

Larry Harte

1955 - 2021



Larry Harte was a man of extensive good will with an ever-present smile on his face. He was exceptionally generous as well. In the 1980s, he hosted Saturday tournaments in which his team had no chance of winning. “When my team swept every flight at one of his events, he handed me the trophy and then brought out a broom and began to work in a facetious summary,” says Ed Waits. “He was all about giving, not winning.”

Larry coached for 40 years, first at Warren High School and then at Warren Mott, replacing Mark Sobieralski. He received our association’s Coach of the Year award twice, first in 1994 and again in 2018. This time span speaks to his dedication but also hints at his reluctance to be recognized. “He was by far the most difficult coach I have ever encountered in terms of prying information out of him for an article praising him,” says Ed who has been writing this stuff since 1988. “When he was chosen State Coach of the Year several years ago, he protested the board’s choice declaring the injustice of the choosing him over the current Novi coach whose team had that year captured the Division 1 state championship (Vince Preuthun of Trenton good naturedly told him to shut up).”

Larry had been a board member from District 7 of the MHSTeCA since 1996 and had missed our meetings only once. He rarely spoke at gatherings but when he did, it was usually with a smile on his face while he said something positive. He implored members to financially help out Romeo’s Mark Dubiel when Dubiel suffered a debilitating stroke. He conducted Regional Coach of the Year balloting and when Ed mistakenly sent balloting materials to the wrong person, they were turned it over to Larry because “he does such a good job.” He performed his tasks with quiet, genial, self-effacing humor.

Larry attended our clinics starting in 1987, “trying to update my knowledge.” He once took his players to U of M and was able to ask questions of NCAA champion Brienne Moore “for a memorable learning experience.” And memorable were the home dual meets where there was an opponent’s hospitality table. After the outcome of the flights, each player got to serve two balls at a Little Caesar’s target. The prize was a gift certificate for a freebie.

For 24 years, he ran the Sterling Hgts. Parks and Recreation summer tennis lessons program along with monitoring the end-of-season city tournament. He was a member of the Macomb County Tennis Coaches Association since its inception in 1988. He became the historian of the Macomb County Coaches Association “because I am a dinosaur” and attended every post season meeting.

This tennis association annually hands out awards for coach of the year, team of the year, MVP of the county, and all county distinction in every flight. They also sometimes choose a coach for induction into the Macomb County Coaches Association Hall of Fame. Larry always helped write the program booklet and made presentations with his ever-present smile.

Several years ago, this two-time MHSTeCA Coach of the Year took his talents to Warren DeLaSalle where he helped out then-coach Jake Jones as their program’s assistant coach. “I worked with Larry for just a few years but he has been an icon in Macomb County tennis for decades,” says Jake. “He was incredibly knowledgeable about the game and absolutely loved tennis. He did things on the court that people half his age would never dream of. He was always willing to stay after practice – or create a new practice – for any player. He demonstrated a proclivity to watch and support our players in their various other extracurricular activities and was a regular at the school’s various honors banquets and graduations.”

Unfortunately, Larry’s funeral service in Center Line came on the same day as that of Tiger Teusink, almost two hundred miles away. This forced former MHSTeCA president and current Grosse Pointe coach Mark Sobieralski to make an agonizing choice. He “stayed home” to honor Larry whom he had known and worked with since the 1980s.

Mark spoke at the service and then stood aside as parents and players – some tearfully – testified as to how generous Larry was with his time and talent and how much he meant to so many people for over four decades. One former player journeyed all the way from Delaware to talk about how much Coach Harte impacted his life. “He made kids feel important and gave them self esteem,” says Mark. “He changed kids’ lives.”

That same kid from Delaware, a self-described lost soul when he first entered Warren Mott, played on Larry’s team for two years before his family moved to the Ortonville Brandon district, yet Larry traveled to that school to see the kid play a varsity basketball game. This young man felt awkward and out of place as a freshman at Mott but Larry took him under his wing. At the service, this man expressed life-long gratitude.

Mark, a superb player and current teaching pro in the Grosse Pointe area, fondly remembers winning the Romeo Open Doubles Tournament with Larry who possessed a cannonball serve. He had played for Warren High School in the early 1970s while Mark competed at nearby Warren Fitzgerald. Years later, the two would strive to “spread the wealth” around in terms of Regional Coach of the Year selections. As one can imagine, Larry -- often enough deserving -- would decline the honor.

“He was the epitome of what it means to be a great coach,” says Jake.