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For some coaches, the instinct to instruct, teach and lead never goes away.

After retiring in 2009, Grant coaching legend Larry Pritchett watches every game, in a way, like a coach. Whether it be at a high school game, on television or in a stadium, Pritchett has never lost the passion for coaching and it's because of that passion that he is forever honored on the walls of Perkins County Schools.

As a means of reducing physical awards, the Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA) has gone digital with its Hall of Fame plaques. The physical plaques have been sent to the various schools around the state where the coaches earned their hall of fame status.

Pritchett was inducted into the NSAA Hall of Fame in 2010.

PCS athletic director Carlie Wells feels it is a great honor to have the plaques given to the school to show past, present and future generations of Plainsmen athletes the fruits of years of hard work in coaching.

"These kids will have memories that will last a lifetime. Larry (and the other coaches) have built friendships with the kids that will last a lifetime," Wells says. "That is what coaching is all about, teaching kids about doing the right thing."

Pritchett's dry wit is evident as he looks at his plaque and says, "This has spanned 50 years. Some of the kids have caught up with me in age, that is when I knew to get out."

The honor is humbling, according to Pritchett, but he says he never got into coaching for the glory or the accolades.

"You don't go into coaching for that stuff, it just happens. You have good kids through the years and you work hard when you stay in it for nearly 40 years," Pritchett says.

He is thankful for his time at Perkins County.

"This district has allowed me to do some other things like coach some all-star teams, we took a team to Vegas," Pritchett says. "Then you start building some relationships with kids from other schools that are now coaching and you go watch their team play."

Every year Pritchett revels in the alumni basketball tournament weekend as he gets to see some great hoops action and re-connect with former players.

Pritchett explained coaches are becoming younger and younger and when he runs into coaches he came up through the years with, the conversations all run the same.

"A lot of sentences start out with 'do you remember when?'" Pritchett says with a chuckle.

He enjoys going to the state basketball tournament every year and notes that this year he was able to watch Ben Ries coach Norfolk. Ries, a standout for Norfolk High School, was on an all-star team Pritchett coached in Las Vegas.

"It has been fun to watch those guys have success, too," Pritchett says.

No matter where he is, in a seat in the stands or in a chair at his home, Pritchett has never lost the coaching mentality.

"Very seldom do I go and watch for enjoyment. I always try to guess what they are going to do, what they are running," Pritchett said. "It is still fun to do that."

Coaching is in the Pritchett family. Larry and his wife, Marlene, have two sons, Travis and Troy. Troy is an administrator and coached at Malcolm and Travis is a CPA in Lincoln.

Even Marlene is a coach within the family.

"My wife allowed me to coach while she raised our kids and she did a better job of raising our

kids than I did of coaching,” Pritchett explains, giving Marlene a look of adoration.

Being able to coach his sons was a special career highlight for Pritchett.

For eight straight years Pritchett coached with his sons on the squad.

“It was fun to have your kids in the program,” Pritchett said. “They may not have always thought it was fun, but I enjoyed being able to go to work and see my kids in coaching.”

Marlene said there were times when it wasn’t easy for the family have their children on the team.

Larry agreed.

“It was tough having to hear them in the stands yell at how stupid her husband was or how the kids weren’t playing right,” Pritchett says.

The pressure of being the son of a coach was evident for Pritchett and his boys.

“It puts that pressure on them. They used to ask my boys what I was going to do with this or that and I never told my boys, so they didn’t know,” Pritchett said. “I was told that you want your boys to be really good or really bad. If they were bad you wouldn’t play them, if they were good, then people would understand.”

Going to games as young boys and later watching game film with their father, all of the Pritchett boys picked up different nuances about the game.

Marlene relates that sometimes there were two sides to the story when it came to coach and player.

“You get the kids’ side and then the dads’ side,” Marlene says.

Travis Pritchett, according to family lore, did not come home until nearly 10 p.m. after one practice due to Larry ‘coming down on him.’

Pritchett booted his own son out of a freshman versus sophomore game only to realize he then did not have enough players to complete the scrimmage.

Ed Haenfler and Bill Ramsey were mentors to Pritchett when the Kansas native arrived in Grant to begin his career on the plains in 1965.

“The biggest lesson they taught me was how to work with kids,” Pritchett says. “Coach Haenfler told me ‘you don’t need 18-year-old buddies. You need their respect but they aren’t close friends.’”

Pritchett kept that slight distance from his players and now says that some have become his close friends.

“To be able to work with them and be fair with them was the biggest thing I learned,” Pritchett said. “It is one of the most difficult things to get as a coach because there are kids that need a pat on the back all the time and then some that need a pat a little lower to get them to move.”

During the twilight of his career, Pritchett explains that family life has changed over the years and coaches become instructors, disciplinarians and therapists all in one.

“It is different than it was in 1965. You did more counseling in the locker room than some counselors did in their office,” Pritchett says. “Kids learn they can confide in you and sometimes you hear things you did not want to hear, but that is something you have to deal with. Once you know that, it makes it a little easier to deal with the kid, too.”

Growing up in Kansas, Pritchett and a friend from Pennsylvania rode up to Grant for a job interview, a part of the country they were not familiar with but eager to explore.

Pritchett sat at the elementary office waiting for his job interview when he was approached by a woman.

“A car drove up and a lady got out and asked if I was there for an interview. I said yes and she said I was at the wrong school and her husband had been waiting for over an hour,” Pritchett

says. "I told the guy with me 'kiss the job goodbye, I am over an hour late.'"

The principal, E. Lee Todd hired Pritchett because, Pritchett said, Todd wanted to go on vacation in early August and just needed a body in the position.

Through the years, Pritchett has had three tenures at the helm of PCS basketball.

"We were gone twice. I may be the only coach in Nebraska who has been the head coach at a school three different times," Pritchett says. "This has been an awesome experience."

Other Pritchett highlights include:

- In 2009 the basketball court at Perkins County High School was named 'Pritchett Court,' which is inside the Larry and Marlene Pritchett Gymnasium.
- Pritchett is a member of the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame, inducted in 2009.
- Pritchett was a finalist in 2008 for the National Coach of the Year in boys basketball.
- In 2006 Pritchett was named Athletic Director of the Year in District 4.

Other coaches and athletes with ties to Perkins County in the NSAA Hall of Fame include: the late Al Gaston, the late Ed Haenfler, Bill Jackman, Fred Bessler, the late E. Lee Todd and Larry Vlasin.