

{ IN MEMORIAM: SEAN BERTANZA }

# Competitor extraordinaire

By Todd Montana

The Great Northeast Athletic Conference honored the late Sean Bertanza by naming him to its all-conference first team for the 2012-13 men's basketball season. The Lasell senior captain died suddenly and unexpectedly in his sleep Dec. 20 at his home in Seymour, Conn.

The conference recognition was more than a gesture. It was a well-deserved honor.

Through the first nine games of the season, Bertanza was averaging 20.6 points per game, including 28.7 points per game in three conference contests. The Lasell community was shocked to lose not only such a great athlete, but also a great individual.

Plenty of stories surround Sean Bertanza the player and Sean Bertanza the person.

He loved competition so much that he used to bet his high school coach that he could read faster than him. At the same time, it's also been said that he would call out his team's defense and then turn to a teammate and ask what defense was being deployed.

One of the most widely told stories happened Bertanza's junior year against Mount Ida. Lasell had the ball with 2.7 seconds left in a tie game, and in the huddle, head coach Aaron Galletta drew up a play for Bertanza to take the final shot.

As the team broke the timeout Bertanza turned to Galletta and asked, "Whose ball is it, Coach?"

Galletta told his junior guard, "It's our ball, Sean. It's our ball."

Bertanza then calmly buried his sixth 3-pointer of the game at the buzzer to give Lasell the win.

Bertanza is Lasell's seventh all-time leading scorer, having amassed 1,162 points in only 59 games. In his sophomore year, he set the school record for steals in a game with eight against Rivier, one of three single-game records that bear his name.

Three weeks later, Bertanza etched his name not only into the school record books again, but also into the national spotlight with his performance at St. Joseph's (Maine). He exploded for 55 points, on 22-of-32 shooting from the field, including 5-of-7 from three-point territory and 6-of-7 from the free-throw line. The scoring outburst would

be the highest in NCAA basketball that year.

Galletta recounts it as "the greatest shooting performance I have ever seen." Some people who were in Standish, Maine, that afternoon swear that as the game went on, even the Monks fans were starting to cheer Bertanza's brilliant shooting display.

But back to the story about the Mount Ida game. When Galletta retells it, there's the hint of a smile on his face when he recalls the exchange that preceded Bertanza's game-winning shot. That smile belies something more about the relationship between the player and coach, and how much they trusted each other.

As it turns out, the only game in his entire Lasell career that Bertanza didn't start was that very day against Mount Ida.

Looking to create a spark for his team after a couple of subpar performances, Galletta dared to pull his high-scoring guard from the lineup in the conference opener against a bitter rival.

Bertanza didn't sulk or question his role. He competed. He picked up his teammates. He left everything he had on the floor, and he trusted that his coach was doing the right thing to help the team win.

Bertanza checked in with 13:46 left in the first half and proceeded to score 15 of his team's next 25 points while grabbing a pair of rebounds and making two assists. He finished with 34 points in 33 minutes, including the now legendary game-winner.

More importantly, his example showed his teammates what it meant to compete when the sole goal was team success.

Bertanza's competitiveness was legendary among his peers. It was what opposing coaches would reference first when they spoke about him as a player. It was what set him apart on the court. It was why he always wanted the ball in big moments, and it is why he climbed to lofty heights in his time at Lasell.

The person Bertanza was and the way he approached the game made a lasting impact on Lasell and its men's basketball program. The all-conference honors given to him help fortify that legacy.

*Todd Montana is the director of sports information at Lasell College.*



LASELL COLLEGE SPORTS INFORMATION PHOTO

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## DEATHS

Former Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference Commissioner **Thomas Bohlsen** died Dec. 22. He became the conference's first commissioner in 1998 and held the post until he retired in 2008 ... Two-time Olympic track and field medalist **John Thomas** died while undergoing surgery at the age of 71. Thomas attended Boston U. and set a world record with a 7-foot jump as a freshman ... Longtime Miami (Fla.) head baseball coach **Ron Fraser** died Jan. 20 at the age of 79. Fraser led the Hurricanes to two College World Series titles in 1982 and 1985 and completed his career as the third-winningest coach in NCAA baseball history ... Former Denver ice hockey student-athlete **Joe Casey**



