



Celebrating Our Staff

"I know I'm not going to replace him, so I think I will carry him with me."

-Megan Wellander, W.F. West High School Head Girls Tennis Coach

Megan Wellander: Next Generation Takes Up Tennis Coaching Torch

Carrying on a Legacy

At the W.F. West Tennis Courts, a pair of angel wings hangs at exactly 6-foot 8-inches above a certain spot along the first court's sideline.

For Head Girls Tennis Coach Megan Wellander, it is a reminder of the legacy she carries into her new role. Wellander took over the coaching position this year after the death of Coach Jack State in January. State had coached the W.F. West Boys Tennis team for 50 seasons and was a few weeks away from his 48th season coaching W.F. West Girls Tennis.

When Wellander heard about the need for someone new to step into those big shoes, she felt a pull to apply. Encouragement from Assistant Coach Denise Boulac (affectionately known by players as Coach Boo) and the State family further pushed her to put her hat into the ring.

"I knew Jack really well and I felt I could do a really good job carrying on his legacy," Wellander said.

Like so many in the Chehalis community, Wellander was coached by State and Boulac. She played tennis all four years of high school, from 2014 to 2018, earning a place in state both her Junior and Senior years and placing at State her senior year.

After college, Wellander returned to Chehalis. She is in her second year as a 4th Grade teacher at Orin Smith Elementary. She reconnected with her former tennis coaches, helping out where she could during clinics and camps. Wellander said State had talked to her about the future of the W.F. West Tennis program and indicated he thought she might be the right person to take the reins after him.

"I always pictured myself potentially being a tennis coach. I coached with Jack (State) and Boo when they had camps and I learned how much fun it could be," Wellander said.



A New Era for Girls Tennis

Boulac continues to serve as Assistant Tennis Coach, now coaching alongside her former player. Boulac has been assistant tennis coach for W.F. West for more than 30 years and a special education teacher in the district for about 48 years. After having worked with Wellander over the years as both a player and a coach, Boulac said she was pleased to know she would be the one to take over the coaching position.

"We have just had a good relationship all these years. She brings with her a desire to follow in Jack's footsteps and also a different energy level. She's forging her own path," Boulac said.

"It's so fun for me because she's the one who trained me and I think our values are the same," Wellander added.

The W.F. West Girls Tennis team has had a strong season this year but to Wellander, the season was just as much about remembering Coach State as it was about winning matches. She said she was determined to allow Coach State to be part of their season and to give players permission to talk about and remember him.

"I think it's a unique role I have because I love Jack, so I don't want to never talk about him. There's so many times I've said to the players 'if Jack were here, this is what he'd be telling you.' I know I'm not going to replace him, so I think I will carry him with me," Wellander said.

Celebrating Jack State

A dedication for the Coach Jack State Tennis Courts will be held at 12:30 Saturday June 29 at the W.F. West tennis courts. Afterwards, the Lewis County Tennis Association will host a celebration of life for Jack State in the W.F. West High School commons and gym.

This new name was chosen by a unanimous decision by a naming committee that convened in February. Committee members were: Cy Bunker; W.F. West CTE teacher Donald Bunker; Senior tennis team member Ema Weerasinghe; Denny Daniels; Turning Point Principal Tim Touhey; Assistant Tennis Coach Denise Boulac; Athletic Director Thomas Elder; board member J. Vander Stoep; and Superintendent Dr. Christine Moloney.

Cy and Donald Bunker volunteered to make and donate the new signage for the tennis courts. Those signs include name plaques hung both inside and outside the fence as well as a biographical plaque near one of the entrances to the courts. At Boulac's suggestion, a symbol of a tennis ball with angel wings and the words "Coach State" was hung at 6-foot 8-inches (Jack State's height - which earned him the nickname Six-Eight Jack State) above the spot where State usually placed his chair during practice.



Photo by Ridley Hudson/The Chronicle



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