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Conlan Has Frewsburg Talking Proud

FREWSBURG - "Frewsburg should borrow the phrase, 'We're talking proud,'" Bob Payne said.

And so it did.

About 500 people packed the Frewsburg Central School auditorium, Saturday night, to pay tribute to one of their native sons, Shane Conlan, an All-American linebacker at Penn State University, on "Shane Conlan Day."

Payne, chairman of the "Shane Conlan Day" committee, was the first of a long line of friends, coaches and political dignitaries who took to the podium to honor Conlan, a 1982 graduate of FCS.

Proclamations were read, plaques presented and stories told. And old No. 34 -- Conlan's high school football jersey -- was retired, a first at the school.

"This jersey is going to be retired and put in the trophy case." said Frewsburg Football Coach Tom Sharp. "No one, henceforth, will wear this number.

"This is really a tribute to Shane, primarily. But he would be a little upset if I didn't say it was a tribute not only to him, but also to his teammates.

"To me, for a high school athlete, it's probably the highest accolade and recognition."

But that wasn't the only accolade bestowed on Conlan this night.

*Don Hitchcock, commander-in-chief of the Samuel Derby American Legion Post, presented a plaque - a Shane Conlan Athletic Award - to Frewsburg Athletic Director Bill Hair, who was representing the school. Each year, a name will be added to the plaque with the qualifications for the award being established by Conlan himself.

*Sharp, Hair and Frewsburg Basketball Coach Mike Mangano presented a plaque/clock to Conlan on behalf of the school.

*Father Joe Carlo of Our Lady of Victory Church presented a plaque/clock to Conlan's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Conlan. "I was always raised if you honor the son, you honor the parents," Carlo said.

*Proclamations honoring Conlan were read by: Chautauqua County District 8 Legislator Jackie Jackson, who was representing county Executive John Glenzer; Frewsburg School Superintendent Ralph Marra, who was representing the Frewsburg Board of Education; and Town of Carroll Supervisor Frank Engblom, who was representing the town board.

Then there were the personal remembrances, those that mean more than any plaque or piece of paper.

"I think we all realize Shane's athletic ability," Sharp said. "On the other side -- which some people might not realize -- is the type of person he is. He's the type of kid who has a positive effect on everything he touches and it's contagious."

Mangano recalled a basketball game in Conlan's sophomore year in which Conlan caught up to a Silver Creek player, who was seemingly in the clear for an uncontested layup, and blocked the shot. After the game, Mangano said, Black Knights' Coach Curt Raymond pulled Mangano and Conlan aside and said to the latter, "If you keep your head, you will be one of the best athletes in Western New York and the state."

And, noted Mangano, "He kept his head."

Jon Burch, a classmate and teammate of Conlan's at FCS, represented the students.

"I could tell some stories about how I knocked him around during practices, but I don't have any," Burch said with a smile.

"Every year you could see him building and building... and his neck size got bigger and bigger, but I'm happy to say his head didn't get any bigger."

"He has a lot of ability, but he's made the most out of his ability."

Sponsoring the program and the reception that followed in the school cafeteria were the Samuel Derby American Legion Post, the Frewsburg Sports Boosters and the Parent-Student-Teacher Association.

Frewsburg High School Principal Robert Woodard was the master of ceremonies.