

Inducted 1987

NEW YORK STATE

(PITCHER)

HORSESHOE PITCHING NAME OR PITCH RECOMMENDATION

NAME OF PURPOSED CANDIDATE JOHN RUSTON  
ADDRESS OF CANDIDATE OR REPRESENTATIVE  
STREET 4278 BARNSIDE LANE  
CITY OR TOWN CLAY NEW YORK ZIP 13041  
TELEPHONE 652-6295

BORN: APRIL 4, 1937 DIED: \_\_\_\_\_ AGE: 47  
MARITAL STATUS: MARRIED SPOUSE'S NAME JUDY

CHILDREN/AGE:  
CATHY, 24, MARLA, 20, JANICE, 12

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: LENGTH OF TRAINING AND/OR EXPERIENCE: NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:  
AT LEAST (5) FIVE YEARS IN STATE ASSOCIATION: (PLAYER AND PROMOTER)

1955-1963 - CLASS "A" PARTICIPANT - KIRK PARK, SYR. N.Y.  
1963-1973 - CITY OF SYRACUSE AND ONON. COUNTY  
CLASS "A" CHAMPION (ONLY YEARS HELD) - KIRK PARK - LAFAYETTE LANES,  
(PITCHED 70-75%) (SYR. N.Y.) LAFAYETTE, N.Y.

1966 - NY STATE CLASS B - 2ND PLACE - LOCKPORT, N.Y.  
1967 - NY STATE TOURNAMENT - CLASS A PLAYER - HORNELL, N.Y.

PURPOSED BY: P. J. O'NEER - H. O. R. S. E. S. HOE CLUB  
ADDRESS OF SPONSOR (DAVID R. HARNDEN)  
STREET 3971 HOWLETT HILL RD.  
CITY OR TOWN SYRACUSE NY ZIP 13215  
TELEPHONE 488-3910

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CROSS-STATE RELATIVE OF CANDIDATE:  
MRS. MARLEAH MOORE - KENWOOD, CAL. (MOTHER)

COPIES OF THIS FORM TO: → Park Division, 2025 Blair St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850  
Hockey Section, 20 Sherwood St., Syracuse, N.Y. 13204  
Park Division, 645 Olive St., Fairport, N.Y. 14078  
Hockey Section, 10 Main St., Canton, N.Y. 13617  
(Use additional paper for more information and SIGNATURE REQUIRED)

1968 - NY STATE TOURNAMENT - CLASS A HIGH QUALIFIER - 8TH PLACE  
NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y.

1970 - EASTERN NATIONAL TOURNAMENT - CLASS A - 8TH PLACE  
QUALIFIED AT COURTS WITH 88% - ERIE, PA.

1971 - NY STATE TOURNAMENT - CLASS A - 2ND PLACE - 76%  
NY STATE FAIRGROUNDS - SYRACUSE, N.Y. →

1974 - World Tournament - Class B - 6th Place Finish  
Keene, New Hampshire  
1984 - Awarded National Top Ten Pitcher's Patch  
High Point Game - 50 shoe Count-All Games  
7th in Nation (Tied) - 132.  
High Season Point Average - 50 Shoe Count-All Games  
8th in Nation - 114.  
Pioneer Horseshoe Club - League Play  
NY State Fairgrounds - Syr. N. Y.

PROMOTER

1963-1973 - Tournament Organizer - City-County Tournaments  
Kirk Park - Syracuse, N. Y.  
Also, kept statistics several years.

1968 - Supervision and construction of four lighted clay courts  
Lafayette Lanes - Lafayette, N. Y.  
Included considerable landscaping with only a skelton crew.

1969-1971 - New York State Tournament Director  
(President Lafayette Horseshoe Club)  
Tournaments held at NY State Fairgrounds - Syracuse, N. Y.  
Included construction of courts, finding and hauling of clay  
to Fair site, and over-all running of tournament - (3yrs.)  
We had record number of participants and prize lists for  
State Tournaments held through 1971.

1983-1985 - Supervised and led construction of ten indoor clay courts  
NY State Fairgrounds - (Pioneer Horseshoe Club voted to  
re-locate to Fairgrounds from Mattydale VFW)  
Responsible for obtaining building for housing of courts.  
Single-handily got operation off the ground, and has  
co-ordinated work details over a two-year period.  
He has been the driving force behind the continuing  
improvement of the entire lay-out.

1983-1985 - Pioneer Horseshoe Club President  
NY State Fairgrounds - Syracuse, N. Y.  
Under his leadership membership has swollen from 25 to 80.  
Has delegated responsibility to key members, and helped to  
elect hardworking officers to bring about the smooth operation  
of the Club.  
Mainly responsilbe for the rebirth of Horseshoes in the  
Syracuse area.

During the summers of 1962 and 1963, John shortened his step, added height to his delivery and developed that high-lofted  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pitch which became his trademark. Under the watchful eye of old pro Wes LaFleur, the summer of 1963 marked the beginning of the Ruston Horseshoe Era. John unleashed that lofted pitch at all local comers and except for George, Tony and Gus Krause, blew away the opposition with relative ease. He put on an awesome display of ringer power which left many good pitchers talking to themselves. During the Ruston years, John averaged between 70 and 75% for most all tournaments held locally, including 80 and some 90% games!

