

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY SPORTS SPOTLITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SHANAMAN SPORTS MUSEUM

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Ditching his high-top Converse, Ron Medved ran in socks at a CYO Track Meeting in 1958 and won the 100-yard dash. Photo courtesy of Marc Blau.

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL NFL CAREER, RON MEDVED IS STILL PRACTICING

It's a well-worn adage, the idea that an individual should take life "one day at a time."

But for Ron Medved, the concept has become his latest in-depth project being studied with some colleagues at the Pacific Institute, where Medved spent 45 years as a co-founder and vice president. It's a project that feels very appropriate, especially considering that Medved has practiced what he's now studying – sometimes even subconsciously – throughout a life that has been littered with successes in business as well as in athletics.

Those successes started even before he started high school at Bellarmine Prep.

Medved, who grew up in Tacoma's south end, played all sorts of sports as a child long before settling into the gridiron where he'd become a professional. In 1958, he was part of a team of young people who trekked into Seattle to compete in an all-Catholic track meet.

Medved said the only shoes he had to compete in at the time were his Converse high tops. When he got to the starting line for the 50-yard dash on the track at Catholic Memorial Stadium, Medved looked around and made a decision he thought would help him that day – he removed his shoes, put them behind him and dug a starting hole in the dirt like his other competitors.

Having run in his socks growing up, the feeling was familiar. The decision resulted in a race victory as Medved made the most of that one day.

"I'd never really thought of it that way," Medved said. "But yeah. I didn't know where I stacked up against a lot of those guys. I thought my Converse were a little clunky. So I did it more out of fear than anything else. But I ended up winning it by quite a bit. For my confidence, it was a big deal. I was faced with the idea that 'I'm pretty good. I gotta do something with this.'"

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SHANAMAN Sports Museum

The mission of the Shanaman Sports Museum of Tacoma-Pierce County is to recreate the history of sports in the community by chronicling the evolution of various sports through written, visual and audio mediums and to educate the public about our sports heritage.

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 INFORMATION IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE
 OF THE NEWSLETTER.

FROM THE COLLECTION



Imagine what it would be like to have a football game
 between Penn State and WSU at Stadium Bowl.
 In 1948, Tacomans didn't have to imagine it, they saw it.

REMEMBER WHEN? TACOMA BASEBALL HISTORY MADE IN 2001



Left to Right: John Halama, Blake Berthol, and Brett Tomko

This summer, we have witnessed a Seattle Mariners club in playoff contention hoping to reach the postseason for the first time since 2001.

That has us thinking about some Tacoma baseball history from that very year!

On July 3, 2001, Tacoma Rainiers pitcher Brett Tomko tossed a no-hitter against Oklahoma City, defeating the hometown RedHawks, 7-0. It was the first no-hitter by a Tacoma pitcher since Pat Wernig's no-no in 1991.

Four days later, on July 7, John Halama duplicated the feat, throwing just the tenth no-hitter in Tacoma's history since 1960. Halama's game was also the only 9-inning perfect game in the history of the Pacific Coast League.

Blake Berthol caught both no-hitters.

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Medved, cont. from page 1



Ron Medved finishing 88 yard run vs. Stanford during the 1963 season—the sixth longest run in UW history.
Photo courtesy Ron Medved.

Medved did more than just something with his speed and his athletic ability. He became a standout athlete on the football field and other venues for the Lions, became a star safety for the Washington Huskies under Jim Owens and was drafted by coach Joe Kuharich and the Philadelphia Eagles before the 1966 season.

“It’s amazing that I had a five-year NFL career,” Medved said. “If you’re a player that is a journeyman, you are fighting for your job every day. My goal was to play those five years, to get my NFL pension.”

When he was drafted by the Eagles, Medved found some good luck. Philadelphia needed another defensive back to fill out a six-man room. And Medved, who always worked hard each day, won the job that first year.

By the time his fourth season in Philadelphia approached, Medved thought his NFL fortunes may be running out.

“There was a coaching change (Jerry Williams replaced Kuharich in 1969),” Medved said. “And I was pretty sure they weren’t going to keep me.”

Fortune again intervened. Medved suffered a severe hamstring pull during a preseason game, landing him on injured reserve.

“If that bit of bad luck hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t have had a spot,” Medved said. “But when you’re on injured reserve, your salary is guaranteed. I even came back late that season and played some.”

By the next season, his last in the NFL, Medved was back in the Eagles starting lineup at free safety – ensuring his five years and his goal of a pension. When the 1970 season ended, so did the Tacoma boy’s football career.

He returned to the Northwest, where he helped to start the Pacific Institute. And for 45 years, Medved ‘designed strategies to empower organizations to mobilize the power and creativity of their people,’ as his company bio reads.



Ron Medved, a Bellarmine Prep grad, played defensive back for the Philadelphia Eagles from 1966-70. Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Eagles.

