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Time Out!: The world was better place with coach in it

By TRISH BERG
October 25, 2007

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Someone I knew died Saturday. He had a heart attack, and though I have not seen him in many years and didn't even know him well, I knew him well enough to know the world was a better place with him in it.

Bob Packard was my husband, Mike's, college football coach at Baldwin-Wallace College, and he singlehandedly changed the course of my life by changing the course of Mike's life.

He was a man of character and strength and a fierce competitor on the football field. I can't tell you what he taught Mike about football; but I can tell you what he taught Mike about life.

I know because of the man Mike became, the man I married, the father of my children.

Bob Packard could inspire a snail to race up Mount Everest if given half the chance and can probably be credited with turning more boys into men than even their fathers.

He always called me Pat. You see, my full name is Patricia and all through high school I went by Patty. That was until I met Mike and he started calling me Trish. But Bob, he always called me Pat because his wife's name was Pat.

I always took that as a great compliment.

Pat passed away from cancer when Mike and I were still in college at B-W just before we were married and I remember attending her funeral. I remember feeling sad that we were beginning our life together when Bob and Pat were ending theirs.

I remember the feel of Bob's arms around me as he hugged me, looked at Mike and told him to take care of his Pat.

He has.

Bob coached football at B-W for 34 years, 21 as the head coach. He became the winningest football coach in Yellow Jackets history. Bob never experienced a losing season as a head coach there, though I know he experienced loss in his life.

But he was always a winner.

Throughout the years that Mike played football for Coach Packard, I saw him grow and become stronger not just as a defensive tackle, but as a man.

When you look back over the timeline that defines your life, there are people that impact the direction your life is heading in, some for the good and some for the bad.

Your parents, your teachers, your Sunday School teachers, your friends and loved ones.

But I can honestly say my life was impacted by a Division III college football coach even though I never once wore a brown and gold Yellow Jacket football jersey or shoulder pads and never took the field or kicked a field goal.

I am sure in Bob's eulogy, many people will read about how many years he coached and how many games he won.

He spent many years turning boys into football players, that is true.

But I bet not many people will know how many wives he blessed over the years as he turned those football players into husbands. Men of the same character and strength he was built of.

I may not have known Coach Packard that well, but I knew him well enough to know that the world was a better place with him in it.

And I will miss being called Pat.

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