It was during these years that he developed his dual role as a tournament organizer and pitcher. John and I and a few others organized the local tournaments in this time span. We qualified and seeded pitchers, dug pits, kept scores and statistics for most tournaments. John was the one who got the ball rolling and kept it going for all contests. This was the outstanding leadership which would again surface as NY State Tournament Director in 1969-1971, and also as League President 1983-1985.

John, also, participated against the top pitchers at the State and National level during this time span. He pitched better than 75% against the likes of Hohl, Kuchinski, Zadroga, and Maddox among others in the Eastern National in 1970. He missed winning the NY State title in 1971, losing to Steinfeldt by the slim margin of 8pts. while pitching 76%! He defeated former Champs Ginger Natale and Steve Fennechia both at the top of their games, in eye-popping, head-to-head matches. His head to head duals with 1972 State Champion Al Stockholm were usually hard fought and right down to the wire. John and Al, also, met in the Eastern National in 1972 when both boys were really smoking ringers on the stake. They had a very tight game going when John's pitching arm gave out midway through the contest. This unfortunate happening spelled a continuing arm problem for John which would finally lead to an operation.

March 22, 1985

Gentlemen:

I have known John Ruston since 1960, when we first met while pitching horseshoes at Kirk Park in the City of Syracuse. I was a beginner at that time and he was already an up and coming player, pitching between 50 and 60%. In that 25 Year-span from 1960 to the present, John has been the driving force in Horseshoes both locally and statewide. His impact has been twofold: as a Horseshoe Pitcher and Horseshoe Promoter. In my mind, it would be unthinkable to single him out for just one of these accomplishments without also including the other.

The foremost illustration of this would be John's dual role as NY State Tournament Director from 1969-1971 and Class A - 2nd Place finisher to Carl Steinfeldt in 1971. John and I and a mere handful of workers from our Lafayette Horseshoe Club with statistical help from Don Gates and Betty Steinfeldt, organized and put on the NY State Tournament from 1969-1971. However, those of you who witnessed Big John at the top of his game during those years would remember him as being just an eye blink away from the great players of our era. The thrilling match between Carl and John for the NY State Championship with Steinfeldt winning a close one 50-42, was a game to remember for all time. John, also fired a 93% game at Ed Lockwood, causing the little fellow to shake his head in amazement!

John seemed destined for stardom even in those early years at Kirk Park. He continually qualified for the Class A tournaments even though his average in the 1950's was below 50%. In those years, John got his baptism under fire against the likes of Hall of Famers George LaRose and Tony Sauro. These two were awesome players in their won right and monopolized A Class pitching in this area for nearly 30 years. John took his lumps in those tournaments in the 1950's and this layed the foundation for his development as a hard-nosed pitcher in later years. Lesser individuals would have given up but John hung in there against the areas best and worked hard to improve his Horseshoe game.

It is for these reasons, that I believe, my good friend,  
the Big left-hander, belongs in the State Horseshoe Hall of Fame!

Yours in Horseshoes,

*David R. Harnden*

David R. Harnden

League Director

Pioneer Horseshoe Club

*Alec W. LaRock*  
*HARRY L. DUNBAR*  
*TONY SAURO*

*Alec W. LaRock*  
*HARRY L. Dunbar*  
*Tony Sauro*



HORSFESHOE KINGS. John Ruston, left, 756 South Ave. is congratulated after retiring the County Horseshoe permanent trophy with his third championship at Kirk Park. Congratulating Ruston for his 50-47 win over Tony Sauro in the final is Chester Wilk, 608 Otisco St. the B-Class champ. Wilk beat Dick Grabowski, 50-45 in the final.

1966

To think that he Accomplished all of this despite the fact that he underwent a back operation for a ruptured disc in 1968 and the eventual operation on his left arm in 1972, is truly an amazing feat! His arm operation was not totally successful and left it with limited flexibility. This greatly effected his pitching and caused a marked decline in his performances in the mid to late 1970's. This was a great blow to a man who had become a pitching perfectionist, and as fine a student of horseshoes as the game has known. As many of you know, John changed turns to the 1(3/4) which was foreign to him, often producing bewildering results. John, again hung in there, when most would have packed it in, losing to men he had no business losing to, and weathered the storm.

In the 1980's, John has shown signs of returning to the form which many of us have seen in the past. He has gone back to the 1 1/2 and with new found confidence, He's again setting his sights on the top pitchers of the times. He's accomplishing this while, also, being the driving force behind the organization of the Pioneer Horseshoe Club at the State Fairgrounds. He has almost single-handily initiated the construction of ten new indoor clay courts and organized a growing, highly successful Club. I'm convinced that without his leadership horseshoe pitching would have remained at a stagnant level in Syracuse for years.

What has made John a unique individual in the horseshoe game, is that he has been willing to sacrifice his time to organize and promote horseshoes while being a top A Class pitcher. His role as a teacher of fundamentals is well known among league members. For those who wish to work hard to improve their games, John has often taken the time to instruct them in the key points of the game. Over the years, he has helped to completely turn the games around for several individuals. It's a rarity to see a top pitcher of John's caliber, sacrifice his time and talent for the promotion of the game.