



KEITH RUELLE: JUNE 12, 1944-JULY 12, 2023



JAKE HILL, JOURNAL TIMES FILE PHOTOS

Keith Ruelle, the late St. Catherine's softball coach, talks to his players in May 2019 before a game against Racine Lutheran at Island Park in Racine.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Braun named interim coach

He will succeed the fired Fitzgerald at Northwestern

ASSOCIATED PRESS

EVANSTON, Ill. — David Braun has been elevated from defensive coordinator to interim coach at Northwestern for the upcoming season, replacing Pat Fitzgerald, who was fired this week due to a hazing scandal, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Thursday.



Braun

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because Braun's promotion to interim coach had not been announced.

Braun was hired as the Wildcats' defensive coordinator six months ago. He spent the previous four seasons in the same position at North Dakota State, where he helped lead the Bison to FCS national championships in 2019 and 2021.

Fitzgerald was fired Monday after a university investigation found allegations of hazing by 11 current or former players, including "forced participation, nudity and sexualized acts of a degrading nature," Northwestern President Michael Schill wrote.

Fitzgerald, who led Northwestern for 17 seasons, has maintained he had no knowledge of the hazing. After Northwestern initially suspended but did not fire him, The Daily Northwestern published an article including allegations from a former player who described specific instances of hazing and abuse and suggested Fitzgerald may have been aware.

The elevation of Braun puts the program in the hands of someone who never shared the sideline with Fitzgerald during a game and was not part of the culture established by the longtime coach. The rest of Fitzgerald's assistant coaches and support staff will remain in their jobs for 2023, the university has said.

WNBA

Wade will be part owner of league's Chicago Sky

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Dwyane Wade is joining the Chicago Sky ownership group, becoming the latest high-profile figure to invest in the WNBA.

Wade will invest in his hometown team once the league's Board of Governors approves the sale. The Chicago Sky sold



Wade

a roughly 10% stake in the team to a group that included Chicago Cubs co-owner Laura Ricketts last month. "I think D-Wade joining the organization is a huge milestone for us," Sky star Kahleah Copper said. "Having a former player who has done it at the highest level is big time."

Please see **WADE**, Page B3

Remembering Ruelle

Late St. Catherine's teacher and coach was all about revival

Someone named Charles Franklin once wrote something that I believe is so applicable to Keith Ruelle, the longtime St. Catherine's teacher and coach who died Wednesday morning at the age of 79.



PETER JACKEL

*It goes like this:
No one gets out of this life alive.
So leave a footprint of your choice.*

*You are writing your epitaph.
You are writing it now!
Life is a process, not a goal.
Live it now, or you will miss it!
We have time to spend and no time to waste."*

Of course no one gets out of life alive, and it sure appeared as if Ruelle's life was coming to an end more than 17 years ago.

It was during the winter of 2006 when Ruelle, who had been at Froedtert Hospital in Wauwatosa since the previous fall with bile duct cancer, was seemingly fighting a losing battle.

During the Christmas season in 2005, Gene Biesack, his assistant softball coach at St. Catherine's, and wife, Mary, visited the man who had been so full of life just months earlier.

What they saw was someone who seemingly didn't have a chance.

"It was bad," Biesack re-



Keith Ruelle led the St. Catherine's softball team to the 1993 Division 1 championship in the old private schools athletic association. The Angels returned to the championship game in 1994, but lost 1-0 in the 11th inning on an unearned run.

membered during a May 2018 interview. "You heard the term, 'Death warmed over?' That was Keith. There was no way he was

going to make it. He was so bad that when Mary and I left the hospital, we just cried like crazy. We said prayers to not have him

suffer. He was breathing, but he was just about dead."

Somehow, Ruelle made it out of that hospital in the spring of 2006. And somehow, he returned 12 years later at the age of 73 to oversee a revival of his once-proud St. Catherine's softball program, which was going through coaches seemingly on an annual basis.

