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50 Years as 'Voice of the Wildcats'

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50 years as 'voice of the Wildcats'

Wildcat football fans are familiar with The Streak – 49 consecutive winning seasons.

But they may not be familiar with another football streak – for most of the last 50 years, Linfield faculty members have served as the “voice of the Wildcats.” Craig Singletary, professor emeritus of communication, began broadcasting for the local commercial radio station in 1956, the year The Streak began. Ted Desel '61, professor of speech and drama from 1970 to 1987, broadcast the games on KSLC, the student radio station, for a few years. Hansen, vice president for student affairs, dean of students and professor of economics during the week, has spent his fall weekends as the voice of the Wildcats for somewhere around 30 years.

Although Singletary wasn't at Linfield when he began broadcasting Wildcat games, he left the radio station in 1960 to accept a faculty position at Linfield, but continued to broadcast the games until 1965. His voice can still be heard during home games. Since the mid-1970s he has served as the public address announcer at all home games.

One of Singletary's most vivid memories is a 1964 playoff game against Concordia on a bitterly cold day in Fargo, N.D. Singletary, who was broadcasting from a toasty warm press box, had scheduled one interview at halftime with Linfield President Harry Dillin. But dignitaries, including the governor of Minnesota, head of NAIA and president of Concordia College, all flocked into the press box to get warm, so Singletary interviewed them all. Another interesting fact from that game: Former Linfield head coach Ed Langsdorf played that day for Concordia.



Craig Singletary, Dave Hansen and Ted Desel '61, from left, all current or former faculty members, have served as the voice of the Wildcats over the last 50 years. Hansen has the longest tenure, starting “some-time in the early '70s” and continuing today.

Desel did some color and play-by-play for KSLC, primarily during the Ad Rutschman '54 era.

“My career was very short lived, probably with good reason,” he said with a laugh. But that didn't end his affiliation with the football team. From 1975 until Rutschman retired in 1991, Desel drove the team bus to nearly all the road games.

“I got to see a lot of Linfield football,” he added. “There were a lot of interesting experiences being with the team like that over the years.”

Hansen says if he were not broadcasting the Linfield Wildcat games, he'd probably be providing commentary in the stands, much to

the entertainment – or chagrin – of his fellow fans.

Hansen's career in the broadcast booth had a dubious start when he teamed up with Desel for a half-time show.

“We didn't have anything to talk about so we described a half-time extravaganza out on the field, with a marching band that spelled out Linfield in script and the landing of a hot air balloon,” Hansen recalls. None of it was actually taking place anywhere but in their imaginations.

An admitted sports fanatic, Hansen is up at 6 a.m. or earlier on fall Saturdays to head to Ashland or Tacoma or Spokane, whether he is

broadcasting the game or not. “This gets me there at someone else’s expense, takes care of my transportation, and occasionally I get a meal out of it,” he laughs. “I enjoy watching the game and being a part of it in the sense that I get to talk about it. My wife worries that I do play-by-play at everything we attend, whether it’s athletics or not.”

Hansen, who will be inducted into the Linfield Athletic Hall of Fame in November for his work as voice of the Wildcats, started as color commentator and switched to play-by-play. After taking a four-year break in the mid- to late-’90s, he returned to color commentary with veteran broadcaster Darrell Aune.

One bonus of his job is getting to know players in the classroom and on the playing field. His position at Linfield gives him an edge

on providing information to the listeners.

“I might have some inside information about a player outside the football realm,” he said. “I have an opportunity to mix with the students in a different setting.”

He began collecting material for this season right after the 2004 championship game. His preparation includes taking the roster to bed and seeing how far down he can name player, position, number and hometown without looking.

His memories of his years in the booth are both funny and poignant. There was the time he had to rent a room for just a few hours in Bellingham, Wash., in order to find a phone line over which to broadcast. Or the time at Menlo when he and Aune had to string about 500 feet of telephone line from Menlo’s brand

new football stadium to a residence hall because Menlo officials had neglected to install phone lines. Or the time, when broadcasting a basketball game, the radio station sent a taxi across McMinnville to inform him that the line had been pulled and Hansen had been broadcasting to no one for 20 minutes.

But the constant throughout Hansen’s broadcasting career – in addition to The Streak – has been the strong tradition of the football program.

“The coaching focus of using the football field as a classroom experience for the students has remained fairly constant,” he said. “I think success breeds success and I think that accounts for how well we do here.”

— *Mardi Mileham*

“The Streak” closes in on golden anniversary

Four coaches, four national championships, 382 wins and thousands of dedicated young athletes.

It’s been a recipe for success for Linfield College football for 49 years. Since 1956, Linfield has produced winning football teams, fielding squads with better-than-.500 records and doing so without the benefit of scholarships, letters of intent or spring practice. And with one more winning season, it will be the program’s 50th in a row. The Wildcats could secure the season as early as Oct. 15 when they take on Southern Oregon University.

The Wildcats stand alone as the most consistently successful college football program in the country. Linfield established itself as college football’s all-time leader in consecutive winning seasons in 1998, coming from behind to defeat Willamette University 20-19 and clinching a 43rd straight winning season

to move ahead of Harvard and Notre Dame.

Four coaches have widened The Streak, including Paul Durham ’36, Ad Rutschman ’54, Ed Langsdorf and Jay Locey, who was one year old when the 1956 Wildcats launched the series. Since then, Linfield has captured four national championships, in 1982, 1984, 1986 and 2004.

The secrets of the program’s success? Quite simply, it’s the stability of the coaching staff, a daunting work ethic and a long-standing commitment to make everyone associated with the program a better person.

The winning seems to take care of itself. For updates, go to

www.linfield.edu/sports

