

wild ride

AND ENJOYING EVERY BIT OF IT

Rich Zvosec '83 has gone from hitting golf balls, to coaching, to author, with no plans of slowing down

By Debbie Richard, '02, '04, Assistant Director of Marketing

Alumni often have particular memories of their time at Defiance College. For Rich Zvosec, '83, it's hitting golf balls from the dorm quad toward Whitney Hall. "The goal was to hit the ball as far as you could, without hitting the building...or breaking any windows," quipped Zvosec during a visit to the DC campus earlier this year.

Being a golf pro, however, was not in the cards for Zvosec. Instead, he turned to coaching.

Zvosec transferred to Defiance College as a sophomore after high school friend Larry Flynn told him about DC. "Larry said it was a good place, with teachers who were very encouraging," said Zvosec. "I also wanted to be a coach for a Division I school after graduation. When most athletes are asking questions about how much time they will play, I only had one question. 'Can you get me a coaching job at a Division I school?' Coach Hohenberger said yes, so I transferred."

After graduation, basketball coach Marv Hohenberger did help Zvosec get a Division I coaching position at Bowling Green State University. From there, Zvosec went on to a career that included head coaching positions at St. Francis College in New York, the University of North Florida and, the most recent, University of Missouri – Kansas City. "My dad was a coach when I was younger, and I saw the impact he had with the kids. While my dad went on to be a high school principal, I only wanted to be a coach," commented Zvosec.

It was after being fired from UMKC on his birthday that Zvosec took a career path change. He started speaking publicly and wrote a book entitled *Birds, Dogs & Kangaroos: Life on the Back Roads of*

College Basketball. It's a humorous memoir that takes readers on a journey through Zvosec's life as a college coach sharing details seldom discussed with those outside the game.

"When I worked at St. Francis, because of the unique situations, my mom kept saying I should write a book," said Zvosec. "When I

did, my goal was to give the fans and future coaches the perspective of life in the low-majors. Not every school has the budget of Duke, and I wanted people to know what it was really like.

"It was also a way for me to answer in writing, what so many ask. Why do you do it?" continued Zvosec. "I've been doing it for



25 years, and I love it! It's not for fame, not for money or any of the typical responses. I do it for the kids. When a previous student contacts me to say they took a new job, got married or had a child, I know that I've made a difference."

Zvosec has made a difference with many of the student athletes he's coached. "I realized I had gone full circle when I received a call from Ricky Menendez, one of my first recruits. He was being inducted into the Lorain Sports Hall of Fame and asked if I would be there. Of course I said yes." It was a few days later, he found out he would also be inducted in the Lorain Sports Hall of Fame, too.

Zvosec also remembers the coaches that touched his life. While in his third or fourth year at UMKC and getting ready to coach a game, he was told an old friend was there to see him. When he went out to see who it was, it was Coach Hohenberger. He'd driven over to see him coach the game. Zvosec remembers that as a special moment and a great surprise – as well as making him a bit nervous. Fortunately, his team won.

"The best thing about writing the book has been catching up with old friends," said Zvosec.

While no longer coaching, Zvosec is still involved with basketball as an analyst on ESPN and the Big Ten Television Network. He likes that no one can tell him he made a bad move anymore and still gets to watch the kids and coaches. It also works to his favor that he isn't from a Big Ten school and is often considered a neutral party when commenting on games and schools.

"The biggest misconception about broadcasters is that the good ones make it look easy. It's about knowing the right timing and saying the right thing."

He also does radio and has been in a few movies and television spots. Zvosec also speaks professionally. One of his speaking programs is called "Drink, Swear, Steal and Lie your way to Success."

"It's not what you think," Zvosec explained with a laugh. "I used to say that line at the end of the basketball camps I helped coach when the parents are there ready to take their kids home. I got the proverbial gasps, which subsided when I expanded the saying. It's applicable in so many ways; I use it as a motivational presentation. Drink from the fountain of friendship, you never know how the person beside you will help you."

Swear to make today a bit better than yesterday. Steal time to be by yourself, to understand yourself. And lie in bed and thank the powers that be for those who have impacted you in your life."

For Zvosec, he thanks many people who have impacted him. DC business professor Garnet Smith is included in this group.

"Not only was she a huge supporter of the basketball team, she was also a life mentor who could see your future potential," said Zvosec. "She helped me solidify the philosophy I had with my students, 'What are you going to do when the ball stops bouncing?'"

The ball stopped bouncing in 2007 and Zvosec hasn't looked back. With the success of his first book, Zvosec hopes to publish a second book, a self-motivation book entitled *Happy Birthday, You're Fired*. He also plans to continue in broadcast media and acting in movies and television.

Zvosec and his wife, Sandy, live in the Kansas City area and have raised three children. His two youngest are in high school while the oldest currently attends college with plans to go into sports administration.

Birds, Dogs & Kangaroos: Life on the Back Roads of College Basketball was produced by Ascend Media Books and can be found at major retailers such as Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble Books. ♦



Whether it is getting together to share a few laughs, do important service, or participate in a "kick-off" for the Transforming Difference campaign, alumni are finding that getting together with other Yellow Jackets in their region is just plain fun. And getting to know our 18th President, Mark Gordon has been an extra bonus.

While regional events will quiet down for the holidays, watch the alumni website at alumni.defiance.edu after January 1 for the listing of new DCAN regional and Transforming Difference Campaign kick-offs across Ohio and the rest of the country.

IMPORTANT 2010 DATES

January 19
Alumni Basketball Day and
Coach of Year Awards

July 26
Yellow Jacket Golf Classic

October 4-10
Homecoming