky about where he wanted to move, and he moved to Southington by design. He heard good things about youth sports and high school sports—baseball in particular—because I was so interested in it."

It didn't take long for Mackie to blend right in. At DePaolo Junior High School, he worked his way into the lineup as a pitcher before an arm injury drove him away from the mound. He settled into the outfield and never looked back. Mackie's bat earned him notice the following year at the high school when he worked his way into the starting lineup as a sophomore. He earned a .338



average in his first season and hit over .300 in each of his three years with the Knights. As a senior, he earned a .396 batting average even with the hitless game in Plainville. Still, it was in the outfield that Mackie really turned heads. He moved at the crack of the bat. He slipped effortlessly into gaps. He'd turn singles into outs with his arm, and Fontana began to roll out special plays to take advantage of his superstar fielder.

"He could anticipate the ball better than anybody else," Fontana said. "We used to pull him in at right field because, if someone hit a bullet to him behind second base, he would take it on the hop and fire it to first. We'd get force outs on base hits to right field. He was unbelievable. He didn't have a lot of speed, but the ball would get hit to the gap and there was Scott Mackie to catch it."

That's why the scout was unfazed by a bad day at the plate. Mackie could hurt a team just as much by his fielding as his hitting, but Mackie still wasn't convinced he could play at the next level.

He had earned just about every honor that's available to high school players. He was all-conference, all-state, and all-American. He was the Knights' leading hitter for two straight seasons, a captain, and the team MVP as a senior, but Mackie was all set to hang up his mitt at the end of his high school career.

It took a concerted effort by his father and his high school coach to get Mackie to accept the scholarship to play with the Gamecocks. He was already committed to attend UConn where he was set to room with a high school friend. He was looking forward to taking short road trips to

visit his high school girlfriend (now his wife) on the weekends, so South Carolina seemed like a distant dream.

"I wasn't convinced that I was a major division one material. I wasn't that confident that I could even compete," he said. "They won the World Series the year before, so it was a top-notch program. When I got there, it was a little intimidating, but it didn't take me long to settle in and get to know a couple of guys. In short order, it was just baseball. It was a much nicer place to play with a lot of enthusiasm around it, but once you start playing and getting into the groove it was the same thing as the year before. It was just a new bunch of guys."

In high school, Mackie held his own with future major league players like Rob Dibble and Mike Raczka. In college, he held his own when his team faced future professionals like Rafael Palmiero and Will Clark. In his first year, Mackie was one of four freshman to figure prominently on a team that returned to the College World Series. In his senior season, he captained another team into the college playoffs.

He lettered four times. Twice, he batted over .300 with 152 hits and 84 RBI over four seasons. He was named to the conference all-tournament team as a senior and went on to earn NCAA all-tournament honors in the East in 1985.

"Every year, ESPN would open the next World Series coverage by showing catches that he made the year before," said Fontana. "That's the kind of out-

fielder that he was."

Mackie said that it's the friendships with teammates that he remembers

the most, not the catches, the hits, or even the trips to the postseason tournament. That's why he wasn't fazed when nobody drafted him onto a major league roster after graduation. Mackie had already proved everything that he wanted to prove.

"I want to be remembered as somebody that always tried his best and hustled," he said. "Those are some of the basic lessons that my dad taught me. Whether I was having a good game or a bad game, I want to be remembered as somebody that stayed focused and did the best that I could until the game was over. If we won, great. If we lost, great. There was always tomorrow."

Mackie might have had no trouble walking away from the game, but locals can't seem to forget their prized outfielder. In 1989, Mackie was inducted into the Southington High School Baseball Hall of Fame. This spring, officials from the Southington Sports Hall of Fame announced that Mackie would be inducted into the local sports hall of fame, too.

It's no shock to fans, but Mackie still seems to get surprised by that attention.

"It's a great honor. I look at these things as a nice way to be remembered," he said. "The things that meant the most to me was my dad's role and the friendships I made. In a way, it was my dad that played a very prominent role in my development as a player and a person. It gives me pride to be able to share stuff like this with him."

On Thursday, Nov. 14, Mackie was honored in an induction ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.



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Inside the Numbers

SHS Baseball

- Inducted into the Southington High School Baseball Hall of Fame (1989)
- 3 years varsity (1979, 1980, 1981)
 - Captain (1981)
 - All American (1981)
 - All-State (1981)
 - All Conference (1981)
 - Team MVP (1981)
- Senior All-Star Game (1981)
- Leading hitter 2 years (1980, 1981).
 - .338 batting average (1979)
 - .309 batting average (1980)
 - .396 batting average (1981)
- Career stats: 96 hits, 83 RBI, 16 assists.

University of South Carolina

- 4 Letters (1982-1985)
- College World Series (1982, 1985)
- NCAA All-Tournament team (1985)
- Metro All-Tournament team (1985)

COLLEGE STATISTICS

Year	AVG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI
1982	.208	48	3	10	3	0	0	5
1983	.304	92	20	28	6	1	3	15
1984	.265	219	29	58	10	0	2	32
1985	.329	170	35	56	12	1	4	32
Career	.287	529	87	152	31	2	9	84