



TALKING TO HIS BOYS during a timeout in January 2005 was Decatur Community High basketball Coach Dick Ahlberg, who has stepped down after 27 years on the floor. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Oberlin basketball coach leaves court after 27 years

By JIM MERRIOTT

After 27 years, with a record of 203 wins and 207 losses, Dick Ahlberg is calling it quits as head basketball coach at Decatur Community High School.

A 1975 graduate of Fort Hays State University, Ahlberg has taught and coached almost three decades in Oberlin.

He has been a leader and a guide for Oberlin youth.

"My high school basketball coach, Richard Deschner, made a life-time impression on me," Ahlberg said.

Deschner coached him for two years in basketball, three in cross country and four as a golfer at Clay Center, Ahlberg said, teaching him to set his priorities straight.

"He told our team the most important thing in life was to be faithful to your faith, secondly be faithful to your family, be dedicated to your studies, and finally be dedicated to your sport," Ahlberg recalled, "and I have tried to live by that motto for over 40 years."

Ahlberg added that he has used this motto during his career in Oberlin, teaching it to the athletes he has coached not just in basketball, but in cross country and golf.

"Every team that I have coached," he said, "I have preached the same motto Deschner taught me, do the right thing. That is why I have decided to resign as head basketball coach. My youngest son (Mason, 7) put everything into perspective for me.

"He said, 'Dad, will you ever pick me up at school like the other parents do?' After thinking things over, I realized I have spent more time with other people's children than my own. I have raised my three other children and feel that I didn't spend enough time with them. I am not going to let that happen with my last one."

Ahlberg's only daughter, Christy, is married to Jeff Rice and lives in Lincoln, Neb., where he owns a Ruby Tuesday Restaurant and Christy works for Wells Fargo Bank. They have three children, a girl, Parker, 6; a boy, Cole, 4; and a younger daughter, Ella, 2.

Son Andy, 25, works for Coca-Cola in Fort Collins, Colo., and his brother Erik, 21, works for Fiber-Lok there.

His wife, Suzanne, is starting her second year as director of nursing at the Decatur County Hospital. Before going to the hospital, she worked for 15 years at the Oberlin Medical Arts Clinic.

Ahlberg isn't giving up coaching, though he has resigned from the basketball job.

"Dick has been a very dedicated

and hard-working coach for us," said Activities Director Randy Olson, "and will continue coaching cross-country and golf, along with carrying a full load with his teaching duties."

He is planning to slow down, though.

"If I had one thing to say to young coaches today," Ahlberg said, "I would say to take more time with your family. A coach spends the majority of his free time away from the ones he loves the most, and that's tough. I have no idea how many nights I have studied film, practiced late, practiced on Saturdays, traveled to scout teams, and played games on the road, taking time away from my family."

"It takes an understanding wife like my wife Suzanne. She has been my inspiration, my best friend, my toughest critic, and my biggest fan, and I thank her for all the years she has devoted to me. She truly is the 'Sunshine of my Life.'"

The former Suzanne Lane of Clay Center, Ahlberg's wife was no stranger to high school sports — or life with a coach. She is the daughter of Kansas Sports Hall of Fame coach Blackie Lane, who coached three sports for more than 35 years in Beloit.

"Suzanne was my toughest critic," Ahlberg said. "Whether we would win or lose, she would always have a keen eye on what was happening on the court and on the bench. If we had won by 20 points and still looked lousy, she would let me know right off the bat. I found that if I could please my wife, I could usually please the community."

Ahlberg said he started coaching when he was a sophomore in high school, with summer youth baseball teams. After high school, he played four years of varsity golf at Fort Hays State.

"When I first applied for a teaching and coaching job here in Oberlin, I put Blackie down as a reference on my application," he said, adding that Principal Herschel Betts recognized the name. He had coached against Lane for many years.

"Evidently Betts had high regards for Lane," the coach said, "as he hired me and I have been here ever since. I owe a great deal to his trust in me, and I thank him."

Ahlberg first taught and coached nine years at the junior high.

"Some of my fondest memories are of kids I taught and coached at the junior high level," he said. "It was a great time of my life."

In 1988, Ahlberg took the head basketball coaching job for the Red

Devils.

"It took years to change the attitude of the basketball team," he recalled. "Before I took the team, the team seemed to just show up for the games. The first three seasons, we went 13-50 before it began to turn around. I tried to instill the attitude that we as a team could win games, and it gradually developed. I have always worked to make our team consistently competitive."

He said he thinks he has enough bus miles "to earn a free pass by Greyhound."

"Some of my proudest moments are when we won the Northwest Kansas League Championship in 2002," Ahlberg said. "It was the first title for Oberlin since 1952."

"Another great moment was when we broke the 32-year losing streak against Colby. Oberlin had played 40-50 games against the Eagles prior to the win."

Ahlberg has coached 31 players that have made All-Northwest-Kansas League first-team honors and several who have played college basketball.

"It is always nice to see my former players," he said. "There are some who still live in the area and others I keep in contact with that played golf for me. It seems the only time I run into them is at the golf course when they are in town."

"This past year I ran into Chad Addleman, Shad Metcalf and Greg Grafel, who all were point guards for me, at the country club. It was a pleasant surprise. I have always tried to keep up with the kids that went on and played basketball in college."

"Currently, I have kept my eye on Egan Grafel, who attended Cloud County Community College the past two years. He will be going on to Northern Illinois University to finish out his career the next two years. I also have kept an eye on Rusty, his brother, who attended Hutchinson Community College and currently is playing for Fort Hays State University."

