



Ward Olson

Monroe

1928-2023

For decades, varsity tennis players at Monroe High School have been the beneficiaries of some of the best coaching in history. No fewer than four of them are enshrined into our Hall of Fame.

Tim Tambling, the coach of two-time state champion Vic Braden, was inducted into the very first class, that of 1986. Larry Alto joined him two years later. In 1994, the much respected Stan Noland moved over to lead the Trojans from his previous post at St. Mary's Catholic Central.

In the midst of this was Ward Olson, who was the face of the program from 1957 to 1993. **His teams accumulated over 350 dual meet victories. In a 36-year span, this Ishpeming native not only filled Coach Alto's shoes but started the girls program in 1971. His boys team recorded 247 wins while suffering only one losing season while his girls were 116- 117.**

Although a gifted athlete, Ward did not grow up a tennis player. He competed in basketball and in track while in high school and high jumped for MSU while in college. But he wasn't afraid to ask for help. He read books, went to clinics, talked to colleagues, and learned from the kids themselves. He spent 14 years developing interest at the junior level. He organized paddleball tournaments in his Phys Ed classes and ran badminton tournaments before school started in the mornings. Those who showed promise got an invitation to go out for the tennis team when they got to high school.

Yes, Ward stepped into a proverbial gold mine in that Monroe was a tennis town but his longevity and commitment helped perpetuate a tradition that went over the years from father to son and brother to brother. He was inducted into our Hall of Fame in 1994 and the Michigan High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1997.

“As with all of us educators and coaches, Ward dedicated his life to making others better, in classrooms and on tennis courts,” says Vince Preuthun who coached at nearby Trenton. “Even while in his late 80s and early 90s, he continued to help others with his work at Garland Golf Resort where he would change spikes on golfer’s shoes and refresh them in whatever way he could to help the people play and look better. His life was all about service.