

Wrestling Coach Don Parker To Retire

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - After 32 seasons as head coach of the UW-Eau Claire wrestling team, Don Parker is retiring, Director of Athletics Scott Kilgallon has announced.

"We are very grateful for what Coach Parker has done for the wrestling program for many years and we thank him for his years of dedicated service and many lives he's impacted," Kilgallon said.

Parker began coaching at Eau Claire in 1977. Since that time he has coached one national champion, 13 All-Americans and 15 conference champions. In seven out of the last eight seasons, Parker has coached a wrestler to an All-American finish, capped off this season by Josh Holforty's third place at 197 pounds. He has taken at least one wrestler to the NCAA Division III Championships every year since 2000.

Under Parker, the Blugolds advanced to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Championships nine times before the switch to NCAA. The team achieved its best finish in 1990 when it took 15th place. Since joining the NCAA in 1994, the Blugolds' best finish at the national meet was a tie for 16th in 2006 after Derek Sikora captured the Blugolds' only national title.

The Blugolds also had their best finish in program history at the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Championship under Parker when the team took third both in 2001 and 2003. In 2000, Parker earned WIAC Coach of the Year honors. Parker was also honored in 2007 by being inducted into the Glen Brand Wrestling Hall of Fame of Iowa as well as the NCAA Division II Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2000.

Parker concluded his career with the Blugolds having coached more than 450 dual meets. He came to UW-Eau Claire after four seasons at Upper Iowa University. He was a three-time All-American at Northern Iowa University, where he earned two national titles at 177 pounds.

Parker was also an assistant coach for the Blugold football team for 12 seasons (1977-88) and an instructor in the Department of Kinesiology as well.

Parker was forced to teach and coach from a wheelchair since 1998 after a fall from a tree stand caused a severe spinal cord injury.

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