They have some good things to say about their former coach. "Coach Ahlberg was a smart coach who expected each and every one of us to give everything we had out on the court," said Rusty Grafel. "He was tough, but fair, and has helped me to learn to work and study hard. He has encouraged all of us to push harder than we think we can in preparing us for life, and I thank him."

As it says in the book of Ecclesiastes, "There is a time and a purpose for everything." "It has been a great run," said Ahlberg.

Polarized glasses key to fishing success

Over the past 30 years, I have learned one thing. If you can spot fish in the water, you have a better chance of catching them.

The old term, "What you see is what you get," pretty much tells it all.

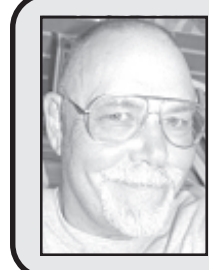
Whether you are stream fishing in the Rockies or lake fishing in Kansas or Nebraska, invest in a good pair of polarized glasses.

A regular pair of cheap sunglasses you buy at the gas station before you make the trip will just not cut it. These sunglasses only reduce the amount of visible light entering the eye. Polarized fishing glasses are built for reducing glare.

A polarized lens contains a filter composed of iodine crystals positioned in vertical rows on a very thin piece of clear film. This film is bookended between layers of lens material, allowing absorption of critical light rays. This process then polarizes the light, filtering it before it hits your eye, to prevent glare.

One thing to remember is that not all polarized lenses are equal. Film clarity, density and visual alignment all affect what you end up seeing. Sunglasses with poor film clarity or improper alignment can create poor or impaired visibility, so it is smart to go to an optometrist and be fitted correctly. If you are like me and need prescription lenses, only your optometrist can fill the bill. If you need bifocals, then that is another issue.

With unpolarized lenses, objects



The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott

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on the bottom of the stream, creek or lake such as vegetation, bait fish, insects, and the fish themselves are practically impossible to see.

Most polarized glasses offer a substantial degree of ultraviolet ray filtering. The best provide 100 percent ultraviolet blocking. Filtering ultraviolet rays is a must, so pass up glasses that are not marked.

Polarized glasses will reduce headaches from sun reflection. There is nothing worse than spending a great weekend on the lake, then having to drive home Sunday night with headlights or sun glare piercing your optic nerve.

The most popular lens colors for fishing are shades of gray, copper, brown, and yellow. Each color offers benefits depending on light conditions. Brown lenses probably provide the best compromise. Brown performs best in medium to bright conditions, helping improve the image sharpness in flatlight and hazy conditions.

A photochromic lens will automatically adjust the density of tint as a function of light as it changes

during the day. Some folks like them and others don't.

Polarized lens are generally available in glass or polycarbonate composite. It's your money and your choice. I have used both. Glass is heavier but more scratch resistant. Polycarbonate is lighter and more shatter resistant.

But most of all, I would recommend that you get a neck strap or eyeglass floats to protect your glasses from sinking to the bottom of the lake if they happen to fall off. Years ago, I learned that diving for glasses under the boat dock is no fun. It's dark and you don't know what's on the bottom of that lake.

In 1964, at Captain's Fancy Resort in Gravios Mills, Mo., on the Lake of the Ozarks, I lost my glasses on a dock. Two days before, a fisherman had drowned and divers could not find him. His body had washed under the boat dock where we had tied off our boat, and at 17, I found not only my glasses, but the first dead person I had ever seen.

It was a frightful experience, so take care of those glasses.

Three junior golfers get top honors

The Oberlin Junior Golfers brought three first-place finishes home from Atwood last Monday.

Dayton Dreher won the boys 8 and 9 bracket with a 51.

Kade Brown won in boys 10-11 with a 43.

Breck Simonsson brought home the gold for the Red Devils in boys 16-17.

Other scores:

• Boys 8-9, Chance Uehlin, 70; Logan Berry, 73.

• Boys 10-11, Garrett Berry, 59, third; Channing Farr, 60; James Peterson, 75.

• Girls 12-13, Ashleigh Peterson, 82, third.

• Boys 12-13, Tim Larson, 60.

• Boys 14-15, Jay Wessel, 140.

• Boys 16-17, Jobey Black, tie

second, 81.

The Junior Red Devils were to travel to Hoxie Monday for their next competition.

Oberlin boy gets third place

Oberlin's Kade Brown shot a 45

last Wednesday on the par 35 front nine in the ages 12 and under category at the Southwind Golf Course in Garden City, overcoming a stiff wind to finish third in Kansas Junior Golf Association tournament

competition.

In the over 16 competition, Jonathon Richards and Breck Simonsson had identical scores, shooting 96 on the 18-hole, par 73 course. Teammate Jobey Black shot a 99. None of the three placed.

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ELECTION

DECATUR COUNTY ELECTION

NEWS for June the 21st!

just a reminder — all registered voters of Decatur County will be voting at the Polling Place for the August 1st Primary Election 2006 at the Gateway in the City of Oberlin. There will be tables set up for every precinct to allow voters to be in contact with poll workers from their same area of residence as they have done in the past. And — all those voters who do not want to vote at the polls are still able to vote ahead of time - in Advance - at the Decatur County Courthouse on second floor in the Clerk/Election Office. Actual voting in the office will begin 20 days before the Primary Election — on the 11th of July, 2006.

Voters may come in or call today to have an advance ballot mailed to their residence. Ballots will not be mailed out until after the 11th of July. Please remind your college student of this availability.

Marilyn Horn, Decatur County Election Official