



Humble, genuine Dick Laverty has spanned eras, influenced many during 64 years of coaching.

Richard "Dick" Laverty S'60



By Bobby Fernandez, High School Sports Reporter
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Dick Laverty wasn't particularly eager to be the subject of this story. In fact, after being interviewed – reluctantly – he made it clear, under no uncertain terms, he was going to have a pointed word or two with the person who casually suggested the story, a former player of his and current coaching colleague, Matt Uyemura. Tracking down visuals for this story was a chore. When asked for a photo or two, he politely, yet emphatically, declined. He doesn't do pictures, he said, with a telling laugh. But his past and current pupils in almost every sport imaginable paint a pretty glowing picture of a man who began coaching when he was just 11 years old – when Dwight Eisenhower was in office, when Mister Sandman by The Chordettes was burning up the airwaves and when a gallon of gas cost \$0.22.



The 75-year-old Laverty doesn't talk about walking to basketball practices up hill, both ways. But such a chore wouldn't seem too daunting considering the number of miles he's put on the soles of his shoes, stomping up and down sidelines for seven decades and counting. Even though the excessively humble Laverty might be adamant when insisting he doesn't deserve the recognition, there are 64 reasons – actually probably way more than that – why a story on him is warranted. When he assists Uyemura as a middle school boys basketball coach at Saint Mary Catholic School this winter, it will be his 64th year coaching youth athletics – save for a few very brief "retirements" along the way.

"I've retired three times; I obviously don't know when to stop."

When Uyemura approached his longtime mentor about helping him out at Saint Mary, Laverty said he would do it for a year. That was three years ago. Then again, the three years Laverty has spent assisting Uyemura are just a mere grain of sand in the proverbial hourglass measuring a coaching career that has lasted, give or take, 23,000 days – an entire lifetime. He's coached everything from basketball to baseball to cross country to soccer – you name it. He's coached athletes who went on to become stars at higher levels: Mike Higgins, Tad Boyle, Vaughn, Vance and V.J. Lechman. But it's every bit the less-heralded success stories that bring a smile to Laverty's face as he reflects on his vast coaching career.

"Yeah, there's been a few names here or there," he said. "But, I look, and I have doctors, I have lawyers, I have business-owners, I have great parents, I have fantastic employees working for other people that I have had the opportunity to coach and/or teach.

"There are the big names, but there are the others that are just making this a better community than it would have been without them."

A boy coaching boys

He began his coaching career as an 11-year-old in Ventura, Calif., where he grew up. The older boys would act as assistant coaches on the basketball floor for younger kids. So begins a coaching career that easily predates the invention of the internet, cell phones and color TVs. He then coached Little League baseball while starting high school in Ventura, doing the same after moving to back to the city in which he was born, Los Angeles, later in his Belmont high school career. He coached American Legion baseball as a pitching coach after high school.

He graduated from California State University, Los Angeles, then taught and coached cross country, volleyball, girls and boys basketball, softball, track and field, football and soccer at a school district in El Monte, Calif.



He moved to Greeley in 1976 where he coached football, basketball and track at the now-closed John Evans Middle School – a junior high school at the time. He coached boys basketball, baseball, soccer and started the softball program at Greeley Central High. He went on to coach basketball, girls soccer and softball at Northridge. He coached girls' basketball at Greeley West. For so much of that time, he was also a teacher before putting away his lesson plan for good in 2006. That's the one retirement that has stuck. At 75 years old, his wit remains as keen as his ability to draw up a game plan.

"I'm a history major, so you know I taught math," he said.

Laverty has coached numerous formers pupils of his: Uyemura, Tory Hanson, Aryn Henneke.

"You can't turn down former players," he said.

Constantly reinventing

After his third retirement from coaching – following his six years coaching girls' basketball at Greeley West – Uyemura gave a no-pressure pitch for Laverty to assist him at Saint Mary. For seven decades, Laverty has never allowed himself to fall out of touch with the day's youth. When asked if he's the same coach he was 64 years ago, Laverty quipped, "I'm not the same coach I was even last year."

