

2008 Titan Hall of Fame to honor Tom Taraska

by Vanessa Virbitsky - Thursday, May 01, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/816/2008-titan-hall-of-fame-to-honor-tom-taraska-75/>

[More information on the Titan Hall of Fame banquet to be held May 4.](#)

Coaching, mentoring and motivating teenagers since graduating as a student-athlete from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh in 1975, Tom Taraska is recognized by many as the most successful high school football coach in Wisconsin.

Taraska, who suited up in the so-called “Golden Age” of Titan football, will tell you that everything he is and everything he teaches today was learned on the football field and in the classrooms at UW Oshkosh.

Remaining in close contact with several of his college coaches, Taraska continues to draw inspiration from these men who led the 1972 Titans to an 8-0 season and the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Association (WIAC) title — one of only five conference championships won in the Titans’ 112 seasons of play.

Upon graduating with an education degree from UW Oshkosh in 1975, Taraska started his coaching and teaching career at Franklin High School. He remained at Franklin for seven years before taking a job at Arrowhead High School. And the rest is history.

Taraska, now in his 26th year as head coach at Arrowhead High School, has produced four Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) Division 1 State Championship teams, the most recent in 2007; four WIAA Division 1 State Runners-up; a state-record 39 victories in the WIAA Division 1 State Playoffs; three undefeated and nationally ranked teams; and an overall record that most coaches only dream of reaching: 233-91.

Along with inspiration from his days as a UW Oshkosh football player, Taraska credits much of his coaching success to the character of his players, the support of the Hartland community and Arrowhead administration and what all highly successful coaches admit to having — a little bit of luck.

Coach of 12 high school All-Americans, 34 All-State players and numerous collegiate athletes, Taraska has seen many Arrowhead alumni ascend to greatness. The most recognizable include Tyler Donovan, former UW-Madison quarterback; Nick Hayden, former UW-Madison defensive tackle, who was chosen by the Carolina Panthers in the sixth round of the 2008 draft; Todd Meisel, former University of Minnesota defensive tackle; and Mike Solwold former snapper for the Dallas Cowboys, Baltimore Ravens and Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Arrowhead alumni also have been members of teams that competed in the Rose, Orange and Fiesta Bowls. In the 2002 NFL football season, Solwold was a member of the world-champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers and was awarded a Super Bowl ring.

Taraska also has been hailed as the 2007 Associated Press State Coach of the Year, three-time Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel Area Coach of the Year (1993, 2002 and 2007), three-time Wisconsin Football Coaches Association District Coach of the Year (1991, 1996 and 2002) and the Packers High School Coach of the Week in 2003.

As a testament to Taraska's pride for his players, respect for his school and vision for his team, his 2007 State Championship team was presented championship rings designed to represent the past, present and future success of Arrowhead High School football.

On the rare occasion Taraska had a free moment in the past 11 years, he was scheming under Loren Seagraves' guidance to develop a nationally recognized physical education program known as Club Arrowhead — a cutting-edge class on the development of successful and well-rounded high school students. He also has given clinic presentations at several Big 10 universities and graduated with a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 1992.

Giving back to the UW Oshkosh community, Taraska served as the first president of the College of Education and Human Services Alumni Association from 2006-07. Taraska remains a board member of this organization.

After his 33rd prom, homecoming, spring break and graduation, Taraska wouldn't trade his life for anything and plans to continue coaching even after he retires from teaching. He currently resides in Brookfield with his wife, UW Oshkosh alumna and former pom-pom girl Sue Anne Taraska.

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