



John Rooney, C'60

Clearing the Bar

Mount alumni John and Patrick Rooney give back to move forward!

By **Donna Klinger and Joe Paciella, C'03, MBA'11**



JOHN J. AND PATRICK (PAT) J. ROONEY, BOTH C'60,

and legendary track & field coach Jim Deegan arrived at Mount St. Mary's about the same time when track was "a minor sport still in its infant stages," according to the 1957 Pridwin yearbook. The young coach and his student-athletes, including John Rooney, a pole vaulter, high jumper and hurdler, did everything themselves. As the program cleared the bar and achieved major sport status within John and Pat Rooney's four years at the Mount, Deegan and John Rooney even built the field's runway and landing pit. More than 60 years later, Deegan continues to coach as a volunteer, and the Rooneys are still ensuring that the athletic program has the resources needed to succeed.

John and his wife JoAnn and Patrick and his wife Sandy recently generously funded a centerpiece of the Forward! campaign: an athletic performance center with each couple contributing \$3 million. Located within the PNC Sports Complex, the Rooney Performance Center will be part of a project that includes a new campus recreation space, renovated Dillon Field House, new tennis courts, expanded sports medicine area and new Legends Concourse at the entrance to the ARCC.

"My college years were one of the high spots of my life. I was a young kid from Pittsburgh, and the Mount helped form me into the man I am," John Rooney says. "I'd like the current Mount athletes to have outstanding facilities that help them perform to the best of their abilities."

"I look back at my years at the Mount and have to say that those were the best years of my life!" exclaims Pat Rooney. "The camaraderie with tennis teammates and friendships developed lasted a lifetime. I am happy to see the tennis team doing well and continue to support the team."

"We're so thankful to John and JoAnn and Pat and Sandy Rooney for their generosity, investing in the Mount to provide our students with this incredible facility," says Mount St. Mary's University President Timothy E. Trainor, Ph.D.



Patrick Rooney, C'60

"These upgrades and enhancements will be instrumental in helping all our students meet or even exceed their athletic and fitness goals.

This new 26-30,000 square foot campus recreation space will feature four multipurpose courts for basketball, volleyball and tennis, expanding athletic opportunities for not only Division I student-athletes, but also for club and intramural sports, as well as unaffiliated student use.

These facilities would have been used by the Rooneys in their days at the Mount. Pat was a top contributor to the tennis team, showing steady improvement in his game each year. Both Pat and John sought exercise beyond their athletic teams by participating in intramural sports.

"On behalf of the Mount St. Mary's University Athletic Department, I want to express my profound gratitude to the Rooneys," says Mount St. Mary's Director of Athletics Lynne Robinson, C'79. "Thanks to their transformational gift, our student-athletes will be able to practice and compete with pride in a state-of-the-art facility. This gift is a real game-changer for Mount St. Mary's and will have a tremendous impact on all our programs for many years to come."

The track & field team, now with 120 student-athletes, will move into Dillon Field House, as the space will be transformed into the team's dedicated indoor practice facility with a resurfaced floor and new pits.

The Mount's Cross Country and Track & Field Head Coach Jay Phillips, C'05, S'08, expressed his appreciation. "I've been blessed to get to know John over the past few years, and his support for the program has been unprecedented," says Phillips. "We've won a couple titles recently, the first ones in two decades, and we simply don't make these kinds of jumps in our program without his generosity. I can't express enough the gratitude of our student-athletes, alumni and staff for the impact he's made."

As a token of the track & field program's gratitude for John Rooney's support, Phillips this winter presented him with a ring from the 2018 men's Northeast Conference championship. Rooney quipped that the ring is as big as a Super Bowl ring. He is easily able to make that comparison because he also possesses six Super Bowl rings from the success of his family's Pittsburgh Steelers.

As the Mount has attracted more student-athletes—300 in 2015 to 453 today and increasing to 600 at the project's completion—the need for improved sports medicine and athletic training capabilities has become a top priority in improving the athletic experience.

A new sports medicine and strength and conditioning facility will more than double the current space, expanding from 1,900 to 4,300 square feet. The university has also invested in additional staff, bringing the number of trainers from one to seven and strength and conditioning coaches from one to four.

Finally, to honor the greats in Mount athletics history, the ARCC will receive an upgrade to its entrance. The space will become the new Legends Concourse, where the university will honor members of the Athletic Hall of Fame, as well as

Multi-Faceted Men

John and Pat Rooney's professional careers make a strong case for the value of the liberal arts. After earning his degree in English, John:

Taught middle school English

Served as a manager at the Pittsburgh Steelers' training camp

Handles family oil, gas and real estate interests

Acts as chief financial officer, Palm Beach Kennel Club

After earning his degree in history, Pat:

Worked as a salesman for C.G. Hussey & Co.

Acted as assistant general manager of William Penn Race Association

Served as president of Liberty Bell Racetrack

Led the Investment Corporation of Palm Beach

Serves as president of the Palm Beach Kennel Club

display photos and memorabilia from unforgettable moments in Mount sports history.

Last spring, John Rooney attended a Mount track & field meet and came away impressed with the team's student-athletes and coaches. He recalls watching the "incredibly athletic" pole vaulters and muses on how superior the fiberglass poles are to the Swedish steel ones he used. "I could have been a contender," he quips. John, JoAnn, Pat and Sandy Rooney have made it possible for countless Mount student-athletes to be contenders for years to come.