

# Lessons Learned at S

In the past four decades, Southwestern College has graduated some 3,000-odd athletes. They have run faster, jumped higher, scored more points, and set more records than any generation before them.

But an odd thing happens when these athletes graduate.

Unlike their counterparts at the mega-universities, these record-setting athletes rarely go on to the ranks of professional players. No, the fields of Southwestern produce an even more advanced result.

SC athletes become coaches, the best coaches at many levels in many sports. Consider the evidence:

- **Jerry Kill '84**, head football coach, Southern Illinois University, 2004 Coach of the Year in NCAA IAA.

- **Jim Littell '77**, head women's basketball coach, Seward County Community College, as of Feb. 17 ranked third in the nation.

- **Jim Helmer '71**, men's cross country and track, Southwestern College, 25 consecutive KCAC championships in cross country and 22 consecutive titles in men's track, NAIA Hall of Fame.

- **Linda Hargrove '75**, former head coach and general manager of WNBA's Portland Fire, current assistant coach for WNBA's Washington Mystics.

- **Marvin Diener '83**, head football coach, Salina Central High School, 13 consecutive district championships, five state titles.

Despite their diversity, each credits the lessons learned at SC for their successes. Lessons like the importance of hard work, of character and organization, and of doing things right. Most of all, the importance of relationships.

The importance of Southwestern College.

The Moundbuilders profiled on these pages represent dozens of superb coaches who have graduated from Southwestern College. These five are members of the SC Athletic Hall of Fame; some were inducted in 2004, others were honored earlier. For more information on SC athletic programs, contact athletic director Mike Kirkland, [kake@sckans.edu](mailto:kake@sckans.edu).

## Jerry Kill

### Relationships

#### JERRY KILL:

Jerry Kill was not known as an intimidating or dominating athlete in his freshman and sophomore years. But with tremendous heart, character, instruction, and desire, he became a two-year starter and was voted most inspirational player by his teammates.

His coaching career has mirrored his playing days as he has moved on from the days of lying in the shadows as an assistant coach to being named the head coach at Southern Illinois and four years later in December 2004, was named the Eddie Robinson Award winner. The award is given to the top coach in NCAA I-AA Football.

Yet, it's the relationships made at Southwestern that have meant more to Jerry than anything else. Two of his most significant relationships today are because of SC. He met his wife, Rebecca (Smith) '87, here as well as as Tom Audley '84, his teammate and best friend. It was Audley who helped the family after the passing of Jerry's father a few years ago.

"Southwestern College changed my life," Kill says. "It was the best time in my life. I am very proud to be a Southwestern graduate."



Jerry Kill revisits scene of his SC football accomplishments with former athletic director and coach Bill Stephens.

### Work Ethic

#### JIM LITTELL:

Jim Littell, head women's basketball coach at Seward County Community College, may be on his way to a national championship—as of March 1, his Lady Saints were ranked in the top ten teams in the nation. Many of the lessons he's passed on to these players Littell learned at Southwestern.

"Coach (Bill) Stephens was highly organized and paid attention to detail and I have taken a lot from him," Littell says. "We had players from winning programs that wanted to do well in the classroom. But even more than that, the institution was successful. Southwestern College stands for good work ethic. They do things the right way."

Littell took those lessons to heart and it has paid off. The kinds of kids he recruits now are the types of kids that were recruited at SC while Littell was here, he says.

As a result, he has compiled more than 400 coaching wins at Seward and 600 in his career, and has been recognized by the Jayhawk West Conference as coach of the year eight times.



Jim Littell has taken his Seward County Community College Lady Saints to national prominence in women's basketball.

## Jim Littell