

Talent and character highlight inductions into the Campolindo Football Hall of Fame



Photo Jon Kingdon

From left: Andrew Zolintakis, Sterling Strother, Luke Crossley, Coach Kevin Macy, and Alex Baldwin

By Jon Kingdon

The Campolindo football program on May 15 held its 15th Hall of Fame induction ceremony. It was an event that celebrated the program, the staff, the history and four players, Luke Crossley (2006-2008), Andrew Zolintakis (2011-2013), Sterling Strother (2013-2015) and J.V. (John-Vincent) Baldwin (2013-2014).

The evening began with a short film about Baldwin who passed away this past year from cancer, titled "A Life Well Lived" which presented a young man of character from the very beginning. The comments by his friends and teammates in the film bespoke of the influence he had with them: "Unchallenged leader," "Everything that's good about Campo," "Best teammate any of us every had," "A friend to everybody on the team."

Representing J.V. Baldwin at the ceremony was his brother, Alex. "J.V. was always 100% in, never missing a practice or a game," Alex said. "He would come in early and stay late and would talk with every coach."

Coach Macy was witness to the growth Baldwin made in his commitment to be the best player that he could be. "At one point, J.V. went into the weight room and reinvented himself, where he made himself a man. He was always the first one in and the last one out of the weight room."

In Baldwin's two seasons as a linebacker, Campolindo won the state championship and had a combined record of 27-1. But he was far more than that for Macy. "J.V. was with me every day assisting in any way that he could. Everyone saw him as our captain because of everything he did," Macy said.

"J.V. went on to the University of Arizona because he wanted to be involved with a big football program in any way that he could, and by his senior year, he had earned a full scholarship," Alex said.

After graduation, Baldwin went on to be a wildland firefighter and following his passing, his fellow firemen established the JV "Bubby" Baldwin Service & Conservation Foundation, whose mission is to honor and celebrate Baldwin, supporting organizations that Baldwin cared deeply about, advancing pediatric cancer research, assisting the nation's veterans and first responders, and supporting youth athletics and education.

For Coach Macy, the possessor of many awards and photos, there is one that he values most, the photo taken after the 2013 championship game: "After our championship, we wanted to get a group picture, but we had no plan for it, so we were scrambling to get everyone together on the field. After I saw the picture, right next to me kneeling in front of me was

J.V., the one person that I was closest to in my coaching career and that's the most cherished picture I have in one of the most cherished moments of my life. Thank God J.V. was the one smart enough to know to be right by my side and that's the gift that he gave me."

Luke Crossley

To everyone who coached or played with Luke Crossley, he was a talented player, and in the end, a real character. Upon learning of his induction into the Hall of Fame, Crossley's first reaction was: "Why? There were so many other players on my team that deserved it more than me. I was only good because of what the coaches told me to do."

Prior to college, Crossley always found places to work in many service industries working at the Moraga Tennis and Swim club, caddying, bussing in restaurants, working as a landscaper and bartending at the American Kitchen in Lafayette. "Luke was one of those guys that when the wind blew, he just went that way," Macy said.

As a player, Crossley brought the same number of varied skills but was singularly focused on the team. "Luke was a great player," Macy said. "He did it all as a running back, wide receiver and defensive. He was a mister do-it-all. When he came up as a sophomore in a rough year, he established himself quickly on the varsity."

Crossley made it a point to thank his family and the Campolindo football team. "You get born with two lottery tickets in life: where you're raised and who raised you and I won both of those lottery tickets – and I won a few others with my coaches and my team."

At Cal State Chico, Crossley vastly expanded his horizons by majoring in International Relations and Affairs and spent a year abroad studying at the Hague University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. "I was lucky enough to be a captain at Campo and that really helped me to gain that confidence to do things like live in a foreign country for a year," Crossley said.

"After college, I had some 'grown up' jobs and that wasn't really for me, so I went back to serving in restaurants and that really was my niche." And for Crossley it all came back to Moraga. To the amusement of the audience, Crossley shared how he felt he was perceived: "A lot of my friends said, 'Luke, you're not going to amount to much' and look at me now. I'm a bartender and assistant general manager at Moraga's finest establishment, The Canyon Club Brewery."

Crossley also shared how he was a bone marrow donor and encouraged others ages 18-40 to sign up through Be the Match Foundation. "Please, please, please do. At the end of the day, you can save a life."

Sterling Strother

Upon hearing Luke Crossley's story about donating bone marrow, Sterling Strother shared a similar story: "I wasn't expecting his story about Be the Match and I also was able to donate bone marrow as a senior in college. It's truly a life changing opportunity for anyone able to donate and a life extending opportunity for the recipients."

Strother had unparalleled success on the field and in the classroom. In his three years as the right tackle on the varsity, he was all state, won a state championship (2014) and his teams had a combined 41-3 record. He was also a top basketball player whose teams went 87-36 in his four years, along with being named an NCS scholar-athlete four straight years. Strother went on to Yale where he was a four-year starter, playing tackle and center and was named all-IVY his last three years.

Though he weighed 315 pounds when he played at Yale, Strother showed up at a relatively svelte 240 pounds and spoke of his reaction when he heard he was to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. "It really floored me and I'm extremely grateful," Strother said. It's really a reflection of our whole class because there are 13 of us that have been inducted that were on the state championship team and none of us would have been successful without one of those 12 guys. It's more a reflection of them than any one person by a long shot."

Strother is currently working for The McChrystal Group in Alexandria. "I work in management and leadership consulting with McChrystal. We work with clients and executive teams on organizational improvement and all through the lens of leadership and the impact that leaders have on their teams and standard operations strategy communications work. It's a lot of fun."

Strother then shared with

the current team what he hoped they would take away from playing for Coach Macy: "You don't need to love the x's and o's or lighting up an opponent. The only thing you need to love is the guy on your left and your right and the relationships that you're going to hold onto for the rest of your life, so it doesn't matter how much you love football in and of itself, love all the things that come with it, and you'll never regret a day playing for Campo."

Andrew Zolintakis

Andrew Zolintakis was another two-sport player for Campolindo. A three-year letterman and two-year starter at quarterback, the 2011-2012-2013 teams had a combined record of 35-4. Over that period, Zolintakis threw 51

touchdowns and only 11 interceptions. In his two years on the varsity basketball team, their combined record was 45-17.

The induction to the Hall of Fame really struck home for Zolintakis. "I'm just really happy and honored to be named to the Hall of Fame," Zolintakis said. "The group of guys that I'm being inducted with are people that I've looked up to for a long time and it means the world to me."

Zolintakis had his own take on how it was to play for Kevin Macy. "The unique thing about Coach Macy is that he knows how to get the best out of each player, and he knows how to bring the team along so that you're peaking at the end of the season," Zolintakis said.

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