



JAY HERKELMAN'S JUNIOR COLLEGE SUCCESS COMES FULL CIRCLE WITH HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

He remembers the times in grade school in grade school and junior high where he would walk to Clinton (IA) Community College and watch the men's basketball games.

Jim Wyatt was the head coach at Clinton, then. He, too, would go on to have his own NJCAA Hall of Fame career. But, not before making an impact on Herkelman.

In 1981-- Herkelman's senior year of high school, Wyatt left to take a position at Southeastern (IA). There Wyatt would compile 371 additional wins, make seven trips to the NJCAA National Tournament in Hutchinson in 15 seasons at the helm all the while setting the foundation for Southeastern to win three Division I national championships in five years in 2000, 2003, and 2004 shortly after Wyatt retired in 1997.

Herkelman chose to follow and play the first two seasons of his collegiate career at Southeastern under Wyatt.

Herkelman enjoyed his time in Burlington, highlighted by winning the conference and advancing to the play-in game of the NJCAA National Tournament.

After his time there, Herkelman finished his collegiate playing career at the University of Dubuque-- an NCAA Division III program slightly closer to Herkelman's hometown.



Herkelman, seen in a team photo from his first year coaching as an assistant at the University of Dubuque (Back row, second from the right)

It was pretty immediate that he knew his future was in coaching.

After wrapping up his playing career, finishing both seasons at Dubuque with All-IIAC honors as well as a top 10 mark for best free throw percentage in program history, Herkelman immediately set out on his coaching journey. In his first two years coaching at Dubuque, he was put in charge of the JV program as well as an assistant for the primary team.

"[My first influence] was Jon Davison, who was the head coach at Dubuque," said Herkelman. "I played for and then coached under him. He got me into this profession and I am truly grateful for that.



Herkelman and his assistants look on in a postseason game.

Herkelman would move into a brief stint at Fort Hays State where he completed grad school. After a few stops along the way, including an assistant coach stint at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M, he settled with his wife in Coffeyville-- where he has been ever since.

"Being able to have an impact on young men as they are making the transition from high school to becoming a young man in college," reasoned Herkelman on what his favorite aspect of the junior college game was. "The satisfaction of helping someone through the struggles that the majority of them will have and assisting them in reaching their final destination of a scholarship to a four-year program."

Herkelman has plenty of experience in that capacity. With more than 50 players that have come through his program and on to four-year programs has shown that results speak louder than words in the community of nearly 10,000 people in southeastern Kansas.

One of his most notable players, Reggie Evans, enjoyed a long career in the NBA. Making stops with seven organizations, Evans was on an NBA roster from 2002 until 2015.

It's even easier to hang around a program when you've turned it into a powerhouse and built so many memories around it. One that sticks out to Herkelman was his first year on the job.

"My first year at Coffeyville, I took over a program that was bad-- just 3-26 the year before," reminisced Herkelman. "My assistant at the time, Doug Wagemester and I brought in a whole new team. We won the conference championship, made it to the Region (VI) Championship, where we got beat by Butler in a very close game and ended the season 26-7. The interesting part about that is that in my 23-year career at Coffeyville, we have averaged 26 wins and seven losses per year."

Sometimes basketball can bring light to a not so great situation. In September 2001, Herkelman was involved with an accident while golfing that resulted in him permanently losing his right eye.

"After that, we had a great year and won the conference with an 18-0 record and the Region (VI) Championship," said Herkelman. "My wife gave birth to our third daughter, Halle, early on Friday morning-- just two days later. By Sunday, we were on our way to the NJCAA National Tournament in Hutch and my wife, along with all three daughters (including Halle at just four days old) were at our first game on Tuesday at 11 a.m.."

Coffeyville would go on to play in the national championship bout, falling to Dixie State by just a point (the closest game since 1992). But finishing year the with a 36-2 record, and best national tournament finish for the Red Ravens since before the moon landing made the whole situation much more bearable.

A career that has encompassed more than 600 victories, 14 conference titles, eight Region VI Tournament titles and nine NJCAA National Tournament appearances in 23 years has been recognized with Coach Herkelman's place in the Hall of Fame.

"It is a great feeling of accomplishment," remarked Herkelman. "To get a call that tells you that you have been selected to the NJCAA Hall of Fame is truly amazing. To play for another NJCAA Hall of Famer at Southeastern (Jim Wyatt) and now years later to be recognized myself for this honor is really special."

"All these moments along the way in the junior college game obviously influenced me without knowing at the time. Here I have been coaching at the junior college level for the last 27 years and I don't see it changing in the future."