It certainly wasn't that way during Ruelle's run.

On May 23, 1993, Ruelle led his 19-1-1 team to an 8-6 victory over four-time defending state champion Milwaukee Pius XI in the Division 1 game of the old private schools state tournament at Saratoga Complex in Waukesha.

Players on that 1993 team performed to Ruelle's exacting standards. Their names live on more than 30 years later: Missy Sadlon, Erika Hunzinger, Dena Zajdal, Katy Bosch, Jenny Golden and so many others.

The Angels returned to Waukesha one year later for a chance at a repeat. This time, St. Catherine's took Pius to 11 innings in the championship game before losing 1-0 on an unearned run.

"I wish the hard work would have paid off on offense," St. Catherine's infielder Holly Barrett said after that game. "We all worked so hard for this. They're a lot better this year. But we've shown ourselves we're a lot better, too"

That was the mark of Ruelle's teams. They were going to fight to the very end.

Please see **JACKEL**, Page B4

WIMBLEDON

Reaching back for something extra

Djokovic advances to finals with dramatic victory over Sinner

HOWARD FENDRICH Associated Press

WIMBLEDON, England — This was the moment. If Novak Djokovic was going to be stopped in the Wimbledon semifinals, if his much younger and harder-hitting opponent, Jannik Sinner, was going to turn things around Friday, the monumental comeback required would need to start immediately.

Djokovic knew it. Sinner knew it. The 15,000 or so Centre Court spectators knew it.

After taking the first two sets, Djokovic trailed 5-4 in the third, and a flubbed forehand made the game score 15-40 as he served.

Two chances for Sinner to finally break. Two chances for him to actually take a set. Djokovic hit a fault, which drew some sounds of approval from the stands. Djokovic sarcastically used his racket and the ball to applaud the noise-makers, then flashed a thumbs up.

He can back up any such bravado. Djokovic simply does not lose at the All England Club lately. Or at any Grand Slam tournament, for that matter. So he calmly collected the next four points to claim that game, looked toward the crowd and mockingly pretended to wipe away a tear. Twenty minutes later, the match was over, and the 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory over Sinner allowed Djokovic to close in on a record-tying eighth title at Wimbledon and fifth in a row.

Please see **WIMBLEDON**, Page B4



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns to Italy's Jannik Sinner in a men's singles semifinal match on day 12 of the Wimbledon championships Friday in London.

Jackel

From B1

But the time came long after Ruelle stepped down as coach in 2012 when this team had no fight left. A once proud state power was sinking fast with a revolving door of head coaches and diminishing results.

From 2014 through '17, the Angels lost 62 out of 70 games and the narrative had shifted from state championships to survival. As was once the case with Ruelle himself, the prognosis was not good.

"That program was dead in the water," said Zach Prideaux, Ruelle's former assistant who took over the program in 2021. "There was nothing going on. At the time, there was no interest in the program. It was on life support. It was on the way out."

And then Ruelle miraculously

returned at the age of 73 in the spring of 2017. What could he possibly have left to offer at his age with a losing culture so intertwined in this program?

Plenty, it turned out. The losing continued during the 2018 season, as the Angels went 1-23.

But then things started to change. Ruelle refused to accept failure and, gradually, his players caught on. And in 2019, Ruelle and his players managed a 12-10 season.

Ruelle had brought back this dying program 13 years after he was expected to die. One could say that his efforts that season were even more impressive than when he led the program to the state championship in 1993.

But that was just a part of who Ruelle was.

The Kenosha native, who graduated from St. Catherine's in 1962, was a widely-respected music teacher at Catherine's for years. His students were in the northeast platform of the St. Catherine's gymnasium for years, serving as a pep band

for the great basketball teams coached by John McGuire and Bob Letsch.

Ruelle was also a devoted family man, marrying his wife, Judy, in 1967 and raising two daughters, Jeanne and Julie.

