

Ed Gastonguay - Coach



In 1965 as Fitchburg High's famed track and field coach Erkki Koutonen gathered his depth laden squad led by the likes of co-captains Rod Tulanen and Barney Keenan, Warren Muir, Bob Girouard, Dennis Belliveau and Lothar Huckaby, he introduced them to their new assistant coach, Ed Gastonguay. Actually the coach's introduction was probably not needed by this group of track stars. They were probably familiar with coach Gastonguay and his track ability. When they were in the fifth or sixth grade these kids had probably traveled to Crocker field with their parents or older brothers and watched Ed Gastonguay as he won the North Central Mass Track and Field 440 championship as a Notre Dame High freshman on the cinders of Crocker Field.

Ed's college career at Brandeis University was often written up in the local papers. As a half miler, Ed won the Greater Boston Championship 880 setting a Brandeis university record that still stands.

In these halcyon days of track and field in the early sixties, Ed learned that respect was a two way street and kids appreciated Ed's attitude toward their individual needs and his knowledge of middle distance running. These were the glory years of Fitchburg track and field as Koutonen-Gastonguay rolled through the completion.

In 1975 Ed became the head track and field coach upon Erkki's retirement. The highlight of his outdoor coaching career was the 1976 undefeated District Championship team which included Chris Woods, Doug Romano (Hall of Famer) and Mike Gallo, New England intermediate hurdle champion.

In 1974 Coach Gastonguay took over the boys cross country program which he would maintain for twenty years with great success. His record of 133 wins to 24 losses is noteworthy. Ed's teams had eight undefeated seasons and nine League championships. His teams finished in the top five in the Districts eleven times and placed 4th once and eighth twice in the State Championships. Thanks to the accomplishments of his many great track and field and cross country athletes, Ed was selected by his peers to the Massachusetts Track Coach's Hall of Fame.

But if you really want to know what type of Coach Ed Gastonguay was, then you had to follow him in his last coaching job at FHS. In 1986 Ed decided to give freshman girls basketball coaching a try. He loved it. If you have ever been to a 9th grade basketball contest, it can appear to be disorganized chaos, but Ed thrived in that environment. He was great with the girls whether they won or lost by twenty five points. Ed is still very proud of his freshman girls' record of 133-24. He is also proud of the fact that he was part of the coaching staff which brought the FHS girls basketball team a District Championship and a trip to the state finals at the Centrum in 1990. Little did he know that the star point guard on that squad, Paula Goodchild, would someday present him with grandchildren.

To say that Ed Gastonguay is a nice guy is to state the obvious. But nice guys do not always land in the Hall of Fame. Ed has the record to justify his selection. During his thirty five seasons of coaching cross-country, indoor and outdoor track, Coach Gastonguay's squads won nearly ninety percent of their meets.

Ed Gastonguay was a great athlete, a great coach, and is a wonderful family man who has been married to his beloved Jeanne for forty seven years. The Gastonguays' have three children: Greg, Cherrie and Doug who presented them with six grandchildren: Johnna, Ean, Samantha, Johnathan, Emily and Alisha. Following thirty nine years of teaching and being a guidance counselor at FHS, Ed is enjoying golf, summer on Cape Cod, and watching his grandkids compete athletically. But true to his nature, Ed has remained close to high school Athletics by refereeing basketball, soccer and track. Today FHS is overjoyed to induct Ed Gastonguay into its Sport's Hall of Fame as one of its all time best coaches and finest gentlemen.