

## **Robert Comerford**

For 80 seasons Robert Comerford has laced up his tennis shoes and trudged out to practice across some 40 years as one of the premier boys and girls' high school coaches in Illinois; and for that fact alone, he should be commended. However, Bob's contributions to student-athletes go far beyond mere longevity. With over 700 wins, 15 conference titles, four sectional triumphs, four top ten finishes and a remarkable 2<sup>nd</sup> Place trophy to his credit, Bob has left an indelible mark on Hinsdale South (1974-2006) and Benet Academy (2006-2012). Both the Hornets and the Red Wings have been privileged enough to have been steered by one of our State's very best.

Off-court, Bob has run successful summer tennis camps since 1974 growing it to over 2500 students at its peak. On the court, Bob feels it is his job "...to facilitate the success of my (his) players by being a collaborative coach." He involves them in key decisions always trying to keep the bigger picture in mind as to what was important and what was trivial. Bob has looked to Downers Grove South head coach Peter Freischlag as an "...exemplarily role model as the quintessential high school coach..." notwithstanding the once fierce rivalry between Downers South and Hinsdale South.

Bob is a collaborative as a coach, hence, defining his philosophy of trying to involve parents and players in team decision. He realizes as well that there are also times to "...make the hard call..." and then defend that decision when necessary. Bob feels that the advent of the USTA player has raised the level of play from top to bottom across the State and he would like to see sectional assignments be revisited, and perhaps, if possible, move away from the geographical anchor that holds the Chicago area in harbor. Bob longs for a more equitable solution.

Bob holds visits from former players as special moments and cherishes these along with actually coaching sons and daughters of former players. Bob's fondest memories were of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Hinsdale South girls' team and his 6<sup>th</sup> Place Benet girls a few years ago. Having his wife Julie at the State meet for moral support during these title runs brought together, "...the two major aspects of my (his) life, family and team." Wow, that says enough Bob and makes all of us who coach step back and reexamine and hope for that kind of passion.

The IHSTCA would like to welcome Robert Comerford to the Hall of Fame! Congratulations Bob, well deserved!