Ron Fraser

died Feb. 4 at age 37 in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Casey was a member of the Pioneers from the 1996-97 through 1999-2000 seasons and finished his career with 15 goals and 12 assists while seeing action in 78 games ... **Bob Greenwood**, former men's basketball head coach at Washington U. in St. Louis, died Jan. 31 in Lakewood, Colo., at the age of 83. Greenwood served as the head coach of the Bears for five seasons from 1965 to 1970 ... Former Hofstra AD **Jim Garvey** died Feb. 5 in Kentucky while awaiting a heart transplant. The James V. Garvey Memorial Scholarship was created by his surviving family members and will be presented annually to a deserving student-athlete from the men's lacrosse program at Hofstra ... **Leonard "Lenny" Williams**, the first African-American football player in Delaware history, died March 2 after a brief illness. Williams enrolled two years after the 1950 Parker v. University of Delaware decision that desegregated the university ... Seton Hill head women's lacrosse coach **Kristina Quigley** died March 16 when the bus carrying her team to a match against Millersville crashed. Quigley's unborn baby boy died, as well. Quigley had just begun her second season at Seton Hill program after she began the program at Erskine. She also had coached at Duquesne, her alma mater ... Former Cleveland State Athletics Director **John Konstantinos**, who served there from 1990 to 2002, died March 14 at age 76.

If you want to share a memory of somebody who made a difference in college athletics, please send your thoughts to David Pickle at [dpickle@ncaa.org](mailto:dpickle@ncaa.org).

{ IN MEMORIAM: LAYTON SHOEMAKER }

## Founder of 'the Messiah way'

By Steve King

It's been almost 40 years since Layton Shoemaker first set foot on the campus of Messiah – almost four decades since the man they call “the father of Messiah College soccer” first walked the field that one day would bear his name.

We lost the legend of the pitch on New Year's Day. Shoemaker died at age 70, leaving a legacy that lives on in the hearts and minds of countless former players, colleagues and friends.

A man of modest stature, Shoemaker nonetheless represented a major presence. His personality and character were nothing short of inspiring. As evidenced by the more than 600 people at his memorial service, it's easy to see that those who knew Shoemaker counted him as a close friend. But for those who knew him best, they also knew a man of great passion for living life in a certain way, every day. He believed that he and others should strive for excellence in every area of life, and he modeled that conviction in his leadership.

He inspired his teams to be excellent both on the field and in their Christian faith. The stereotype of Christians being too “soft” or content with second place was a misnomer to Shoemaker. In his mind, the exact opposite was true: United by their faith and commitment to each other, the Messiah players should be inspired to train and compete just as hard, if not harder, than anyone else.

The result of his leadership was the birth of a new culture, not only within Messiah soccer but also the entire athletics department. Over Shoemaker's 23 years on the sidelines from 1974 to 1996, the Falcons won 316 games and had a winning percentage of .751. His teams advanced to the Division III finals in both 1986 and 1988, and he was honored as the National Coach of the Year in 1986.

But Shoemaker would be the first to say that winning, though important, was not the most important outcome. “Excellence” wasn't about just winning and losing, it was about doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons. The larger goal, he believed, was the byproduct of

accomplishing smaller goals each day.

If that sounds similar to the leadership of John Wooden, Shoemaker would've agreed. He based his own principles on those of two contemporary coaches who, like him, believed that Christian faith and ethics could coexist with a fierce competitive drive: John Wooden and Joe Gibbs.

Shoemaker, of course, is not a household name like Wooden and Gibbs. But at Messiah, Shoemaker's name and legacy are prominent. The Falcons soccer teams compete on Shoemaker Field, arguably the toughest place to play in NCAA Division III soccer. In the past 10 seasons, the Messiah soccer teams are a combined 241-12-9 on Shoemaker Field, a .937 winning percentage.

His coaching principles have also carried through to a current generation of Messiah soccer players, as men's head coach Brad McCarty and women's head coach Scott Frey are both former players of Shoemaker's. Under their leadership – and the previous leadership of former men's soccer coach and Shoemaker-disciple Dave Brandt – the Falcons have raised the bar of success to a new level. In the fall of 2012, both the men's and women's programs won the NCAA Division III national championship, marking the fourth time the Falcons have achieved the dual-championship in school history. Since 2000, the teams have combined for 14 titles, with the men's team accounting for nine.

In true Shoemaker spirit, both McCarty and Frey would admit that on-field success is never assumed and never taken for granted. Winning isn't, after all, even the ultimate goal. Excellence requires a more comprehensive vision, one that includes deep and meaningful relationships with God, family, teammates and friends, and the community.

Shoemaker was, of course, passionate about such relationships, and deeply committed to their development. That's surely why so many hundreds of friends showed up to honor his memory, to give thanks for the indelible mark he left on their lives.

*Steve King is the assistant athletics director for public relations and marketing at Messiah College.*



Layton Shoemaker