



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Nadine Horne, RSS Volleyball Coach

Teaching life lessons is what Nadine Horne's approach to coaching volleyball is all about, but it pays off for her as well as for her teams. For the past 21 years, Ross S. Sterling High School's head volleyball coach has received the American Volleyball Coaches Association's award for having a team with a cumulative grade point average of 4.1 or higher on a 5.0 grading scale. Only two schools in the nation have been able to accomplish this feat. For the 2012-2013 school year, the team's grade point average was 4.6733.

"I talk to all of them about academics," said Horne. "Only a small percentage of our players will go on to play ball in college, so they need some high grades to apply for academic scholarships."

Horne is flexible about letting students attend tutorials and diligent about keeping in contact with their teachers to make sure they are passing. Along with the high standards she sets for academics, Horne also has expectations for their behavior.

"The kids have to sign a contract with me, telling me they'll strive to have all A's and B's and they'll behave in class," said Horne. "I won't tolerate my players being disrespectful to adults and disrupting class."

With all of this emphasis on grades and behavior, do they ever have a winning season? For 20 of her 22 seasons at RSS, including this year, the varsity volleyball team has made it to at least the first round of playoffs. The Lady Rangers earned the title of co-district champs three years and bi-district champs eight years, including 2003 when they also were area champs and played in the regional quarter finals. The past two years, the Lady Rangers have made it to the second round of playoffs and were bi-district champs. With a 17-16 record this year, the playoffs again loom ahead of Horne's team.

Horne also hit a milestone in her volleyball coaching career recently when she collected her 500th win at the game against Lee High School September 10.

"I didn't realize it until several games later," said Horne. "I have a young team this year, and I'm really trying to focus on helping them, so I wasn't thinking about my record."

Horne has coached for the past 30 years, starting at San Antonio Memorial High School and moving to Lamar University, where she served as assistant basketball coach for two years. She landed at Sterling in 1986 and has been head volleyball coach since 1992. She always set high expectations for herself in Waco at Robertson High School, where she played basketball and volleyball and ran track as well as at McClendon Junior College and Sam Houston State University, where she played on a scholarship. She sets those expectations just as high for her players.

In fact, two of Horne's assistant coaches are her former players. Natalie Nichols, 1999 RSS graduate and Health Science teacher, coaches the freshman volleyball team, and her sister, Melanie Nichols Joseph, 2001 RSS graduate and health teacher, coaches junior varsity volleyball and track. Kasey Brentzel, another former player, coached with her for three years but now works as a certified public accountant.

"Hiring my former players made sense," said Horne. "They played for me, so they know my system and they know what I'll tolerate."

Having played for Horne, they also share her philosophy about working with high school athletes.



Nadine Horne, coach of the Sterling High School Lady Rangers volleyball team, watches during a tense moment at a recent game against Beaumont Westbrook. Also pictured are (right) Alan Eschberger (filming) and (l to r) Erin Kelly, Myrah Urquidez, manager, Emily Johnson and Shelby Grigsby.

"Coach Horne was just as serious about academics as she was about athletics," said Joseph. "She wanted us to strive to make the A's we were capable of making, and she checked our grades and eligibility all the time. We have the same expectations for our girls."

Nichols is proud to work with her former coach and is glad that she stresses academics and behavior as well as grades.

"She still keeps this tradition alive. The teachers know what to expect from our volleyball girls, both academically and behavior-wise," said Nichols.

Horne's current team members feel the same way about their coach. Caroline Fess, a sophomore varsity player with a 5.4 grade point average, appreciates the high standards to which she holds her players and the advice she gives them about life.

"She works lots of life lessons into the game," said Fess. "She tells us it helps us to work hard in everything we do. Even if it's challenging, you have to put your 'all' into it."

Junior Hazel Jackman benefits not only from the life lessons she receives from Coach Horne, but also from the encouragement from the other players.

"She tells us that what we do reflects on the volleyball program, so we always try to have good behavior and to work well with our teammates. We encourage each other to try to boost everyone's confidence," said Jackman.

After 30 years as a coach, with 500-plus wins under her belt, Horne says she doesn't really have plans for retirement.

"Whenever the Lord tells me, I'm going to go," said Horne. "I thought about it last year when I hit 30 years, but I didn't have peace about it. I prayed about it, and the Lord told me, 'Just do your job,' so I'm still here."

Sterling will take on Beaumont Westbrook in a playoff match November 1 to determine which team will play the third and fourth seeds in the playoffs. The Lady Rangers will play a bi-district playoff match on Tuesday, November 5, at Channelview Athletic Facility against Pearland or Alvin at 6:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m., depending on the outcome of the playoff match Friday.



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