

Lakeville's Ringeisen: 100 Seasons And Going Strong

Posted by John Millea (jmillea@mshsl.org) - Updated 8/22/2012 2:41:30 PM

Rick Ringeisen has not been coaching for a century but he is in his 100th season as a high school coach. Think about that, because it's a remarkable feat: Ringeisen, 56, has coached three sports for 33 years, and this fall marks the beginning of his 34th year and 100th season, all in his hometown of Lakeville. Remarkable.

Every fall, Ringeisen coaches girls swimming. Every winter it's boys swimming. And every spring he coaches throwers on the girls and boys track teams. First at Lakeville High and now at Lakeville South, the seasons change but Ringeisen doesn't. As former Lakeville head track coach and current Lakeville North athletic director Bob Ertl said of Ringeisen, "He's a guy who comes to work as excited today as he did 25 years ago. You can see that spark in his eye; 'Let's get after it, let's help kids.'

"He goes three seasons every year, back to back to back, and he never loses energy, never loses steam, to help kids. He's always helping, always giving back to kids, tirelessly."

Ringeisen was once one of those kids. His father died when Rick was 4 years old, and as he grew, his coaches became his role models. "My coaches took really good care of me," he said. "They were my inspiration in life."

At Lakeville High School Ringeisen participated in baseball, track, football and swimming before graduating in 1974. He was a swimmer at Winona State, earned a bachelor's degree in 1979 and was hired back in Lakeville as a social studies and history teacher as well as a coach. He could have joined the family trucking business but he said teaching and coaching "was my true passion in life. I came from a time and a place where people wanted to make the world a better place. Delivering boxes wasn't going to do that. I wanted to have an impact on lives, the way my teachers and coaches did for me."

He has a passion for Lakeville and the kids – like him – who grow up there. "Lakeville is a great place to grow up and it gets better every day," he said. "We put kids first."

And a lot of the kids he has coached have finished in first place. In the swimming pool, Ringeisen has coached two boys teams to True Team state



championships and two boys teams to MSHSL state titles. He has coached

260 girls and 312 boys who qualified for state meets, and Lakeville athletes have won state titles in every swimming and diving event. During the track season, Ringeisen has coached discus throwers and shot putters to 63 state meet appearances, and five of them have won a total of 11 state championships.

Hailey Campbell, a 2010 Lakeville South graduate who now swims at Brigham Young University and competed in this year's U.S. Olympic trials, was a state runner-up in the 100 backstroke and 100 freestyle and anchored a 200-yard freestyle relay team that set a state record in 2008 (they share the record with Stillwater). Campbell said Ringeisen had a tremendous impact on her.

"When I first came in I sat down and told him my goals, like 'I want to be a champion' and 'I want to be recruited by a lot of



colleges. One thing he did was he worked with me a lot and he made sure my head was in the right spot. He was a really great motivator for me; he always made sure I was motivated and ready to go."

POOL SPACE AND TIME are limited in Lakeville so the teams from South and North practice together under the direction of Ringeisen and North head coach Dan Schneider. When Lakeville had one high school, Ringeisen was the head girls coach and Schneider was the head boys coach, with each of them working as assistant for the other. When South opened in 2005, Ringeisen became the head coach of both swim teams there and Schneider did the same as Lakeville High became Lakeville North.

"I don't think there are many places that would have high school swimming workouts at the same time in the same pool," Schneider said. "It's tight and there are a lot of bodies in there, but we're making the best of what we have."

Ringeisen and his wife Joyce (a nurse) have been married for 34 years. Their son Alex is in medical school and their daughter Rachel is training to become a physical therapist. Family and community are vitally important to Ringeisen, who stresses to his athletes that sports translate to life.

"The sports we play and the things we coach are important," he said. "But the life lessons are much more important. You compete with people, not against people. You learn to collaborate. You learn to ask for help and help others. We tell our kids they must conduct themselves with class and integrity, that they're representing their family, their school and their team."

Every practice includes a quote of the day and discussions that extend beyond sports. During one recent practice, the quote of the day was written on a white board on the pool deck at Kenwood Trail Middle School: "Teammates are forever!"

"We have a teaching session every day. We don't just practice," Ringeisen said. "I always tell kids practice is the place we get to go to every day. We check our bags and leave our baggage at the door. Teammates are forever. It's the camaraderie, it's what you accomplish together."

Lakeville South athletic director Neil Strader said Ringeisen always cares about details and the people he works with.

"I've never been around a guy who cares more to do all the details the right way," Strader said. "He's so diligent in doing things the right way and asking me time and time again, 'Do we have anything else to cover? Is there anything else we should talk about?'"

"As a younger athletic director, those of us in the profession need someone to confide in, someone who's been there. Ringer's been a wealth of knowledge for me and a calming presence. He's the first guy to talk to and he always has great advice. He's a good friend to go to."

Ringeisen, who has coached two generations of some Lakeville families, is always gratified when former athletes get in touch with him.

"I love to get an email from an athlete who wants you to know the affect you had on them," he said. "They want you to meet their kids or introduce you to the person they're engaged to. Those are the moments that touch your heart."

BY THE NUMBERS

*Schools/teams John has visited: 13

*Miles John has driven: 268

(*During the 2012-13 school year)

--Join the MSHSL on Facebook by clicking on the Facebook button on the right side of www.mshsl.org. John Millea is on Twitter @MSHSLJohn