Throughout his 79 years and one month of life, Ruelle was writing an epitaph that is worth celebrating now that he is gone.

Sometimes he came off a little cranky, but he also had a delicious sense of humor and admired commitment. If you worked hard for Ruelle, you had his respect for life.

"He was really a remarkable guy," Prideaux said. "He lived in the truth. He was always on the straight and narrow, but he had this legendary sense of humor. You wouldn't expect a guy like him to be funny, but he was one of the funniest guys I ever met. He could make you laugh where you would have gut pains."

"He was an incredible teacher, he was an incredible coach. You hear about people running programs the right way, and I got to watch Keith do it

for several years. He held people accountable."

That brings Prideaux to his favorite story about Ruelle.

There was once a sensitive disciplinary situation with a St. Catherine's player. Ruelle, after consulting with the St. Catherine's athletic director, had confided to Prideaux about the situation.

Prideaux, trying to help, decided to take matters into his own hands.

"I was younger and thought I knew something, so I thought to myself, 'I know what to do,' and went to talk to the student," Prideaux said.

To make a long story short, the situation only worsened after Prideaux intervened. And now he was scared of catching Ruelle's wrath.

"It got back to Keith, which made him look bad because he trusted me with that information," Prideaux said. "I violated his trust, thinking I knew better. I felt awful, and I dreaded an away game because I knew I would have to face him when I

got on the bus.

"I deserved to get chewed out. If he wanted to fire me, I would have understood. I got on the bus and he was sitting there going over his scorebook. He looked up at me and we made eye contact and I didn't say anything."

"The bus started to go and I was just sitting there waiting for it. I was waiting for him to say something. I was sweating because I was so anxious. He finally looked over at me and he says, 'Who do you think we should have batting leadoff?' I about melted into my seat!"

Prideaux hesitated before continuing with a cracking voice.

"He knew that I knew that I had screwed up and he showed me grace," he said.

That was Keith Ruelle for you.

"I don't know people like Keith Ruelle," Prideaux said. "I don't think they exist."

Peter Jackel is sports editor of the Journal Times. You can reach Peter by calling 262-631-1703 or by emailing him at peter.jackel@journaltimes.com

Wimbledon

From B1

"The third set could have gone his way," said Djokovic, who will meet No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz for the trophy on Sunday. "It was really, really, just a lot of pressure."

Alcaraz showed off every bit of his many talents, including winning 17 of 20 points when he serve-and-volleyed, while beating No. 3 Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 on Friday to make his way to his first final at the grass-court major tournament.

While Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia, is pursuing a 24th Grand Slam singles championship, Alcaraz, a 20-year-old from Spain, seeks his second after winning the U.S. Open last September.

"What can I say? Everybody knows the legend he is," Alcaraz said about Djokovic. "It's going to be really, really difficult. But I will fight. ... I will believe in myself, I will believe that I can beat him here."

No one has managed to beat Djokovic at Wimbledon since

2017. And no one has managed to beat him at Centre Court since 2013.

Against Sinner, Djokovic repeatedly served himself out of potential trouble, saving all six break points he faced, to reach his ninth final at the All England Club. It's also his 35th final at all Grand Slam tournaments, more than any man or woman in tennis history.

As great as he is as a returner, as superb as his defense is — over and over, he would sprint and lean and stretch to get to a ball that extended a point until Sinner made a mistake — Djokovic possesses a serve that might be the part of his game he's improved the most over his career.

That showed Friday, and it's showed throughout this fortnight: In his half-dozen matches during the tournament, Djokovic has won 100 of his 103 service games and saved 16 of 19 break points.

"In the pressure moments, he was playing very good. Not missing," Sinner said. "That's him."

The age gap between Djokovic and Sinner, 21, was the largest between Wimbledon men's semifinalists in the Open era, which



ALBERTO PEZZALI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates a point against Russia's Daniil Medvedev during their men's singles semifinal match Friday in London.

began in 1968. Djokovic would be the oldest champion at Wimbledon since professionals were first allowed to compete that year.

