



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Finger Lakes Region Can Take Pride in Accomplishments of Coaches Coughlin and Boenheim

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO March 2, 2012

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Throughout my life, I have been very proud to have been born and raised in the Finger Lakes Region. Growing up here and educated in our local schools, I have always held a deeply-felt pride in our community. That pride only intensified after graduating high school, and attending two outstanding universities right here in our region- Cornell and Syracuse.

Throughout both high school and college, many of the most important lessons I learned didn't take place in the classroom, but on the football, baseball and

lacrosse fields and basketball courts of local schools like Mynderse, Waterloo, Geneva, Auburn, Clyde-Savannah and Lyons. The values I learned on the playing field are values I have carried with me my entire life- hard work, commitment, perseverance and teamwork.

The athletics programs of the Wayne-Finger Lakes school system have a long and proud tradition of shaping the lives of our youth, and I have never been so proud of that tradition as I have been over the past few weeks.

That is because there is not likely to ever be another high school athletic conference in the entire Nation that can claim as alumni both the head coach of a Super Bowl Champion NFL team and the head coach of a top-ranked Division I basketball team!

By now, most readers will know I'm referring to the Super Bowl Champion New York Giants' Head Coach Tom Coughlin, Waterloo High School Class of 1964, and Syracuse University Men's Basketball Head Coach Jim Boeheim, Lyons High School Class of 1962.

I've lived in our region long enough to remember seeing Tom Coughlin score touchdowns and score baskets for Waterloo High School. In fact, Tom still holds the school's single season touchdown record of 19. I also remember watching Jim Boeheim play basketball. Enshrined in the National Basketball Hall of Fame for his outstanding coaching record at Syracuse University, we should also remember Jim as the leading scorer in the Wayne-Finger Lakes Basketball League, where he twice led his school, Lyons, to win the League's Championship.

Both men were born and raised in this region and stayed close to home during college, attending Syracuse University. They both continue to visit the area frequently and remain loyal to the communities that shaped their dedication and passion for the game. Tom Coughlin continues to support Waterloo by

awarding \$1,000-a-year scholarships to college-bound student athletes in each graduating class. Jim Boeheim turned down numerous offers to coach at larger colleges for more money, choosing to remain at Syracuse and transform the basketball program there into one of the most successful in the Nation. Jim and his wife Julie also give countless hours of their time, energy and financial support to many significant charitable endeavors throughout Central New York.

This level of dedication, forged on school basketball courts and football fields right here in our region, is what led Jim Boeheim to the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame and Tom Coughlin to capture two Super Bowl Championships. I also firmly agree with *Finger Lakes Times* editor Mike Cutillo that Tom Coughlin should be in the National Football Hall of Fame and hope his latest outstanding season leading the Giants to victory will ensure he receives this recognition. I look forward to honoring him later this month with a special New York State resolution I have authored commemorating his coaching career and Super Bowl success.

To be a coach at the level of Tom Coughlin or Jim Boeheim requires more than proficiency in athletics. It takes exceptional leadership and a commitment to excellence. It takes a tremendous work ethic, attention to detail and an ability to rise to meet any challenge as it comes. Most importantly, it requires determination to never give up no matter the odds. Our entire region can take great pride in what these two native sons have accomplished, and what life lessons they learned right here as high school athletes. We all should be proud of their examples in leadership, and I look forward to the achievements of future generations of student athletes from the Wayne-Finger Lakes region,

who are learning these important life lessons every day in their schools and in our communities.