



Latest honor is induction into National High School Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame

By Jan Goff

The Grant Tribune-Sentinel

After a 45-year career in education and coaching, Larry Pritchett has formally resigned from his current position of athletic director at Perkins County High School.

As he carts away personal belongings when school dismisses this spring, a part of Pritchett's legacy will remain in the trophy cases that line the halls of PCHS.

The toughest part of the decision to retire is knowing he will miss being around the faculty and the students, said Pritchett.

"I know that I will miss being around the coaches, the faculty, students and the administration. It is a great place to work and it has been a big part of my life," he said.

"Another part of being in education and particularly in coaching is the people that you meet in the other communities. I have made some pretty good friends in a number of other towns across Nebraska and that hopefully will still be there even though I won't be with the school system," he said.

The decision to retire didn't come quickly and was not taken lightly. Pritchett said he and his wife Marlene had discussed it last year, and although not serious, some health issues did come into play on his decision.

"I think things are in place to make a change," he said. "I really enjoy what I am doing at the school, and I have to admit that at times I have questioned why I am doing this (retiring) but yet I think it is the time," he said.

What Pritchett has in place is an insurance license he has had for 25 years and an opportunity to work with Jeff Skeels at the HomeTown Agency.

"They made me a 'Godfather' offer—one I couldn't refuse," said Pritchett. "No 'horse heads' involved, just a place to go each day and work on my own time schedule."

What Pritchett won't miss as athletic director is the extra hours spent on preparation of events.

"I don't know if people understand how many hours are spent at school putting on activities," he said. "It isn't rocket science or anything, but it is time away from home and family."

Pritchett retired from coaching the Plainsmen boys' varsity basketball team in March 2008 following a trip to the state tournament.

"Coaching takes a lot of energy—I was running out of that energy," Pritchett said. He thinks he could still coach and do a good job at it, but only if that were his only obligation.

"I look at the college coaches that are my age and think about how they are able to do that, but they have many more resources, staff members, etc., so I think retiring was the right thing to do."

He still misses coaching—the competition, the players, the coaches and the teaching that goes with coaching.

"I knew that I wanted to be a coach when I was a sophomore in high school, and it has been a great experience," said Pritchett. "I had high school coaches who made positive lasting impressions on me, and I hope that somewhere along the line I did a little bit of that for some of

my players or students.”

When Pritchett reflects back over his life, he realizes how lucky he was to be given an opportunity to begin his teaching and coaching career here.

He had never heard of Grant, Nebraska until the summer of 1964 when he read an ad for a position at Perkins County High School and made the trip with a buddy to interview.

“I know I only got the job because it was late in the summer and Mr. Todd wanted to get some vacation time in before school started!” said Pritchett.

“I started a career in education with hall of fame educators—one of the best superintendents in Nebraska, E. Lee Todd; a hall of fame football coach, Ed Haenfler; hall of fame basketball coach Bill Ramsay, a great ag instructor in Stan Elsen, and a super music man in Marion Thayer. A rookie couldn’t ask for a lineup of mentors any better than that. Throw in decades of outstanding students and other great teachers in Cozad and Imperial and all of a sudden in a blink of an eye you have gone through a career in education,” he said.

Pritchett joked about hobbies he might pursue.

“I don’t golf, I don’t fish, I don’t hunt. So I really need a job!”

He said he might try golfing because he needs to walk, although a treadmill suffices for now.

He said his wife will continue working at Sargent Irrigation where she has been employed for 20 years, “just in case I do take up golf and decide I want to buy a cart instead of walk.”

The couple has two grown sons, Troy and Travis.

Honors, achievements

- February 2009: Inductee into National High School Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame as one of two selected from Nebraska and one of approximately 25 chosen from across the U.S.
- July 2008: Grand Marshal, Perkins County Fair parade.
- June 2008: One of eight finalists in the National High School Athletic Coaches Association’s selection of the National Coach of the Year in boys basketball.
- March 2006: Athletic Director of the Year, District 4.

Teaching, coaching career

2008-2009: Athletic Director, Perkins County High School.

2005-2008: Plainsmen coach, Athletic Director.

2000-2004: Athletic Director, media specialist, Grant High School.

1987-2000: Grant High School.

1980-1987: Private business sector in Grant.

1975-1979: Chase County High School, Imperial.

1973-1974: Cozad High School.

1965-1973: Perkins County High School, Grant.

Pritchett has served in athletic administration for 19 years.

As a native of Byers, Kan., and a Fort Hays State graduate, Pritchett began his career in Grant in 1964 as assistant coach to Ed Haenfler in football and Bill Ramsay in basketball and track.

Pritchett has 463 wins as basketball coach of the Plainsmen, beginning at the start of the 1967-68 season. That year, the Plainsmen won the Class C state championship.

His winning record includes 55 wins at the state level where the Plainsmen captured two other championships under Pritchett’s reign in back-to-back tournaments in 1989 and 1990.

In March 2008 the Plainsmen took a trip to Lincoln to compete in the Class C state tournament, losing in the first round to the Ravenna Blue Jays.