

Lechnir to be inducted into WBCA Hall of Fame

by Kennan Timm - Thursday, February 12, 2009

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Tom Lechnir, who has been a part of 917 victories as a player, assistant coach and head coach at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh since 1979, will be inducted into the Wisconsin Baseball Coaches Association (WBCA) Hall of Fame on Feb. 14.

Lechnir joins Robin Schrank of Greendale High School, Mark Simon of D.C. Everest High School and Pete Swanson of Viroqua High School as members of the WBCA's 2009 Hall of Fame class. The inductions will take place at the WBCA's annual convention in Middleton.

Lechnir has achieved legendary success since becoming UW-Oshkosh's fifth head baseball coach in 1989. Under his guidance, the Titans have fashioned a 623-205-1 record with one National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III championship (1994) and 10 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) titles (1991-99, 2007). The WIAC's all-time winningest coach ranks fifth in NCAA Division III history with his .752 winning percentage and 13th with his 623 victories.

UW Oshkosh has reached the 30-win plateau nine times during Lechnir's tenure, including a 41-4 record in 1994 and a 41-5 mark in 1998. The Titans also hit the target with records of 36-8 in 1992, 39-5 in 1995, 35-6 in 1996, 34-4 in 1999, 37-8 in 2003, 35-9 in 2004 and 35-12 in 2007. UW Oshkosh's 2008 squad posted a 29-11 record.

In addition, Lechnir has guided UW-Oshkosh to 14 NCAA Division III regional tournaments (1990-99, 2003, 2007-2008) and nine NCAA Division III World Series (1990-96, 1998, 2003). The Titans finished first at the NCAA Division III World Series in 1994, second in 1993 and third in both 1991 and 1995.

Lechnir has had 23 players sign professional contracts, including 17 who moved to the next level after being selected in Major League Baseball's Amateur Draft. The list of professional players includes current major-leaguers Jack Taschner of the San Francisco Giants and Jarrod Washburn of the Seattle Mariners. In 1999, UW-Oshkosh had five players (Taschner, Craig Glysch, Kevin Grater, Casey Kopitzke and Sean Parnell) drafted by professional teams, the most ever selected in one year from a NCAA Division III school.

Lechnir is also responsible for coaching 27 players to a total of 37 NCAA Division III All-America awards. Among the All-Americans are National Player of the Year award winners Chris Delarwelle (1990), Tim Jorgensen (1994 & 1995) and Vince Mancuso (2003).

Lechnir's coaching success hasn't gone unnoticed. He was named as the NCAA Division III National Coach of the Year in 1994, NCAA Division III Midwest Region Coach of the Year in 1990-96, 1998 and 2003 and WIAC Coach of the Year in 1998-99 and 2007.

Lechnir has always taught his players to dream big. Seven years ago, Lechnir had a dream of his own.

Lechnir's dream was to build a baseball stadium to house what has become a model for success in a NCAA Division III baseball program. Today, that dream is kept alive with the recent construction of Alumni Stadium. Lechnir, who always wanted to leave something better than he found it, was the primary driving force behind the planning, fundraising and design of one of the finest baseball facilities in the NCAA Division III.

Prior to becoming the Titans' head coach, Lechnir served as an assistant coach at UW Oshkosh from 1983-88. During that time, UW Oshkosh registered a 193-36-1 record with one NCAA Division III championship (1985), five NCAA Division III World Series appearances (1984-88) and six WIAC titles (1983-88). In addition to winning the national title in 1985, the Titans also finished second in the country in both 1987 and 1988.

Lechnir, a graduate of Mosinee High School, played baseball at UW Oshkosh from 1979-82. The two-year captain was a member of UW Oshkosh teams that compiled a 101-29 record with three NCAA Division III World Series appearances (1980-82) and four WIAC championships (1979-82).

Lechnir, who played in the outfield, saw his first regular action with the Titans in 1980. He hit .330 that year with eight home runs and 40 runs batted in. In 1981, Lechnir hit .289 with seven home runs and 38 runs batted in. Lechnir's 1982 season was his finest as he hit .369 with eight home runs and 50 runs batted in. During an 11-2 win over UW-Eau Claire in 1982, Lechnir belted three home runs to set a UW Oshkosh record that stood for nearly 14 seasons.

This spring, UW Oshkosh enters its 55th baseball season with an all-time record of 1,250-445-4 and a resume like no other. In 1997, Baseball America recognized the Titans' success of winning games, capturing championships and producing professional players by naming UW-Oshkosh as the Top NCAA Division III Baseball Program of the 1990s and the Top NCAA Division III Baseball Program of All-Time.

The WBCA Hall of Fame induction is the second enshrinement of Lechnir's career. In 2001, UW Oshkosh inducted Lechnir into its Hall of Fame.

Lechnir, who received both his bachelor's (1983) and master's degree (1989) from UW Oshkosh, lives in Oshkosh with his wife, Tina, and twin sons, Drew and Zach.