



ELIZABETH FORWARD SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Brian Holton speaks to members of the Elizabeth Forward Baseball and Softball teams on Sept. 27.

From Wylie Field to the Major Leagues, alum Brian Holton says he's never forgotten where he came from

Holton is one of five inductees to join Elizabeth Forward Hall of Fame in Sept. 28 ceremony

September 27, 2024: ELIZABETH, Pa. — If you ask most Major League Baseball players what his most precious memory is, he'd likely say winning the World Series, if he was fortunate enough to have done so.

Elizabeth Forward alum Brian Holton is one of those fortunate players. However, he was not only a member of a World Series winning team. He played for one of the most iconic World Series teams in the history of baseball – the 1988 Los Angeles Dodgers. And while he loved that win, it's not his most cherished memory.

That moment would come in Game Five of the Division Finals against the New York Mets. In Game 3, the Dodgers regular closer, Jay Howell, was suspended for putting pine tar on the ball to make it harder to hit.

“The Mets never had any luck hitting off of me,” Holton said prior to speaking with EF’s baseball and softball teams. “(Dodgers Manager) Tommy Lasorda came to me that day and said, ‘You’re my guy tonight.’”

“I pitch one-and-a-third innings and get the save. After, Tommy runs out and grabs me around the neck and said, ‘I knew you could do it, bub!’ That’s my most cherished memory of all my time playing professional baseball. Tommy Lasorda counted on and believed in me. He gave me my dream.”



Tommy Lasorda celebrates with Brian Holton after Holton’s save during Game 5 of the 1988 League Championship.

That dream started in this very school district more than fifty years ago. Holton was a starter on the 1976 WPIAL championship team, the district’s first. Elizabeth Forward, he says, is where he learned his work ethic and positive attitude.

“At Elizabeth Forward, they taught me to be humble,” Holton says. “I learned here that if you work hard, sacrifice and never give up, you can achieve your dream.”

Holton was the Dodgers’ first-round pick in the 1977 MLB winter draft. He had gone to a Dodgers tryout in West Virginia in 1977 and a scout told him he should look into going to a Junior College for a little more seasoning. He received a scholarship to go to Louisburg school in North Carolina where he played fall ball. He was drafted and signed by the team in December. He wouldn’t hit the Major Leagues until 1985.

Holton shared his story with the varsity squads, took questions and even helped a player with his grip on his two-seam fastball. It was the first time in more than three decades that Holton had come back to the place where it all started. He was also candid about his post-career issues with addictions to alcohol and pain pills, which had left over from several injuries.

“I never did any of that stuff when I was playing,” Holton said. “But after my career was over, I was bored. You can only paint the garage so many times. That’s when I started abusing

pain pills and alcohol. I got clean and sober and if there's one piece of advice I'd give, it would be, don't give in to the pressure of these things. Talk to someone about it; a lot of people are here for you. Reach out and ask for help."

Finally, Holton was asked about EF's 1976 WPIAL Championship. In those days, there weren't different classes based on school size. All the best teams in the area fought for one title. EF faced off against Springdale and won, 4-3. Reminiscing with other ballplayers brought a smile to his face.

"Springdale was so cocky. They felt like we were just a bunch of hillbilles that couldn't play ball. "But, man, we kicked their butts!"

This years Hall of Fame class will be honored at the Sept. 27 football game and in an induction ceremony on Sept. 28.

The other inductees are:

Joseph Ignatius, Class of 1973

During his 39-year tenure with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense, Joseph successfully managed various projects in the Baltimore District and coordinated several emergency response efforts, including 9/11 and major flood control projects. Joseph's outstanding character and achievements will endure as a cherished part of our community. We are honored to celebrate his memory. He is being honored posthumously.

Dotti Gamble Bechtol, Class of 1971. Dotti launched her career in law, and through her diligence, intellect, and perseverance, rapidly emerged as a key leader at Levinson Steel. Following outstanding success, Dotti and her husband John established their own law firm in Pittsburgh. Dotti is a dedicated philanthropist and influential figure in numerous Pittsburgh organizations.

Eugene Curcio, Class of 1968

Eugene's interest in accounting progressed into a variety of roles, and eventually landed him in healthcare management. He has had a robust and prosperous career, holding management positions in several healthcare organizations. Eugene has never been one to sit idle for long, even in retirement. He has obtained his pilot's license, remained active in the community, and owned several businesses over the years.

Chris Brussalis, Class of 1982

Chris has had a successful career in education, leading to his current role as the ninth President of Point Park University in Pittsburgh. His leadership skills exhibited during his days at EF have continued over the years earning Chris numerous awards and distinguished honors in the Pittsburgh community