

Collar decides it's time to go

Football coach leaves Seymour after 29 years

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SEYMOUR — Who would have thought that when the Seymour High School football team went 0-9 in 1972, a magnificent coaching career was beginning? That was Bill Collar's first season as Seymour's coach. Now, after 29 seasons, he has had enough.

Collar, who is retiring as a history teacher as well as a coach, said it was merely a matter of having too difficult of a schedule. "When you're a full-time teacher and a full-time coach it's very demanding," said Collar, 57, who also was president of the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association for the past three seasons.

"During the season, you go to work at 6 (a.m.) and you never get home until 6:30 or 7 o'clock at night. It was just getting harder and harder for me to live up to the standards I set for myself in the classroom as well as on the football field. "So I thought I'm getting to the point where maybe I should consider traveling and seeing some of these places I've been teaching about."

His Bay colleagues respect Collar, who was the elder statesman of Bay Conference coaches. They say they will miss him. "It's going to be difficult to see him not on that sideline at Seymour," said West De Pere coach Bill Turnquist, who becomes the Bay's most veteran coach. "I've been at West De Pere for 26 years (and) ever since I've come he's been the opposing coach at Seymour. "It's been a very excellent relationship with Bill. He's a very unique individual. He's very competitive, but when the battle is finished, he's a very congenial person and very warm."

Another thing that raises Collar's stature has been his willingness to help his fellow coaches. "Bill was not only concerned about running his own program which he did an outstanding job with," Ashwaubenon coach Ken Golomski said. "He's been a great role model and a mentor to all the coaches in our conference. He always had a little broader vision than most coaches and you just don't see that anymore because I guess we're all so concerned about our own programs that we lose track of the bigger picture."

Collar, a 1966 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, accomplished plenty in 29 seasons. His teams won 149 games, three Bay titles (1985, 1991, 1996) and a WIAA Division 3 state title in 1985. Seymour also was the WIAA Division 2 state runner-up in 1991. Even with all of his success, Collar said one loss sticks out more than any of the wins.

In 1996, the Thunder went 9-0, its only undefeated regular season in school history, and headed into a first-round playoff game against a Portage team that was only 5-4. However, torrential rains and a cold, howling wind slowed down Seymour's tremendous passing attack and Portage pulled off a 13-6 upset. Bay rival Ashwaubenon, which the Thunder had beaten 42-14 in the regular season, went on to win the WIAA Division 2 title. Collar still laments the loss by what he thinks was his best team. "That was really an outstanding football team," Collar said. "We just had a lot of problems handling the ball that night, (and) you rehash that in your mind. That was probably our most frustrating night ever, because that team had the potential to keep going."

While Collar said the wins and awards are nice, he will remember more the opportunity to help teach young people not only football, but also how to be good people. "My major goal always was to help young people to realize their full potential and play at a level that they're capable of playing at and work together as a team," said Collar, who was Wisconsin teacher of the year in 1989. "(I tried) to help realize that hard work does lead to success and to just make a difference in some lives in the classroom as well as on the football field."

Collar will be out of coaching for the 2001 season. He is planning to write a book, travel and do more motivational speaking. But Collar, who has coached for 35 years, has not ruled out a return in some capacity in the future. "It's been about 45 years I've either been playing or coaching, so that's quite a commitment," he said. "I still have a lot of enthusiasm and I may return to the sideline. I'm not sure that I'm finished coaching yet. But I'm going to take a year off and see what happens."

Bill Collar's Coaching Career

Coaching experience:

Antigo High School, assistant coach, years (1966-67)
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, line coach, 4 years (1968-71)
Seymour High School, head coach, 29 years (1972-2000)

Record as head coach:

149-130 (10-6 in WIAA playoffs).
Bay Conference titles:
1985, 1991, 1996.

State playoff appearances:

1985-1998 9 times qualified
1991, Division 2 finals, lost to Monroe 30-0
1995, Division 2 semifinals, lost to Menomonie 23-12.

State championships:

1985, Division 3 champions, defeated
Prairie du Chien 28-12.

Why he's retiring: "It was just getting harder and harder for me to live up to the standards I set for myself in the classroom as well as on the field."