

Longtime Wrestling Coach Racich Passes Away



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Longtime wrestling coach Bill Racich unexpectedly passed away Friday.

A legend in collegiate wrestling, Racich has been the Bears' head coach since 1980. He ranks first in wins among all men's single-sport coaches ever to serve at the college, fourth on the NCAA's all-time list for all divisions, and second among all active coaches.

Under Racich, Ursinus established itself as the flagship program of the Centennial Conference. The Bears won 11 CC championships, including five in a row from 2003-07 to become the only school in league history to accomplish that feat.

Racich coached 56 Centennial Conference champions and over two hundred Middle Atlantic and Centennial Conference place-winners, and has seen 17 All-Americans and two CoSIDA Academic All-Americans go through his program. Five Ursinus wrestlers have won the prestigious Chris Clifford Award, while six others were named Outstanding Wrestler at the CC championship meet.

A coach for the better part of four decades, Racich brought an incredible enthusiasm for his role as a teacher and mentor, and leaves behind a legion of student-athletes who were forever changed for the better by his presence.

"Bill always used to talk and joke about 'living the dream' and how great it was to coach kids," said Director of Athletics Laura Moliken. "He'd say, 'they don't' really change; you just have to adjust how you teach the sport."

"Every time we spoke, he couldn't help but gush and show pictures of his granddaughter wearing dresses and bows and wondering if she might be a wrestler one day."

Racich twice coached at the prestigious NWCA All-Star Classic, with All-Americans Chris Donaldson (125, 2013 at George Mason University) and Derek Arnold (149, 2015 at Georgia Tech University) representing the Bears.

In 2001, Racich was inducted into the Ursinus College Hall of Fame for Athletes. Perhaps even more impressive is the academic success his student-athletes have enjoyed through the years. Under Racich, 91 Ursinus wrestlers have been named NCAA Division III Scholar All-Americans, including nine in 2017. All senior letter winners Racich coached have graduated from Ursinus.

As a head coach, Racich was named Coach of the Year 13 times over his time in the Pennsylvania Ches-Mont League, Middle Atlantic Conference, Centennial Conference, and NCAA East Regional. During Racich's storied career at Ursinus, the Bears never had a losing season; his 1988-89 team set the current standard of 21 dual-meet wins.

Under Racich's direction, Ursinus is the home of three highly prestigious wrestling tournaments in the Fall Brawl, North-South Duals, and the Will Abele Invitational. Racich also directed the Citrus Invitational held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida each December.

Internationally, Racich was the head coach of the 2013 Division III Cultural Exchange team that visited France, Bulgaria, and Turkey and won the George Kalchev International Freestyle tournament held in Varna, Bulgaria.

Ursinus College was host to the USA-Russia World Dual meet in 1997, which was televised by ESPN2. Following that historic event, Racich received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for his outstanding and invaluable service to the community from United States Congressmen Jim Fox. He is a USA Wrestling Bronze Certificate coach and in 1998 guided a College Exchange Team to the Dominican Republic which competed in Greco-Roman and Freestyle against the Dominicans and Cuba.

In 2003, Ursinus College was an International Training site for the Freestyle World Championships. Teams training at Ursinus included the Men's and Women's 2003 World Freestyle Champions, Georgia Republic and Japan. The French Men and Women's Freestyle teams also trained at Ursinus. Several Ursinus College wrestlers have travelled to Bulgaria, Turkey and Siberia to train with the Division III Cultural Exchange teams.

Racich was also a standout in his own right. At West Chester University, he was a four-year varsity performer and a team captain in 1974-75. He was a four-time conference finalist and a two-time NCAA Division I qualifier. In 1974 Racich won the 118-pound Middle Atlantic Conference championship, and his West Chester team was MAC champions in 1971, 1972 and 1974.

In 1975, Racich was the East Coast Conference Champion at 126 pounds and captained the team that defeated Minnesota, Northwestern, Purdue, Illinois, and Indiana on a Midwest tour. In 1978 he placed fourth in the USA National Open Freestyle Championships at 136.5 pounds, helping his New York Athletic Club win United States Wrestling Federation Championships.

In addition to his wrestling accomplishments, Racich was a high-level rugby player since competing for Plymouth-Whitemarsh High School in 1971, and a founding member of the West Chester University Rugby Club. Following college he continued his rugby career by playing for Turks Head RFC and then for national power Philadelphia-Whitemarsh Rugby Club. His PWRFC team won the East Penn Rugby Union multiple times, captured the Can-Am Championships and USA East Region titles, placed second in the 1989 Men's USA Rugby Championships, and in 1999 won the USA Rugby 7's National title. He served as a 12-term President of the Philadelphia Whitemarsh Rugby Club and played on two tours to Europe, the North Sea Tour (1992) and the Stockholm International 10's Championships (1996).

Racich is a member of the Conshohocken Sports Hall of Fame (1986), West Chester Wrestling Hall of Fame, Philadelphia-Whitemarsh Rugby Hall of Fame (1999), Plymouth-Whitemarsh Distinguished Graduates Hall of Fame, Ursinus College Hall of Fame for Athletes (2001), Southeast Pennsylvania Wrestling Hall of Fame (2003), Pennsylvania Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame (2003), and the Division III National Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame (2003).

Racich was the longtime District Chair for Health and Physical Education (K-12) in the Spring-Ford Area School District. He also served as the Middle School Athletics Coordinator and coached cross country and track in the district. His son, Cole, is a 2007 Ursinus College graduate and received his Doctorate of Physical Therapy from Temple University in 2012.

The eighth of nine children, Racich is survived by his wife, Julia, and his son, Cole. An Ursinus alum, "Jules" is a fixture at every Ursinus match and is beloved as a team mother, friend to all coaches, and a matriarch of Ursinus wrestling.

Information about funeral arrangements will be provided soon.

