

Alumni Pride: Taraska scores as top football coach

by Natalie Johnson - Friday, September 02, 2011

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As one of Wisconsin's longest-tenured high school football coaches, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumnus Thomas Taraska '75, has earned a record of success that includes four state and 11 conference championships.

Known for treating his players and students with respect and dignity, the physical and health education major has served as a coach and physical education teacher at Arrowhead Union High School for 36 years.

Taraska was inducted into the Wisconsin Football Coaches Hall of Fame and the UW Oshkosh Athletic Hall of Fame in 2004 and 2008, respectively. To honor his accomplishments, the high school even named its new stadium in Taraska's honor.

In October, he will receive a Distinguished Alumni Award from UW Oshkosh during a reception and dinner Friday, Oct. 21, as part of the University's 2011 Homecoming celebration.

"While it may be easy and natural to view Tom's long and successful teaching and coaching career in terms of wins and losses, in my opinion, that would diminish the broader canvas of his work," said David Anderson, Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association executive director. "What Tom actually has done, through the medium of physical education and sport, has been to provide leadership and service to thousands of young people, his school, his community, his profession and his alma mater at an extraordinary level for more than 30 years."

At UW Oshkosh, Taraska served as the first president of the College of Education and Human Services' Alumni Association chapter in 2006-2007; and he remains on the board today.

In his own words:

Professional associations:

American Football Coaches Association, Wisconsin Football Coaches Association

Favorite UW Oshkosh professors:

David Hochtritt and Alex Inciong

Favorite UW Oshkosh memory:

Meeting my wife, Sue, at the University and being a member of the 1972 Conference Championship football team.

What does your UW Oshkosh education mean to you?

My education from UWO means everything to me. Everything I have become and every success in my

adult life can be traced back to my education at UWO. There has not been a day in my adult life that has not been influenced by the lessons that I learned at UWO. I always have been thankful for the wonderful education that I received at UWO.

What advice would you give today's UWO students?

Our young adults need to believe in themselves and to follow their dreams. They need to realize that they received an outstanding education from a great University that will enable them to be a successful member of society for the remainder of their adult lives.

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