



June 21, 2009

'Doc' Shooks great coach, teacher

DEWITT - Being a high school student-athlete and performing at a high level in both academics and athletics can be a challenging task. Many student-athletes may look to parents, teachers, or coaches for inspiration in meeting those high academic and athletic standards.

For 34 years, DeWitt High School employed one of those mentors who would eventually become a model of excellence in the classroom and on the athletic field for many of his students and players. Wayne Shooks came to DeWitt in 1970 and would leave a legacy not of league championships or state championships, but a legacy of teaching and mentorship for hundreds of DHS student-athletes.

Looking back at Shooks' tenure as teacher and coach at DeWitt High School, many teachers, coaches, and alumni are quick to remember "Coach Shooks" or "Doc Shooks." This is not surprising given his involvement in football, track, wrestling, and tennis during his years of coaching at DHS. His commitment to coaching various sports alone is an important accomplishment, but Shooks' excellence as a coach is not measured in league title or coaching record accolades. After three sleepless weeks as a varsity offensive coordinator during the summer before a season early in his coaching career, Shooks hung up his varsity whistle in exchange for a freshmen coaching position where he would spend years quietly grooming underclassmen to achieve championships and personal accomplishments as juniors and seniors. This is evident during a 16-year stretch as freshman football coach in which his teams combined to win 135 out of 138 games. Having fun and learning the fundamentals were at the top of Shooks' goals for his players, but underneath all that he taught his players how to win.

During that exceptional period, Shooks recorded a streak of eight consecutive undefeated seasons and 14 undefeated seasons in all. Even with his astounding success on the gridiron, Shooks never talked about records with his players, but every freshman team that stepped on the field in August knew what was at stake. Under the veil of learning the game for the first time or how to wear equipment, going undefeated became an expectation for Shooks' players regardless of talent level or experience.

Current head football coach Rob Zimmerman commented in an article in 2004 that Shooks "does a really good job teaching expectations about being young men and great students." Shooks' teams learned from their early success to value the hard work and dedication it takes to achieve at the varsity level. Those teams would go on to win district championships, regional championships, and make state-final appearances; each of those teams Shooks mentored as freshmen.

As his career as a coach and teacher came to a close, Shooks was honored in 2002 by the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association (MHSFCA) as Assistant Coach of the Year.

Although Shooks' dedication to coaching and mentoring student-athletes before they reach the varsity stage has contributed to a very successful DHS athletic program, his dedication to teaching is his most valuable contribution to DHS. As a biology, anatomy, and physiology teacher, Dr. Shooks modeled the ultimate student-athlete. Accomplishing a doctorate of zoology at Michigan State University, something many secondary teachers never have the opportunity to achieve during their tenure of teaching, Shooks brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to his classroom.

Fellow teacher and coach Tom Zielaskowski commented that Shooks was "meticulous in teaching and coaching." Shooks pushed his students to question and analyze the material to develop their own thinking process. Zielaskowski also remembered

that Shooks' "classroom was always well run and utilized the wealth of information he brought from his long career in education." Whether one knew him as a teacher or coach, Shooks had a lasting impact on many lives at DHS. His legacy of learning fundamentals, having fun on the field, and achieving the pinnacle of a doctorate in education are exceptional values and accomplishments that many at DHS have modeled in their own lives.

Dr. Wayne Shooks retired from DHS in 2004. He and his wife Linda currently split time between their residences in DeWitt and Lakeland, Florida.

- From the DHS Athletic Hall of Fame organization

Additional Facts

The DHS Athletic

Hall of Fame Induction

What: DeWitt High School Athletic Hall of Fame

Who: DHS Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2009

When: Sept. 18, 2009; Half-time of Varsity football game vs. Eaton Rapids

Where: DeWitt Memorial Stadium

DeWitt-Bath Review Press Release Dates:

May 10: 1977 Boys x-country

May 17: 1977 Girls basketball

May 24: Jason Kreider

May 31: Mike Keevan

June 7: Chad Daggy

June 14: Kay Carroll

June 21: Wayne Shooks

June 28: Individual #6