He worked with organizations like NASA, Chicago Title & Trust, Westinghouse-Hanford, Boston Edison, Digital Equipment, Saudia Airlines, National University of Singapore, Heritage University, Gene Juarez, Costco, Guild Mortgage and John L. Scott Real Estate.

“My most recent accomplishment is convincing myself to retire,” Medved said. “The Pacific Institute is something I could do all my life. I had to find a way to get comfortable with retirement.”

What helped was his new project – delving into the psychology of what retirement can look like “under the umbrella of becoming 80, because I’ll be there in a couple of years.” Medved turned 78 years old in May.

What have he and his project partners found over the last six months?

“I’ve developed a whole point of view around living ‘one day at a time,’ and what makes a successful day,” Medved said. “The principle that I carried forward from my football career is the importance of practice. I was known as a ‘practice player,’ because I always practiced as hard as I played.

“So, what does it mean, becoming 80? You have to practice like you think you have the answer. It’s always frustrating to go through life transitions. It takes some time living with an idea before you decide it’s a keeper. Today is practice for tomorrow.”

Doug Drowley is a contributing writer for the Shanaman Sports Museum and is a freelance sports reporter for Scorebooklive.com, The News Tribune and the Seattle Times.

TITLE IX AND LOADS OF TALENT TAKE WETZEL TO VOLLEYBALL HEIGHTS



Courtesy of Laurie (Wetzel) Hayward

When Laurie Wetzel returned from her University of Washington recruiting trip, her father asked how it went.

“Good,” she told him. “I think I want to go there.”

Chuck Wetzel hesitated, explaining that might not be financially feasible with two other daughters to consider.

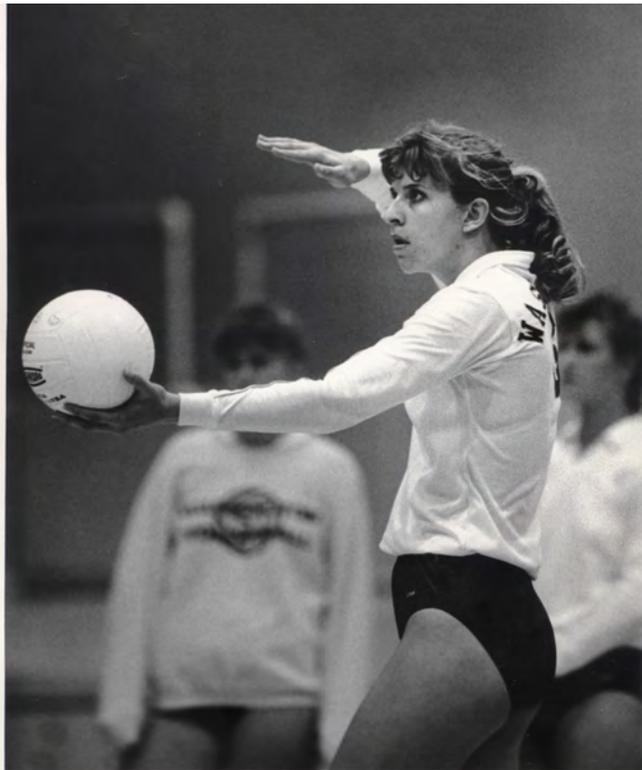
“No, Dad – she said they would pay for it,” Laurie responded, explaining first-year coach Lindy Vivas had offered her a full volleyball scholarship. It was 1985. Laurie was a senior at Puyallup High School and Chuck Wetzel didn’t think those opportunities existed for girls.

“He literally called her (Vivas) on the phone and said, ‘Laurie just got home and she told me this, can you please validate?’ And she said, ‘Yeah.’ Because it wasn’t a thing. Who had heard of that in 1985?”

Title IX, the civil rights law passed in 1972 in part to prohibit sex-based discrimination in any education program, was still finding its footing. Rick Todd, Wetzel’s head coach at the time, believes she was the first Puyallup volleyball player to receive a Division I scholarship.

She made the most of it, leading the Huskies to the NCAA Elite Eight in 1988 and earning All-American status that year – when only 12 were selected. A professional career followed, then a nine-year stint as a D-I assistant coach.

Now Wetzel-Hayward (she married former UW basketball star Mike Hayward in 1994), she is well aware of the impact Title IX continues to make in its 50th anniversary.



Courtesy of Laurie (Wetzel) Hayward

Both of their daughters, who attended Archbishop Murphy High School, earned Division I volleyball scholarships.

Natalie Hayward, the youngest, is a star setter at the University of Tennessee prepping for her “super senior” season (due to the one cut short

by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic). She played her first two seasons at DePaul before transferring. Sam played two seasons at the University of Nevada-Reno before switching to Seattle University, where her career ended when she tore her ACL in her first match.

Laurie spoke about the importance of Title IX during the ceremony for her induction to Puyallup High School’s inaugural Athletic Hall of Fame in 2019.

“My whole speech, especially now that I have two girls that play college athletics, was what Title IX has done for me and the opportunities it gave me at a time when nobody knew yet what you could do,” she said.

