

Ottoville Dedicates Gym after Schools First Coach – L. W. Heckman

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Basketball was introduced to the Ottoville community around 1918. Friday night the man that brought basketball to Ottoville was honored by the community and school. In a ceremony before the Big Green's varsity game with Cory-Rawson, Ottoville's newly built gymnasium was officially named the L.W. Heckman Gymnasium.

Heckman was a long time coach, teacher and principal at Ottoville and was the man that introduced the sport to the community. Heckman retired from coaching after the 1951 season with a career record of 448-124 which included nine Putnam County League titles, 15 district appearances and one state tournament appearance. Heckman also was enshrined in the Ohio High School Basketball Coach's Hall of Fame in 1990.

Besides coaching at Ottoville, Heckman also was a teacher for 50 years, spent time as the high school principal and was the village mayor for 22 years.

Three of Heckman's daughters along with grand children were on hand for the ceremony Friday night. Also on hand were several of his former players and cheerleaders. A reception was held for them and family members prior to the game.

The idea to name the new gymnasium in honor of Heckman was the idea of his grandson Tom Archdeacon and his sister Cathy Looser. They presented their proposal to the Ottoville Board of Education early last year and the board voted in favor of the idea.

Archdeacon was on hand Friday and spoke on behalf of the family. "It feels pretty good to stand out on this new gym floor and just be able to stand here," Archdeacon said. "The last time I was on the Ottoville gym floor was 35 years ago and I was waiting for Coach Dick Kortokrax to blow his whistle so I could start running."

"Growing up with my grandfather, these guys (former players) were my idols. He had the attention of all these guys. He loved these guys, they were his players. Tonight, I've heard all the tales about him and they loved him back. When he walked around town, everyone called him Mr. Heckman even though they were 40 to 50 years old."

"What he did was take farm boys and small town kids and he made them the Big Green. They took on all comers. They played and beat teams from Toledo, Columbus and Lima. They took on anybody and they won a lot and they

took the name of this town every place and that's why we are here tonight."

"I'm proud for my family, especially the three daughters that are here tonight. And I'm really proud of these players and the new kids. I am thankful to all of you for keeping this tradition going. You embrace these kids just like they did 50 years ago and that's what it's all about. My granddad would be so proud tonight."

"And when he retired in 1951, he left with players Augie Trenkamp and Orville Schram being named first team All-Ohio and three players from that team, Dick Kortokrax, Tom Weber and Don 'Tiner' Altenburger stepped into the coaching ranks themselves."

Kortokrax, who has surpassed Heckman's win total, sent a prepared statement that was read to the crowd Friday night by Board President, Bob Weber. Here are some excerpts from that statement.

"Coach Louis W. Heckman, Mr. Basketball, ended his outstanding career as a basketball coach following the 1951 season. I was so proud to be a member of the last team that Mr. Heckman coached at Ottoville High with a record of 17-4 and PCL Champs."

"I personally feel that Mr. Heckman was a pioneer in his teaching and coaching. He had ideas, theories and techniques that were years ahead of his time. How does a community say thank you and recognize an educator that gave 50 years of his life as a master teacher while serving the youth of Ottoville High?"

"How do we say thank you and honor a coach that pioneered the sport of basketball at Ottoville High? The community of Ottoville says thank you by recognizing this master teacher and Mr. Basketball through the dedication of their gymnasium in his honor."

"Personally, I say thank you Mr. Heckman for serving as my idol, my inspiration, my mentor, which gave me the opportunity to walk in your footsteps as a teacher, a principal and a basketball coach. And, when my career is over, I only hope that I can be held in the same high esteem and respect by my peers, former players and other as Mr. Heckman was. In closing, I would like to say congratulations to Mr. Heckman's family, especially his children and grandchildren who I know are so proud of their dad and grandpa."