

Coach McCourt looks at the big picture: "I love what I do"

By JEREMY WILLIAMS
SPORTS EDITOR

Frank McCourt has had the privilege to coach, teach, and counsel many students and athletes. To see them blossom and grow into upstanding citizens and successful careers brings a warm smile to his face. He feels that's what it's all about.

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~ McCourt ~

positive influence on as many kids as I can," McCourt states. "I'm fortunate that they (ACC) pay me to do what I

love to do."

McCourt has dealt with hard lessons throughout his career. He says it hurts him to know that you can't save all kids. Some kids just don't have the desire and heart, according to McCourt. Frank also has found that he doesn't have to have the greatest athletes on his team to make him happy. He wants players with big hearts and with minds in the right spot. That's what it's all about to Coach McCourt.

Frank McCourt has established himself in the Alpena community. Born in Detroit and raised in Alpena, McCourt has seen, been around, counseled, and coached some of the finest athletes and students to come out of ACC.

Though coaching is his forte, McCourt has many job titles. He's a licensed counselor, in which he assists advisors and helps students get on track with their careers. He's in charge of employment services. He and his staff help find full and part-time jobs for current students and graduates. He teaches a careers and learning skills class.

McCourt is the coordinator of athletics. He's in charge

of putting together schedules for ACC's sports teams. He's Vice President of the MCCA (Michigan Community College Athletic Association). McCourt is also the sports director of the Eastern Conference of the MCCA. He handles all the protests and problems that face sporting events and the schools that participate in them.

McCourt is the president of the faculty council. At one time he was full-time athletic director. He now splits that duty with Max Lindsay.

Frank McCourt is a very busy man at ACC, but he has other priorities off campus. He owns Dinosaur Gardens which is an exhibit of life-size sculptured dinosaurs. He owns Lumberjack Enterprises which operates Project ACCESS. He also helps run the Alpena Gus Macker. McCourt is co-chairperson with Tom Townsend. McCourt doesn't take credit for bringing the Macker here, but feels he and his crew work very hard to keep it here.

McCourt started his coaching career leading the Lady Jacks to many years of prominence. His first campaign started in 1980-1981,

which he refers to as his best team ever. He led them to a Region 12 runner-up finish and duplicated that feat the following season. Due to funding problems in 1983, the athletic program was cut.

In 1984, athletics were back and so was Frank McCourt. He coached the Lady Jacks to winning seasons until the 1988-89 season. Due to various reasons, he made the transition to coach the men's team the next year. He held the coaching reigns until Jeff Duncan was hired in 1993. Duncan only lasted one year and McCourt found himself back in the coaching seat once again, this time attempting to resurrect the sorry situation that Duncan left behind.

"The program was in a sad state and it was going to take some time to straighten it out," McCourt recalls.

ACC fans have sat through a couple of rebuilding seasons, but things are looking bright for ACC basketball.

McCourt is a graduate of Alpena High, and graduated from ACC in 1962. He then continued his education at Michigan State. Obtaining his Bachelor's in History and

Master's in Counseling.

His career began as a Social Science teacher and counselor in the Pontiac public school system. He landed a golden opportunity to come home and teach Economics at ACC. He was also the Admissions Counselor. McCourt has been here ever since.

McCourt lives in Ossineke, with his wife of 29 years, Judy, and has two sons, Michael and Steve. Michael lives in Lansing and was just married and Steve is a senior at Central Michigan and student-teaches at Alpena High.

McCourt got into coaching because of the sheer love of teaching and athletics. He's uncertain when he'll step down as coach of the Lumberjacks. He doesn't feel he wants to retire any time soon.

"I'll leave when either I'm 65 or when this isn't fun anymore," McCourt said.

Right now, the 6:00 am practices, counseling and teaching, and his various job titles keep him happy. At the ripe age of 54, we'll see him around for many years to come.

