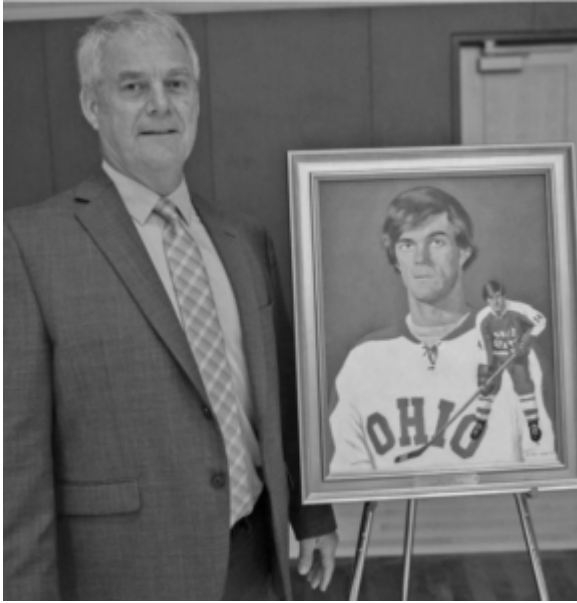


BSB Interview Issue: Former Men's Hockey Coach Jerry Welsh Enjoys Skate Into Retirement



During Jerry Welsh's tenure, the Buckeyes played in the cramped and outdated OSU Ice Rink (built in 1961) with an ice surface 15 feet shorter than a standard rink, and it seated only 1,400.

He had 17 scholarships to offer, and for a time only 15, when other schools issued 20. Early on, he couldn't hire a full-time assistant because of budget constraints, and even after taking the Buckeyes to a No. 1 ranking for the first time in program history in November 1984 and earning top-10 ranking five times from 1979-84, he was one of the lowest paid coaches in Division I hockey during that period.

Welsh, who became coach at his alma mater at age 25, was 328-381-56 (.465) at Ohio State. In his first 11 seasons, he recorded a 239-163-21 (.589) mark. His last winning season was a 23-19-1 record in 1985-86. Over his final 8 1/2 seasons, the Buckeyes were 89-218-35 (.321) in 342 games.

That was then. This is now. Welsh and his wife, Paula, retired several years ago after operating the Garden Grove Bed & Breakfast near the shores of Lake Michigan.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with Welsh for the annual Interview Issue and in the three-page interview, Welsh discussed his tenure at Ohio State and what he has been up to in retirement. Here is a sampling of those questions:

BSB: It's been 40 years since the 1983- 84 season, where Ohio State went 30-10- 1 and reached No. 1, starting with a 13-0-0 record.

Welsh: "Heck, I can't believe it's been that long since I played.

"I remember a few years back I got a call from Bill McKenzie, and he said we're think- ing about doing

something for our 40th and I thought it was for his wedding anniversary but he was talking about the 40th year of that championship team. We did do some- thing with that and the 50th has now come and gone.

“That ’83-84 team certainly was a peak year in what was a peak two- or three-year period. We were No. 1 in the country at one point, but that was short-lived because went down on a Tuesday night and screwed up at Miami (Ohio) and we lost our No. 1 status to a lesser bunch at that point.

“It was the only time in my career when I look back at it. ... I spent my whole career trying to overachieve and I managed to do it early in my career but I couldn’t keep up with it once they cut me back from 17 to 15 scholarships. It seemed like it dumped me right back in the middle of the pack instead of competing for the second, third or fourth spot.

“When you’re talking ’81-84, those couple of years were probably the only times that I had played night after night for a while with the best team. Those were the only times I could make that point. Otherwise, we don’t have the best team. Maybe we have the best plans, we can outperform them, we can outwork them and often we did.

“Our opponents would blame the rink when we won those years - big, bad Buckeyes. Come on, we had Paul Pooley and Andy Browne (the first and fourth all-time leading scorers, respectively, in program history). We were the big, bad Buckeyes. Back when I inherited them in ’75 we were, but by the time we got to ’83, we were not bad in terms of the big, bad stuff.

“We had more talent than everybody else, but they would never give us credit for winning. They would always take it back to that damn rink, that substandard size and that’s why they’re losing. OK, then how do you explain that we were winning on the road? Again, don’t throw facts at me, you’re screwing up the conversation.”

BSB: When you were recruited, you were promised a new rink?

Welsh: “Ask Harry Neale (his first coach at Ohio State) about that. He’s still alive. I don’t think he was really thinking he was trying to recruit me by putting that out there, but yeah, that was 1969 they were saying they thought they were only a couple years away from a new rink and I think they believed it at that point.”

The full interview with Welsh can be seen in the July print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin, available to subscribers. Subscribe at this link to receive immediate online access, or call 614-486-2202 to subscribe and receive online access, and ask about receiving our July interview issue.