

## **GENE PINGATORE**

Gene Pingatore was born and raised in Cicero, Illinois, the son of Annette and Frank Pingatore.

His formal education began at Cicero Grade School and continued at St. Mel High School on Chicago's west side.

While at St. Mel, Gene was an Honors student and three year varsity letter winner in basketball. The 1954 St. Mel team, on which he was 6<sup>th</sup> man, went on to capture the City Championship by defeating a highly regarded DuSable High School team.

Upon graduation from high school, Gene received an athletic scholarship to play basketball at Loyola University of Los Angeles. A three year varsity letter winner, he captained the Loyola team in his senior year.

After receiving his B.A. Degree in History, Gene returned to the Chicago area to do graduate work at Loyola University and DePaul University. In 1960, he began a coaching and teaching career at the newly built St. Joseph High School in Westchester, Illinois. He served as an assistant basketball coach and social studies teacher until 1970. In 1970, Gene became Assistant Principal and varsity basketball coach at St. Joseph. From 1970 until the present, he has also served as Director of Recruitment, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students, Director of Development, and Acting Principal for one semester in 1986, Director of Building and Grounds, Special Events Coordinator and Alumni Director. He is currently working in the Development Office as Alumni Director and is in his 48th year as head basketball coach.

During the 10 year period 1960-1970, he also played 16" softball. He played and managed a team called Triner's Hall that evolved into Sobies and American Rivet. The team won three world titles in the sixties.

In 47 years as head coach, his Charger teams have captured 27 East Suburban Catholic Conference Championships, 2 Catholic League North title, 9 prestigious Proviso West Holiday Tournament Championships, 34 state regional titles and 13 state sectional titles. In 1978, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, and 1999, his teams qualified for the Elite Eight Tournament. In 2015 his team qualified for the Final Four in Peoria and won the 3A State title. In 2016 the Chargers returned to Peoria and placed 4<sup>th</sup>.

The 1978 team was the state runner-up; the 1984 team placed 4th; the 1987 team took 3rd place; and the 1999 team captured the Class AA State Championship. In 2016 St. Joseph returned to the 3A Final Four and placed 4<sup>th</sup> in State. St. Joseph had the most wins in the State of Illinois in the 80's! Gene became the all time win leader in the State of Illinois on January 16, 2009 with his 827<sup>th</sup> win. His record to date is **999 wins and 353 losses**.

During his 47 year tenure as head coach, Gene had the good fortune to coach many fine players, the most notable of whom was Indiana All American and NBA great, Isiah Thomas `79. In addition to Thomas, he coached two other high school McDonald All Americans: Daryl Thomas `83, Indiana University, and Deryl Cunningham `89, Kansas State. Other all staters coached by Gene were Kenny Williams `81, Robert Morris; Tony Reeder `83, Marquette; Tony Freeman `86, UIC; Brian Molis `87, Northern Illinois; Carl Hayes `88, Nebraska; Marty Clark `90, Duke; William Gates `91, Marquette; Gerald Eaker `92, Kansas State; Rodney Horton `94, Dayton; Marlon London `98, Kansas & DePaul; Brandon Watkins `99, Penn State; Jabari Mattox `00, Bowling Green; Tony Freeman Jr. `05, Iowa & Southern Illinois; Jonathan Peoples `06, Notre Dame; 2010 College Player of the Year and number two in the NBA draft, All American Evan Turner `07; All Big Ten guard, Demetri McCamey `07 of Illinois; Glynn Watson `15, Nebraska; Jordan Ash `15, Northwestern and Nick Rakocevic `16, a University of Southern California recruit.

Professional players coached by Gene were: Isiah Thomas `79-Indiana, NBA; Daryl Thomas `83-Indiana U, Europe; Clifford Scales `87-Nebraska, Finland; Carl Hayes `88-Nebraska, Europe; Deryl Cunningham `89-Kansas State, Europe and CBA; Marty Clark `90-Duke, South America; Amal McCaskill `91-Marquette, NBA; Gerald Eaker `92-Kansas State, Europe and Mexico; Marlon London `98-DePaul, Kansas, Europe and Latin America; Brandon Watkins `99-Penn State, Europe; and Evan Turner `07-Ohio State and Portland Trail Blazers, NBA. Gene also coached former Dallas Cowboy and Chicago Bear offensive lineman, Andy Fredrick `72 New Mexico, and Cameron Meredith `10 Chicago Bear Wide Receiver.

Gene received District Coach of the Year honors from the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association in 1978, 1979, 1988, 1990, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2016. In 1999 he was the IBCA Coach of the Year for the state of Illinois. He was also honored as Coach of the Year in the East Suburban Catholic Conference in 1978, 1979, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. In 1980, Gene was honored by the Christian Brothers as the recipient of

the LaSallian Award. In 1985 he was selected St. Joseph's Man of the Year. He was inducted in the Illinois Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in 1987, the St. Joseph High School Sports Hall of Fame in 1991, the Catholic League Hall of Fame in 1993, the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame in September of 2005 and the East Suburban Catholic Hall of Fame in 2005.

He was also the recipient of the Coach of the Year through the Pioneer Press and Suburban Life papers in 1978, 1979 and 1999, and again in the Suburban Life in 1981, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1999, and 2004.

In 1999 he was Student Sports Magazine National Coach of the Year and the Village of Westchester Man of the Year. In 2000, he was named the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Boys Basketball Coach of the Year for Region 4. In June of 2010, he was again named the NHSACA Boys Basketball Coach of the Year for Region 4 and also the National Coach of the Year. In 2016 he again was named the Village of Westchester Man of the Year.

Gene was a charter member and on the executive committee of STAY in 1998. STAY was former Cook County State's Attorney Dick Devine's Youth Initiative, coordinated by the late Gene Sullivan. The STAY program was conceived to help keep kids from showing up in the criminal justice system. He was also a board member for the Westchester Chamber of Commerce for six years.

In 2005, he received the Ellie Hasan Award from the Central Officials Association of officials. In the spring of 2008 Gene was honored by the Illinois State Crime Commission/Police Athletic League of Illinois as Educator of the Year at their 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Dinner. The Commission is committed to working with at-risk teens across Illinois. In June of 2009, he was the recipient of the Ray Meyer Award at Ed Kelly's Giant Award Dinner. Most recently Gene was presented with the De La Salle Award for Service and Leadership in the Community from Lewis University April, 2010. In 2011 he was named the Coach of the West for the McDonald All American Game in Chicago. In 2016 the COA honored him as Coach of the Year.

Gene, a 60 year resident of Westchester, has one daughter, Lisa and three grandchildren, Erin, Kelli and Jack and a longtime partner Jill Oakley.