

Blugold Swim Program Makes Coaching Change

Posted: Monday, September 11, 2006

Rob Welcher has stepped down as the UW-Eau Claire head men's and women's swim coach and Director of Athletics Scott Kilgallon has named Jerry Kollross to take his place for the 2006-07 academic year.

Kilgallon also announced that assistant coach Art Brandt has been elevated to Associate Head Swim Coach and Debi Beachel will return as the men's and women's diving coach.

Welcher has been the head coach for the past five years and was the WIAC women's co-Coach of the Year in 2004-05. The Blugold men have finished third in the WIAC the past five years and the women third the past four years.

Kollross is a 1984 UW-La Crosse graduate with a bachelor's degree in marketing. He will finish his MBA from UW-Eau Claire in December. While at La Crosse, Kollross was a two-time conference champion in both the 50-yard freestyle and the 100-yard freestyle, setting conference records at the time. He also was an NAIA national champion in the 50 and 100 freestyle in 1984 and still holds the UWL school records in those events. He has since been inducted into the UWL Athletic Wall of Fame.

Last year, Kollross was a volunteer assistant for the Blugold men's and women's programs and also served as a volunteer for the Memorial High School girls' team for two years. He was the head coach at Maple Bluff Country Club in Madison for two years and served two years as a volunteer assistant for the legendary coach Jack Pettinger at UW-Madison.

Kollross qualified and swam in the Olympic Trials in 1988 and in 2000 set a Minnesota Masters swimming state record in the 50 freestyle.

Since his graduation from La Crosse, Kollross has been involved in various business capacities across the country. He is currently president and owner of Top Golf Products L.L.C. in Eau Claire, selling golf event programs and products to corporate customers including Pepsi Cola and American Family Insurance.

He and his wife Linda have three daughters: Katie, Taylor and Alexis, and have resided in Eau Claire for the past eight years.

Brandt, a former Menomonie High School swim coach and teacher, has been a Blugold assistant coach the past three seasons. He also teaches in the university's special education department.

Beachel is entering her 12th season as the head diving coach for the Blugolds. During her tenure, she has qualified a diver for the national championships in all but one season. She was named the Division III Men's Diving Coach of the Year on three occasions. Under her tutelage, John Karpe won NCAA diving championships in 1997, 1998 and 1999.

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