"I feel 36 is the new 26, I guess," Djokovic said. "It feels good."

Sinner is the one who hit serves at up to 132 mph and pounded one fault that clanged against the speed readout board in a corner

of the arena with such force it sounded as if he might have broken the thing. Of more concern to Sinner: It was followed by another fault in a service game he dropped to trail 2-1 in the second set.

In truth, talented as Sinner is, he didn't really generate any more frustration for Djokovic than chair umpire Richard Haigh did.

In one game in which Djokovic would face — and erase — a break point, he argued to no avail after forfeiting a point because Haigh called him for hindrance for letting out a lengthy yell while the ball was still in play. Moments later, Haigh issued Djokovic a warning for letting the serve-clock expire.

"It was a very stressful game for me to survive and to kind of storm through. It was super important," said Djokovic, who thought the hindrance call was incorrect after seeing a replay and Haigh needed to "recognize the moment a little bit more" instead of issuing the time warning. "Luckily for me, I stayed calm."

Indeed he did, continuing his bid to join Roger Federer as the only men to have won eight singles trophies at Wimbledon. Martina Navratilova won the women's championship nine times.

Djokovic got major title No. 22 at the Australian Open in January, and No. 23 at the French Open in June — his Wimbledon shoes have a small "23" stamped on the side — after getting past Alcaraz in the semifinals at Roland Garros.

Journal Times' guide to area Business Professionals



PM PLUMBING & MECHANICAL
DIVISION OF P.M. WEIDNER ENTERPRISE, LLC

RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL
ELECTRICAL & HEATING SERVICE & REPAIR

PAUL M. WEIDNER
Master Plumber
(262) 770-0039
<https://pmpumbingandmechanical.com/>

ACCREDITED BUSINESS A+

JIM'S GARAGE DOOR SERVICE

"SERVICE... IT'S IN OUR NAME"
632-DOOR (3667)
24 Hour Emergency Service
Free Estimates

Get your garage door tuned up, call today!

Professional Detail

2405 Lathrop Ave.
State-of-the-Art Detailing Center

Cars / Motorcycles / Boats
We Do Ceramic Coatings

- Hand Washing • Hand Waxing • Machine Buffing
- Interior Cleaning • Engines Cleaned
- Over Spray Removed • Stains Removed

Gift Certificates Available!
Open 30 Years

Call: 554-4550 for an appointment!
professionaldetailracine.com

Beautiful Landscaping Starts Here...

Spring Cleanup
Dethatching
Aeration &/or Overseeding
Bed Maintenance
Mulch & Stone Installation
Landscape Makeover
Bed Edging
Fertilization
Soil Conditioning
Stump Grinding

CALL TODAY!
C.J.S. Lawn and Landscaping
www.cjsslanscapinglawncare.com
FREE Estimates • 262-878-1660
WI Only

Mr. Handyman
Home Improvement Professionals

- Doors & Windows
- Carpentry
- Drywall & Repair
- Painting
- Ceiling & Floors
- Windows
- Siding & Gutters
- Kitchens
- Decks & Patios
- Bathrooms
- Fixtures
- Basements & much more!

Mr. Handyman of Racine County
262-298-8885
www.mrhandyman.com

CHRIS TARWID
Basement Waterproofing and Structural Repairs

Chris Tarwid Contracting, Inc.

Better Priced Faster & Don't let a leak ruin your week!

Foundation Restoration & Drain Tile Systems

Licensed • Insured
Call or Text Chris Tarwid at 262-206-7993
ctarwidcontracting@gmail.com
www.christarwidcontracting.com

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Jeff's
ACCELERATE AUTOMOTIVE LET'S GET YOU MOVING!

Jeff Nelson
Owner

For all your automotive needs

262-800-1137
service@accelerateautowi.com
2321 Lathrop Ave
Racine, WI 53405