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TOP STORY

## Into the Hall: Ross Kershey

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Submitted photo

Dunbar Township graduate Ross Kershey is shown teaching at Immaculata University. Kershey is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame. It is the ninth Hall of Fame he has been inducted into to.

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Ross Kershey is very familiar with Halls of Fame. After all, he had been inducted into eight of them following a legendary career as a basketball coach and a track & field coach at Coatesville High School.

Kershey will up the total to nine this month as he is inducted into the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame. The 1950 Dunbar Township High School graduate ranks this one high on his list.

“It’s great to be honored by your hometown,” said Kershey, who discussed his latest induction recently on George Von Benko’s Sports Line Talk Show on WMBS Radio.

“Connellsville and Dunbar Township has always been my hometown. It’s great to go into a Hall of Fame that includes Johnny Lujack and John Woodruff, a Heisman Trophy winner and an Olympic champion.”

Kershey doesn’t get back to Fayette County often and was flattered that he’s still recognized there.

“It’s very easy to forget people,” Kershey said. “It’s good to be remembered by your hometown.”

Kershey is part of the 2020-2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame. The inductees and representatives will be recognized at a Hall of Fame Golf outing/Luncheon/Social starting at 9 a.m. on June 25 at Pleasant Valley Golf Club in Connellsville.

“I’ve known many of the people who have been inducted, quite a few Connellsville people, Rudy Marisa who was coach at Waynesburg College when I used to go to the camp at Waynesburg,” Kershey said. “I’ve tried to attend as many of the meetings as I could.”

Kershey was a basketball star at Dunbar Township who went on to play at Temple.

“I went to Temple University because they offered a good program in television, broadcasting, radio, journalism,” Kershey said. “My senior year I got good enough in basketball to play for Harry Litwack at Temple University and that’s when I decided to go into teaching. After I graduated from Temple I went to Indiana Pennsylvania, student taught at Greensburg, then went on to teaching at Coatesville High School.

“Mr. Litwack, in addition to being a great coach, was a great gentleman. He’s been inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. Harry was a great man and very influential in my becoming a coach.”

Kershey went on to be the head basketball coach at Coatesville High School for 28 years, amassing a 462-129 record with 12 Ches-Mont championships and one district title.

Coatesville eventually renamed its basketball facility Ross Kershey Gymnasium.

“I feel very honored that the basketball facility was, and still is, named for me,” Kershey said. “I go there as often as I can.”

Kershey cited great talent at Coatesville as one of the reasons for his success there.

“I’ve always said that if you want to make potato salad you need potatoes and we had good players at Coatesville, including Hubie Marshall, who was an All-American at LaSalle, and Rip (Richard) Hamilton, who was an excellent player,” Kershey said.

“He’s one of the few players that have won a national championship, at Connecticut, and an NBA title with the Detroit Pistons. Rip has been a motivational speaker here at Coatesville. He’s helped many of the students at Coatesville to try to do better in studies and in basketball.”

Kershey was also Coatesville’s head track & field coach for 14 years where his dual meet record was an amazing 103-1. He won two District 1 titles, 13 Ches-Mont championships, a state title and 14 League Relay Championships.

“I knew absolutely nothing about track & field but I was an assistant coach for four years with an excellent coach at Coatesville named Walt Funk,” Kershey explained. “I went to Villanova’s workouts with Jumbo Elliott and Jim Tuppeny and saw them practice and got my indoctrination into track & field. I wanted to be the best so I went to the best.

“I became a real track enthusiast.”

Kershey coached 10 state champions in track & field at Coatesville, including George Holmes, who won three gold medals in 1974, and Tom Gormillion, who won two gold medals as well as one silver in 1961.

"I had George Holmes, who recently passed away of kidney failure in Atlanta Georgia," Kershey recalled. "George was a triple champion, he won the 100, the 220 and the high hurdles his senior year. George won eight medals, including three golds his senior year."

Kershey went out in style as a track & field coach. His final team at Coatesville won the Ches-Mont, District 1 and PIAA championships. That same team also won the Eastern U.S. Championship at Randall's Island Park in New York. The team of Holmes, Dave Lapp, Ron Hunt and Doug Lewis won the Penn Relays Mile Relay Championship of America.

"One of my greatest accomplishments in track & field was we won the Penn Relays Mile Relay Championship of America defeating the teams from Jamaica," Kershey said. "It's not very often that teams from the United States have beaten teams from Jamaica so that was probably my highlight as a track coach."

Kershey is still a great admirer of the event.

"I went 60 years in row to the Penn Relays," he said. "The fellow who directed the Penn Relays, Dave Johnson, and I spoke together at the Delaware County Sports Hall of Fame when we were both inducted."

Kershey has been an excellent educator in the classroom in addition to his coaching success. He was the first ever recipient of the Coatesville Educator of the Year annual award in 1982. That honor was eventually renamed the J. Ross Kershey Award.

Kershey expressed his gratitude towards Von Benko, the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame Executive Chair/Co-Founder.

"I was instrumental in founding the Coatesville High School Hall of Fame so I know there's work involved and I know what you have done for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame," Kershey said.

"I'm really honored to be inducted into the Hall of Fame in Fayette County."