

# Sports Sidelines

By Gary Ridderbusch



## *It's been 36 years of covering sports*

When I moved to Eagle River in the spring of 1985 to be an assistant editor at the Vilas County News-Review, little did I know that 36 years later I would be retiring from the same company.

After a couple phone and in-person interviews, News-Review Editor Kurt Krueger hired me as an assistant editor to cover local news and sports in an area I knew little about.

Don't get me wrong, I grew up hunting and fishing in central Wisconsin and was a three-sport athlete at Abbotsford, so I knew about some of the topics that Krueger would ask me to write about over the next three decades.

At the Vilas County News-Review and its sister newspaper, The Three Lakes News, we report on the high school sports scene at Northland Pines, Three Lakes and Phelps. Over the past 36 years, I have attended hundreds of games in gymnasiums, on football and soccer fields, and in hockey rinks. I've witnessed some amazing victories and gut-wrenching losses, but it always has been a pleasure being on the sidelines and covering the games for the hometown fans.

As a News-Review sports reporter, I witnessed two of three Northland Pines boys hockey team State Championships in the 1980s and the Three Lakes girls basketball team's incredible run as a State runner-up in 2021 and dozens of tournament games in between.

Meanwhile, my wife Sue and I were proud parents of two three-sport athletes at Northland Pines, as son Taylor played soccer, basketball and baseball from 2008-'11 and daughter Carly played volleyball, basketball and soccer from 2011-'14. Following those teams during their high school careers was awesome as a parent and sports reporter.

During my time at the News-Review, I've worked with some top-notch coaches, athletic directors, principals and administrators — all who truly care about our student-athletes. A few of the coaching legends included John Wainwright in football, Tom Obrodovich in hockey and Jerry Koslowski in basketball.

One of the highlights of my sports reporting was covering the construction of the Northland Pines fieldhouse. The amazing athletic facility includes four basketball courts, a 200-meter track, batting cages, a climbing wall and a fantastic training/wellness center for both athletes and the public.

As a committee member of the Eagle River/Northland Pines Athletic Hall of Fame, I have reported on and met dozens of standout athletes, coaches and teams. Some of their accomplishments are amazing. Sports fans can view the hall of fame plaques hanging in the hallway just outside the Northland Pines fieldhouse. I am proud to say I was a 2015 inductee into the hall of fame in the citation category as a supporter of Northland Pines athletics.

Current News-Review sports reporter Doug Etten will be taking over a sports column in the coming weeks.

While I am retiring, Sue and I are staying in the area I will continue to cover some games and community events for the News-Review as a freelance writer and photographer.

After 36 years, I just hope that some of the sports stories and photos that appeared on these pages over the years are in scrap books and hanging on refrigerators as reminders of those special moments in sports for both athletes and parents.