Laurie could do it all as an athlete, and not just on the volleyball court. She also excelled in basketball at Puyallup and many thought she would follow that path in college. She led the Vikings to three straight SPSL championships in both and garnered a pair of league MVP honors her senior year.

Oh, and she was a first-team outfielder in softball that year as well. She ran track as a sophomore. “She is a great example of a time where high-school athletes did not have to play just one sport or spend her offseason time playing club sports,” said Tony Batinovich, who is close friends with Todd and followed Wetzel’s career at Washington before taking over as head Puyallup coach in 1992.

Laurie, the Wetzel’s middle daughter, got her love of sports from her late father, calling him “a huge sports buff.” While her sisters were more into cheerleading or beauty pageants, she relished going to a variety of sporting events with him.

When there was a neighborhood basketball game, Laurie would join the boys and hold her own.

“They didn’t let you play if you acted like a girl,” she said. “When I got on the girls’ teams after that, it was kind of easy, because I had always played with the boys.”

At 5-foot-11, Laurie wasn’t particularly tall for a volleyball hitter, but she made up for it with other attributes, according to Todd.

“She always played bigger than she was,” he said. “She was quick and smart, and I think those two things really made up for her lack of height. She was 5-10 or 5-11, still pretty good sized, but when you go up against girls who are over 6-feet tall, you’re a little disadvantaged. But her smarts and her quickness made up for that.

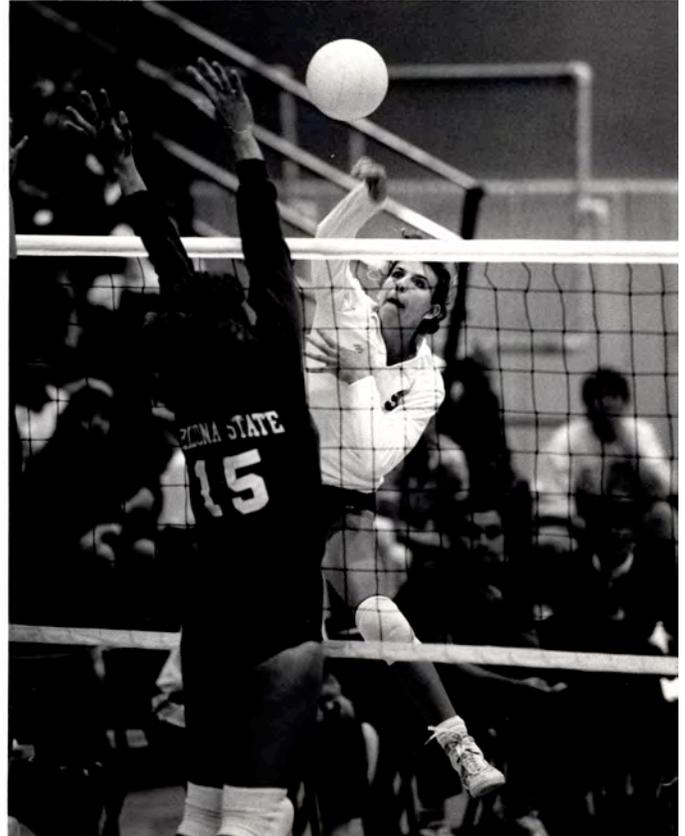
“She was a good leader and she pushed herself and others to get better, and she had a great sense of humor. She was hilarious. And she was such a good overall athlete.”

So much so that Vivas, who was hired after the 1984 season was complete, recruited her without watching her play volleyball. Instead, she attended a Puyallup basketball game and was impressed enough to offer that scholarship.

Laurie flourished at Washington – she still ranks in the program’s top-10 in both kills and kills per set – and was a first-round draft pick (third overall selection) of the New York Liberties in the short-lived MLVB in 1989. She was a USVBA All-American in 1992 and played professionally overseas in ’94 and ’95 (Mike Hayward played professional basketball in Europe for seven seasons after completing his four-year career at UW in ’91).

Her college coaching stops included Idaho, UC-Davis and Fresno State, then she decided to apply for the head coaching job at Nevada. Laurie told Mike if she got the job, she’d keep pursuing that profession and if not, she was done.

The position went to someone else and in 1998 Laurie joined Brooks Sports as the Director of Customer Service & Distribution.



Courtesy of Laurie (Wetzel) Hayward

She was inducted into the Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame in 2005 along with Sarah Silvernail of Fife and Cindy Pitzinger from Rogers of Puyallup – the first volleyball players included. Laurie is currently Director of Operations for Helly Hanson, which manufactures clothing and sports equipment.

Sandy Ringer is a contributing writer for the Shanaman Sports Museum. A 1971 graduate of Eisenhower High School, she attended WSU where she got her degree in Communications.

Sandy covered high school sports for nearly 40 years, predominantly in the Puget Sound area while with the Seattle Times before retiring in 2015.

