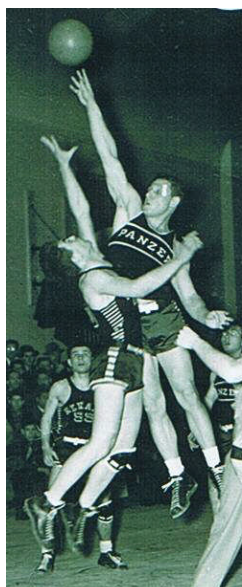


SEYMOUR 'Swede' MASIN

Class of June 1938

Newark sports icon

By Matthew J. Dowling, Star-Ledger



The athletic accomplishments of Seymour 'Swede' Masin have long been elevated to legendary status in Newark sports lore and led novelist Philip Roth to base a character in a Pulitzer Prize-winning book on *'The Swede.'*

The two Weequahic High School graduates never met before *'American Pastoral'* was published in 1997 since they attended the Newark school more than a decade apart. *'Until he got the book, he didn't believe it,'* Swede's daughter, Patty, said. *'It was very exciting for him and for all of us.'*

Still, Swede took the unexpected fame with the same humility that marked his outstanding sports career as a young man some six decades earlier at Weequahic, where he starred in basketball, track and football. *'He was a truly great high school and college athlete,'* said Sid Dorfman, a Star-Ledger columnist who met regularly with Swede to talk sports. *'You had to tell him how good he was because he wouldn't. We had to drag it out of him.'*

Swede was named to the Star-Ledger's top 50 athletes of the century as well as the all-decade basketball team of the 1930s. He is widely considered one of the greatest athletes in Newark history. With little training in track and field at age 14, Swede put the 8-pound shot 57 feet, 6 inches - a record that stood for 45 years. As he matured, he became an imposing figure by the sports standards of the 1930s and 1940s at 6 feet, 1 inch tall and 200 pounds.

He continued to build his legacy when he attended Panzer College, which is now a part of Montclair State University. He captained the basketball, soccer and track teams at Panzer. Swede led the basketball team to a 44-victory streak (longest in the country at that time) including wins over powerhouse teams like New York University and Long Island University.

Jerry Izenberg, longtime Star-Ledger sports columnist, said New York teams suddenly began refusing to schedule games against the upstart Panzers. And Swede's prowess in track and field earned him a state shot put and discus championship and a silver medal in the discus at the Penn

Relays. He was also a Coaches All-American Soccer Player. *'For him to dominate in everything was amazing,'* Izenberg said. *'He was the guy that the entire city of Newark knew. He was so complete, he had the physical strength to match his talent.'*



Swede served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II, stationed on a minesweeper in the Mediterranean. When he returned from the war, he resumed his sports career by playing professional basketball for the Newark Bobcats in the American Basketball League, a precursor to the NBA.



His love of sports never waned during the 49 years he spent as a liquor salesman, primarily working for Gordon Bass and Co. in Union. Swede attended any community sporting event he could find and transferred his passion for athletics to his children.



'Our whole social life was going to sporting events,' said Patty Masin, who was a physical education teacher at Elizabeth High School. *'He just loved sports and loved kids.'*

It wasn't until Patty Masin uncovered a scrapbook documenting Swede's achievements in high school and college that she understood the acclaim that followed his sports career. *'He was just a powerful person, so loved and respected by everyone,'* Patty Masin said.

'I really treasured his friendship,' said Les Fein, who got to know Swede through their regular lunch meetings with Dorfman to talk sports. *'He was an incredibly warm, soft and wonderful individual for his legendary prowess as a big strong man. He was like a gentle giant.'*

Swede had the opportunity to meet Roth when the author was a featured speaker at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center two years after *'The Swede'* character won Roth so much acclaim. *'You put me on the map,'* Swede told Roth, according to an account published in The Star-Ledger at the time. *'You put me on the map,'* Roth replied. Most recently, his son, Bob, has written a book about his life.

In addition to Patty and Bob, Swede had another daughter Dale Raugas, a son Doug, and six grandchildren.

In his honor, after he passed away in 2006, the WHS Alumni Association established the Seymour "Swede" Masin Memorial Scholarship Fund.