"You learn something every year, every day, probably. If you don't, then you get out of it. It's something I enjoy doing. I enjoy working with youth."

Uyemura said with his caring, genuine coaching style, Laverty connects just as well with middle school athletes at Saint Mary today as he did with junior high and high school athletes decades ago.

"The games have changed, the culture, the kids and the parents have changed a lot," Uyemura said. "But, I think he's done a good job adapting to the change. Our kids definitely respect him. He gives his talk, and their eyes are on him. He can command the room."

Laverty coached Uyemura for seven years, from the late-1970s until 1985, coaching him as a youngster at Boys Club, John Evans and Greeley Central. These days, Laverty is coaching Uyemura's children – including sons Zach, a seventh grader at Saint Mary, and Ty, a freshman now at Platte Valley High School. For three years, Zach has enjoyed that same dedicated-yet-considerate coaching style and that wealth of knowledge his father experienced working under Laverty more than 30 year ago.

"He teaches us a lot," Zach said. "He's a fun coach to play for. ... It's very easy to get along with him. But, on the other side, he really knows what he's talking about."

Zach said Laverty has even made him enjoy playing defense, an aspect of the game of basketball that most players consider more chore than privilege.

The admiration of many

Further showing his unmatched humility, Laverty claims he's learned more from his proteges-done-good than he ever could have imparted upon them. But, just the mere mention of Laverty's name to those former players of his tells a different story.

"You won't find a better person in this world," Hanson said. "The way he tells a story, you're just hanging on every word. He's so easy to get along with. He's just the guy that everybody wants to be around. ... I wish there were more Dick Lavertys in this world."

In the 80s, Hanson – a former Greeley West High School standout – played hoops for Laverty at John Evans and for a club all-star team Laverty coached. Hanson then coached alongside Laverty with the Northridge girls' basketball program about a decade ago. He recalls Laverty never raising his voice but still always getting his point across.

Another of Laverty's former pupils, Greg Watts, has coached for 27 years. He is an assistant on Grandview's boys' soccer team. Before that, he was the head coach for Eaglecrest's girls' team for 11 years and for the school's boys' team for nine years. Laverty coached him on the soccer field at Greeley Central from 1990-93. Watts still talks with his longtime mentor, Laverty, on a weekly basis, as so many of Laverty's pupils do. Watts speaks glowingly of the influence Laverty had on him on the soccer pitch and off of it.

"Laverty is the epitome of a true coach," Watts said. "He could talk to you as an athlete. He could get the most from you. He could motivate in ways that make you say, 'What?' But then, you'd come out and ... wow.

"... And he always came with this calm demeanor."

Much of what has allowed Laverty to be so influential in such a wide range of sports for so long is his willingness to listen to others. He certainly doesn't pretend to know it all. And, his willingness to lean on others has played no small role in his ability to evolve as a coach and remain an effective instructor for all of 64 years.

"If he didn't understand the game or he didn't play the game, he found people that could demonstrate," Watts said.



It's easy to see why Laverty never let his ego keep him from asking for help: He seemingly doesn't have an ego. The same humility that makes him so reluctant to draw any attention to himself is exactly what makes him so adored by so many of the players he has worked with and the fellow coaches he has worked alongside. Henneke played soccer for Laverty at Greeley Central from 1994-95. She played softball for him from '95-98, the first three years the Wildcats had a program. Laverty assisted Henneke coaching Northridge's softball team from 2007-10, and Henneke has tried numerous times to bring him on board at Windsor during the past half-decade.

"He's certainly one of the most genuine people," Henneke said. "Everything you get from him is real. There is no front to any of that. He's genuine. He's kind. He's thoughtful. Because of years of experience, there's a ton of foresight that goes with that."



At Belmont, Letterman Dick Laverty played Varsity Baseball and was on the 1960 Northern League Basketball Championship team, coached and influenced greatly by Tom Arima. In the 1960 yearbook Dick is noted as the best defensive player in the league. He was in Eulexians and the Slide Rule Club. (He did teach Math) Dick passed away in February 2022.