

Hall Honors 26 Sweet Seasons

Hall of Fame to Induct Former O-G Coach

Lima News – Jim Naveau – April 17, 2008

When Dave Sweet was hired as Ottawa-Glandorf's boys' basketball coach in 1979, one of the other leading candidates for the job took himself out of the running because he wanted to become a pilot in the Navy. As it turned out, O-G got a pretty good pilot, too.

Sweet stayed 26 seasons, won 449 games before he retired in 2005 and coached the Titans to their first boys' state basketball championship in 2004.

Those accomplishments made him one of five inductees this year to the Ohio High School Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

Patrick Henry's Dave Krauss, Canton McKinley's Dave Hoover, Chagrin Falls' Frank Phillips, former Ohio High School Athletic Association commissioner Clair Muscaro and Sweet will be inducted at a ceremony Saturday night in Columbus.

"I was quite taken back by it," Sweet said about getting the word earlier this year that he was a hall of famer. "I was quite surprised and very honored by it."

Ottawa-Glandorf won the 2004 Division II state title and was state runner-up in 1996. The Titans were the regional runner-up three times for Sweet, most

notably in back-to-back years in 2002 and 2003 when Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary and LeBron James stopped them one game short of the state tournament.

Sweet also coached three other teams that advanced to the regional semifinals. His teams won 20 or more games 10 times, including seven times in a nine-year span from 1996 to 2004. From 2002-2004, the Titans had a 96-9 record.

Sweet's coaching career began when he was hired as Ottawa-Glandorf's freshman boys' basketball coach in 1976, the year he graduated from Bowling Green State University.

Three seasons later in 1979, when Ron Niekamp left to become Lima Senior's boys basketball coach, he was handed the keys to a program that had gone to the state tournament in 1977 and 1978.

"I owe a big debt to Ron Niekamp because he recommended me. The JV coach at the time, Dale Bruskotter, was going to go into the Navy to become a pilot, so he wasn't interested in pursuing the head coaching opportunity," Sweet said. "It wasn't too long, maybe two or three weeks after Ron left, that they interviewed me and told me I had the job."

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Sweet, now the dean of students at Ottawa-Glandorf, decided to try for a career in teaching and coaching at the suggestion of Len Hardman, his high school basketball and football coach at Norwalk High School.

“It was my second year of college,” Sweet said about the moment he decided he wanted to coach. “My high school basketball coach asked me to start working some basketball camps with him. I kind of enjoyed that. At that time, I hadn’t decided what I wanted to do yet. He kind of talked me into getting into education and pursuing it.”

Sweet says his coaching style evolved and changed over the years. One big change came early in his career and the other was after back-to-back losing seasons in the early 1990s.

“The first few years I thought I knew it all and, obviously, I didn’t. Then I matured,” Sweet said.

“I realized I had to become my self and find out what my strengths were as a coach. I started really concentrating on the defensive aspect, the rebounding aspect and getting (the players) stronger.”

Later on, he changed a second time. “We went through a couple of down

years in the early ‘90s and I sat down with myself – I went to my office at home and sat down after the season – and said, ‘I’ve got to make some changes or I’ve got to get out.’ I knew I couldn’t continue to keep doing what I was doing and be successful.”

“I realized I had to adjust more to my players. There for a while back in the late ‘80s, I thought the players had to adjust to me and my system,” he said.

That coaching evolution, along with lots of talented players, helped make Ottawa-Glandorf a team that went deep into the tournament almost every season.

Even though he retired in his early 50s, Sweet says he doesn’t find himself wishing he was back on the sidelines. With one or two exceptions, that is.

“I missed it when we were down at the state tournament this year,” he said with a laugh, referring to O-G’s state title this season. “It’s fun being down on that floor.”

“I’ve gotten over that. If I would miss anything, it would be the interaction with the players in practice. Game nights were fun too. But I enjoyed practices; that’s where the teaching was done.”