

38 years, 500 wins: Waupaca teacher, coach earns Russ Young honor

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/32111/38-years-500-wins-waupaca-teacher-coach-earns-russ-young-honor/>

With nearly 40 years of teaching and coaching at the same high school and more than 500 wins in the books, John Koronkiewicz's dedication exemplifies what the Russ Young Leadership and Achievement Award is all about.

Koronkiewicz '76, a teacher and coach at Waupaca High School his entire career, was honored with the award at the 2014 Russ Young Leadership and Achievement Banquet on Feb. 15.

"It's been a lifelong passion, and when I received the award I was obviously very honored and very humbled because I know there are a lot of UW Oshkosh graduates who have gone onto far greater achievements to me," said Koronkiewicz, who played quarterback from 1972 to 1975 under former UW Oshkosh Coach Russ Young.

The Russ Young Leadership and Achievement award "recognizes an individual who has demonstrated the ideals of Russ Young's legacy through a record of accomplishments in career or cause, community involvement, moral character and positive contributions to the world of sports."

The UW Oshkosh Titan Touchdown Club sponsors the award and the banquet that shares its name.

The award is bestowed to former UW Oshkosh football players or coaches who have left the University for 10 years. Recipients are selected based on their "life-long sports involvement, career achievements, community service, meaningful contributions to the advancement of the football program and character."

"To be singled out for any kind of award, I think, is special," said Koronkiewicz, who graduated with his social science degree in 1976 and has been teaching in the same school district ever since. "To be asked back by your alma mater, quite honestly, doesn't happen very often for very many people. You have to look at that with a great deal of appreciation."

Koronkiewicz teaches social studies, U.S. History and political science at Waupaca High School. Over his 38-year career, he has served as head football and baseball coach, amassing incredibly impressive records in both sports.

He has posted an overall football record of 256-78 losses, helping his teams achieve 22 conference championships, including one string of 13 in a row. With Koronkiewicz as coach, Waupaca football earned five state playoff appearances and two state championships.

That impressive record has not come at the expense of Waupaca baseball. Koronkiewicz also coached 247 wins to 173 losses over his career.

His commitment to student athletes has been critical to their success over the course of his teaching and coaching career, the Russ Young banquet hosts emphasized during the Feb. 15 banquet.

“John believes the only reason he is in the coaching and teaching profession is to serve the kids in his program,” presenters shared before honoring Koronkiewicz with the award. “As such, you really are there only for them. He says ‘every coach has an obligation to create and sustain a rewarding and valuable experience for their athletes. If you begin to lose focus on why are you are there,’ he says, ‘you need to question your value as a coach, as a teacher, as a person.’”

Having logged an impressive teaching and coaching resume spanning seven U.S. presidencies and countless changes in education and athletics, Koronkiewicz said he has no definite retirement plans on the horizon.

Doesn't sound like he's letting the play clock wind down with 38 years on the scoreboard.

“Forty sounds like a nice round number,” Koronkiewicz said.

Learn more:

- [Titan Touchdown Club](#)