He has a young, eager assistant coach, Bobby Allen,



PHOTO BY POLEMIC STAFF
Coach McCourt prowls the sideline during the highlight Homecoming victory over Henry Ford. waiting in the wings. He feels Allen is working hard at becoming a good coach and he doesn't have a problem with Allen being the head man when he's ready.

National Coach of the Year recalls ACC playing days

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There has been a lot of great players to play at ACC. McCourt has coached many of them. When asked to name his all-time five best players for men and women, he couldn't pinpoint just five.

For the men's team, the first name that came to his mind was Bobby Allen.

Allen played only one and a half seasons through 88-90. He finished his career at ACC 12th all time in scoring with 795 total points scored.

Allen stated, "He got my life together. He made me into a man and to what I am today."

Mike Kollien brought a nice outside shot and smarts to his position in the paint for McCourt. Kollien is ACC's 10th leading scorer all time with 891 points.

ACC's 3rd leading scorer, Nathan Tuori, was the workhorse during his stay in 1994 through 1996. He has 1025 points and is currently at

Aquinas College in Grand Rapids.

Brett Benvenuti was a good player and a good student. He was a 6'6 forward that continued his education and career at the University of Denver.

Mike Gunderson was a good scorer and did whatever it took to help win games for the Lumberjacks in his career. He was a good shooter and a lead by example leader.

"He gave me and stills does the proper guidance to be successful. In a sense, he's like a second father to me. He has given me a lot of good opportunities to be a success," Gunderson said.

Demerious Flowers, who is playing at Huron University in South Dakota, is a quick slashing scorer who brought excitement to McCourt's teams in 94-96.

A guard who displayed toughness and grittiness was Dan Marquardt. McCourt feels Marquardt was one of the best defensive players he has ever coached. He's play-

ing at Olivet College.

Another rugged tough guard that McCourt liked was Tim Neumann. He was a great

"Coach McCourt has such enthusiasm for the game. He was always into it..."

~ DeRocher ~

defender and an excellent floor leader.

McCourt picked seven Lady Jacks to be on his all-time team. Heading this list is Diana Flakes.

Flakes is the all time leading scorer in ACC history. She dominated the conference in 1979-81 amassing 964 points during her stay on the Sunrise side.

Pam Pringle played only 18 games at ACC, but scored 521 points in that span. She

averaged 30 points per game and 20 rebounds a contest. She led the country in scoring in 1984-85, and was first team all American.

Currently the Head Coach at Tri-State University, Cindy DeRocher was a great playmaker for McCourt's teams in '80-'82. She helped the Lady Jacks to two runner-up finishes in the Region 12 championships. She also was just named NAIA coach of the year.

"Coach McCourt has such enthusiasm for the game. He was always into it. He pushed me to get my degree from LSU. It was a great time for

me there," DeRocher recalls.

Veronica Mullen played in the glory years of '80-'82. She was a 6'1 center that was hard to stop in the paint. She is currently 6th all time in scoring.

Tabitha Koger, a Flint native, played during the '87-'89 campaigns. Koger is second all time in scoring and was one of two of McCourt's last Lady Jack superstars. She accumulated 788 points.

Brimley's own Sherry Hyvarnien is that other superstar. She is 10th on the scoring list and has 571 total points in her playing days at ACC.

Currently residing in Grand Rapids, Sheila

Parkinson was the best jump shooter McCourt has ever seen. She played on the great teams of '80-'82 also. She is the seventh all time leading scorer and rounds off a great tally of names.

Parkinson recalls, "He was a special coach. I had a great time with my teammates and it was all fun in that time of my life. I have a lot of great memories."

McCourt has touched many lives in his career. He's most thankful for the great kids he's had to counsel and coach, and he still has some years to do what he loves. Isn't that what it is all about?



Current Lumberjack coaches Mike Kollien (55) and Bobby Allen (standing) listen as McCourt makes a point during a timeout. (Archives photo).

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