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Linfield Longevity

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Linfield longevity

Shane Kimura '78 celebrates 40th and final season as volleyball head coach



It's 30 minutes before the first serve and volleyballs are flying in Ted Wilson Gymnasium.

Linfield head coach Shane Kimura '78 escapes the pounding pre-match music, finding quiet in his office upstairs, a long-standing routine for home games. The loud music in the gym drives him nuts. But in the calm, he reviews the upcoming match and puts final touches on the game plan. Later, back with the team, he lays out three points of instruction, the last of which is always to "have fun."

That's been his advice for 40 years.

This year marks Kimura's 40th and final season as head coach for the Wildcat volleyball team, the longest run of any

Linfield coach and the second-longest volleyball-coaching stint nationwide, according to NCAA records.

Soft-spoken with a quiet confidence, Kimura has literally grown up on the Linfield court. He was 18 and younger than most of his players when he took the position. He knew volleyball, but admits he had much to learn about coaching.

What does it take to sustain a decades-long coaching career?

"It takes a person like Shane," says Garry Killgore, Linfield athletic director, who has known Kimura for 28 years.

"A person who has a high degree of integrity and commitment to students. Shane encourages traits that make his players

better individuals, on and off the court. He understands that the real championships are the championships of life."

John Cook, volleyball coach at the University of Nebraska, attended Linfield in 1975 and calls Kimura's 40-year run "historic."

"That means Linfield is a pioneer in women's volleyball," says Cook, who has led the Huskers to three Division I national championships and is the sixth-winningest coach in NCAA history. "There is a lot to celebrate there."

Kimura first picked up a volleyball as a sophomore in high school, to "get on the good side" of the basketball coach, who also coached volleyball. He was a natural,

and at Linfield, while taking a class that included volleyball, he was asked by Jane McIlroy, then women's athletic director, to take the head coaching position.

"They paid me \$300 for the season, and as a college freshman, that was a lot of money," he recalls.

The gig stuck. Kimura has coached all but three seasons since 1974, coupling the coaching with a teaching position in the McMinnville School District.

His career has spanned the growth of women's athletics. He took the team reins just two years after President Richard Nixon signed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

"We had to fight for a lot of things," he says. "There was no compromise on practice times and gym schedules. Women always had the second choice. We had one set of uniforms. When we played a two-day tournament, after the first day coaches were at the laundromat washing clothes. Now we have five or six sets of uniforms."

Kimura has amassed a record of 666-520 and was named NWC Coach of the Year in 2003. But it's his relationships with players that matter most to Kimura. Jan (Wise) Barker '82, a 10-time state championship winning high school volleyball coach, said he has a true love for the game and great people skills.

"We always knew Shane cared about us," says Barker. In 31 years as head coach at Amarillo High School in Texas, Barker has built a 1,114-174 record and been honored as American Volleyball Coaches Association national co-coach of the year. When Barker started coaching, Kimura offered her a copy of his drill book. And when she received an award for 1,000 career wins, Kimura was there to cheer her on.

"He helped me believe in myself and my abilities," she says. "His quiet way, versus a loud coach who constantly yells at the players, gains respect and gets so much more out of the athletes, and it sure did for us. I learned a lot about building relationships with my athletes from looking back at how Shane dealt with us."

Over the years, Kimura has seen enormous change at Linfield – improved facilities, stronger academics, a doubling of the campus, a quadrupling of the McMinnville community. His style has softened from commanding to collaborative. Case in point – Kimura now allows music during practice and warm-ups.

"Twenty-five years ago? You've got to

be kidding me. No way!" he says.

His advice for his 18-year-old self: patience. "There's more than one way to do something," he says. "I learned to be myself and follow my own style of coaching."

Even after 40 seasons, one of Kimura's favorite messages for students still rings true.

"Be a good player for the team, not just a good player on the team," says Kimura, of the importance of character on and off the court.

"Whatever role you have, do it to the best of your ability. It's not just about volleyball. If it's only volleyball, we're not doing our job as coaches."

– Laura Davis

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Shane Kimura '78, pictured here with Susan (Holm) Allsop '84 (left) and Carolyn (Pearce) Kraus '82 (right) in 1981 when Linfield was the national runner-up. Both Allsop and Kraus have been inducted into the Linfield College Athletic Hall of Fame.

Linfield's Top 10 longest-serving head coaches

Shane Kimura '78, 40 years, volleyball

Scott Carnahan '73, 26 years, baseball

Ad Rutschman '54, 24 years, football

Hal Smith, 24 years, men's track & field

Garry Killgore, 21 years, men's and women's track & field, men's cross country

Roy Helsler '36, 21 years, baseball

Ted Wilson, 20 years, men's basketball

Wes Suan '74, 17 years, men's tennis

Jackson Vaughan '97, 16 years, softball

Gary Gutierrez, 16 years, men's and women's swimming