



Lacrosse changed everything for McGushin and sons

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St. Charles, IL — Nearly a decade ago lacrosse was just a city in Wisconsin to Dennis McGushin.

Now the St. Charles resident knows better.

After his sons saw Notre Dame's men's lacrosse team competing in the NCAA Final Four in 2001, the already-huge Irish football fans had a new sports passion to go with stints as soccer, baseball, football and basketball players.

"They knew nothing about it and I knew nothing about it," McGushin said. "The NCAA Final Four is always played over Memorial Day weekend. They were off school and I was off work, they were flipping the channels and saw the gold helmets, and they were mesmerized by the sport. It was fast and you could hit.

"They asked me, 'Dad, do you know anything about lacrosse? Do they have it around here?' We found a camp nearby, Sean did it and fell in love with it."

With older son Sean taking to lacrosse immediately and younger son Patrick soon to follow in those footsteps, McGushin was on a crash course to coaching a sport he knew nothing about. He had coaching experience with his sons' football, baseball and basketball teams. But having grown up in the Midwest, lacrosse's eastern seaboard roots had him at a loss.

"When they started playing, there was a big shortage around here of quality coaches and quality refs," McGushin said. "So basically me and (current St. Charles Lacrosse board member) Gregg Dvorak took over as coaches and we basically had to learn the rules overnight. We found 20 guys who loved lacrosse and formed a team that was called the Chicago Attack. We had some talented boys and we beat all the teams around here, but it wasn't because of the coaching, believe me. We had some talented boys."

Victories are just a small part the positive experience for McGushin.

"I wanted to be involved with the boys," McGushin said. "It's so rewarding, and not just for your own sons. I enjoy being a role model for the kids. There's no telling how many times I blew a game from a coaching standpoint and they probably never knew about it, but if I ever would have blown up at the players that would have been something they always remembered. I wanted to be a role model for the kids and teach them about sports and life."

To be sure, there were some stressful times during his coaching career like preparing the field before Wasco baseball games and finding playing time for every player on a team and serving as a board member for St. Charles Lacrosse. The club continues running in high gear as it prepares for the switch to Illinois High School Association-sanctioned play next spring.

"If we were a school sport, the athletic department would handle everything," McGushin said. "But since we're a club sport we have to go get the coaches, do the schedule, arrange transportation, find refs for the games, collect money from the players — we're almost running a business here. There's a lot to do."

However, there was never any second guessing going on. McGushin estimates he coached around 25 teams his sons played on through the years, and he enjoyed every minute of it, from Tri-City football all the way to youth lacrosse.

"I'm proud, not just for my sons, but for all the boys. They feel like my sons," McGushin said. "Originally I was involved just for my sons because you know they grow up so fast. You don't see them when they're in school, you don't see them when they're with their friends, and being a coach was a great way to be involved. I think they enjoyed it.

"When I look back on coaching, it's one of the most rewarding things I've done in my life. I'd recommend it to anyone."

Dennis McGushin

Hometown Homewood

Children Kelly, 22, Sean, 19, Patrick, 17

Coaches Board president for St. Charles Lacrosse

Day job Managing Director for Bank of America

High school Marian Catholic High School (Chicago)

College Western Illinois

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