Gene McCarthy
All Hallows ('74)

If you followed the NYC track & field scene in 1970's there's a good chance you've heard of him. If you've worn athletic footwear over the last 40 years, there's a good chance he had something to do with it. File this under "local boy makes good", today's spotlight is on Gene McCarthy of All Hallows ('74).

One of the CHSAA greats, Gene penned an article for the New York Times in 1979 titled "Chasing the Four Minute Mile Along the Streets of the Bronx". Among McCarthy's recollections, his first cross country race as an All Hallows freshman, his high school coach (Power Memorial Hall-of-Famer Mr. John Mulligan), his goal of a 4-minute mile and deciding on a college. A link to Gene's August 5, 1979 article is available at https://www.powermemorialtrack.com/articles-news-clips

Gene McCarthy's accomplishments are too numerous to mention here. Undefeated during the 1973 Cross Country season, he broke Matt Centrowitz' CHSAA record on Van Cortlandt Park's famed 2.5-mile course, clocking a sensational 12:23.8. He followed up having the league's fastest mile time (4:15.5) during the 1974 Indoor season by having the CHSAA's fastest Outdoor times at both the mile (4:13.1) and two-mile (9:04.8) distances. I read he lost only two individual races during his senior year at All Hallows. Both losses were in races with somebody named Mark Belger, who defeated him at the inaugural Millrose Games High School Invitational Mile and again at the Outdoor Eastern States Championship Mile.

Upon graduating from All Hallows, Gene attended another Bronx school, Fordham University, where he would become an NCAA Division I All-American.

After training with the legendary Marty Liquori in 1979, he was primed and ready to run faster than ever before, but a broken toe prevented a planned sub-4-minute mile attempt. Gene competed in the 1980 US Olympic Trials 1500-meter event but did not advance to the finals.

In 1980 Gene McCarthy did achieve his mile goal, albeit metrically. At the Manley Games in Kingston, Jamaica he ran a sparkling 3:42.06 for 1500-meters which converts to a 3:59.52 mile. Years later, in an interview with Brian Metzler of Podium Runner, he described it as "the race of my life". Leading with 600 meters to go, McCarthy finished third behind Steve Ovett of Great Britain and Filbert Bayi of Tanzania, both of whom held the world record at some point.
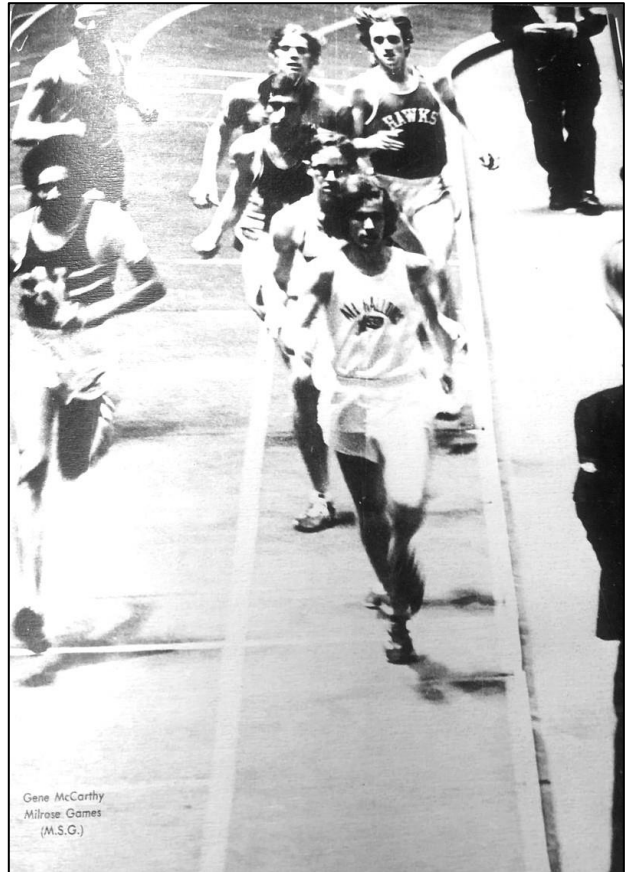
Gene McCarthy leads the Invitational High School Mile
1974 Millrose Games (Madison Square Garden)
Photo courtesy All Hallows High School
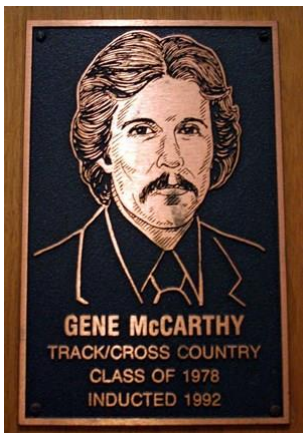
In 1992 he was inducted into Fordham University's Hall of Fame. All Hallows High School inducted him into their Hall of Fame in 2016.

In his post-competitive racing career, Gene worked for 40 years with top global brands across the athletic and outdoor industries. He has held executive level positions with top brands including ASICS, Under Armour, Nike, Reebok, Timberland, and Merrell. McCarthy has held seats on various boards including the Two Ten Foundation, Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), Footwear Distributors and Retailers Association (FDRA) and the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy. He currently is the Founder & Principle of Top League Advisory, which focuses on brand vision and strategy.