

Taking his coaching talents to DVD

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Lin Casciato's life has revolved around softball. He played the sport during college. He played on a men's fastpitch team for several years after college. He's been a head coach at the high school and USA Softball amateur level and an assistant coach at the college level. He's been a softball clinician for three decades.

Now, his wealth of knowledge is on DVD.

Casciato, 70, teamed up with Championship Productions, a company that has produced thousands of fundamental, training and coaching videos across nearly 20 sports, to put out two videos centered on building blocks Casciato has taught his athletes. The videos, which came out in mid-July, are "Foundational Pitching: Setting Up Beginning Pitchers for Future Success" and "The Building Blocks of a Fundamentally Sound Catcher."

Casciato said he personally owns more than 100 softball videos put together by Championship Productions. He's pre-viewed videos, given his input and been in contact with the company for several years.

Eventually, Thom McDonald, Championship's recruiting coordinator for softball, reached out to Casciato about doing his own instructional video.

"He had worked with us as an adviser and that built a relationship," McDonald said. "After a while, you're hearing him talk and share his thoughts and knowledge of softball. It became a natural (process). I said one day, 'You should do a video or two.'"

At first, Casciato was apprehensive of the offer, but a nudge from his wife, Stacey, convinced him.

"My wife motivated me to go ahead and do it," he said. "She's the one who pushed me, (saying), 'You've been coaching. You've had all kinds of kids go to college. It'll be kind of like your recognition. Do it.'"

The longtime coach indeed has a resume that would suggest his coaching ability is worth putting on film. He has been a high school head coach at La Grande and an assistant coach at Eastern Oregon University, Treasure Valley Community College and Blue Mountain Community College. He also coached the Oregon Lightning USA Softball team that this summer won five major regional tournaments, including the Oregon state title.

Players whom Casciato has worked with have also been highly successful, and several have gone on to play college softball. Many have become junior college All-Americans, and some have even played NCAA Division I softball. Recent regional standouts he has helped include Pendleton's Ellie Richards, who is currently at Notre Dame, and Colette Robert, who starred for Milton-Freewater, spent time at University of New Mexico and is currently pitching at College of Idaho. Recent high school



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Softball coach Lin Casciato, left, demonstrates a pitching drill with La Grande's Allie Brock. Casciato, who has been a coach and clinician for decades, has produced pitching and catching instructional DVDs through Championship Productions.

graduates Madison Plew of Enterprise, who is headed to the University of Jamestown (North Dakota), and Lauren Richards of Pendleton, who is off to Claremont McKenna College. Seattle University, Colorado Christian and Pacific Lutheran are among schools that have signed his players. He has also taught at area, regional and national clinics, and taken lessons himself, including one time, he said, from the Can-Am Softball Academy.

More locally, Casciato has worked with a large swath of UC Lightning players, including La Grande's Allie Brock, Jayce Seavert, Jaiden Hafer, Jacie Howton and Kara Gooderham. Each was a key piece to La Grande's success in the spring when the team won the state title.

"We realized he would be a good fit on our advisers," McDonald said. "His biggest success is that his students athletes have (their own success). And he's got a great heart. He cares about other coaches and student athletes. We want to work with the best on the planet."

The videos target a demographic that isn't often focused on — beginning players.

"There are not a lot of videos out there that have been marketed to the 8-, 9- (or) 10-year-old, the starting kids," Casciato said. "I took this down to the very basics. Do these things for the first two years, (and) you'll have a good foundation."



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Casciato has worked with athletes from youth to college during his coaching career.

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The videos, which aren't much longer than an hour each — 80 minutes for the pitching video and 60 for the catching — present the essentials of what a pitcher and a catcher should know to have success.

"It's basically two things. It's breaking down the mechanical parts of what do your legs do (and) what does your arm do," Casciato said of the pitching video. "I have drills that build this whole thing."

He continued: "With the catching, you go through 'What does a catcher do?' They receive, they block, they throw. There are about eight different drills for each one of those things. It's just breaking down and talking through the (process)."

While the videos are geared for younger players, Casciato said anybody could learn from the approach.

"A high-schooler could do this really easy if they never had pitched and they wanted to pitch," he said. "A dad could take (his child) to the gym and easily follow it. That's what it's built for."

Steve Richards, father of Ellie and Lauren Richards, said Casciato has a unique passion for the sport and an ability to get his points across to athletes of any age, and he noted the coach has helped athletes from as young as 7 or 8 years

old all the way through college. He said Casciato worked with his daughters for years.

"For kids who want to improve and are open to receiving instruction, being able to see what he's trying to teach you can help you advance quicker," Richards said.

Brock has worked with Casciato since she was 8 years old, and she gave him ample credit for her personal success and the success of her teammates.

"He understands the way the body works. He doesn't just tell you to do something because that's how

you do it," she said. "He actually explains to you, and it just helps you get the most out of your body."

Brock said she thinks it is great that Casciato made the videos.

"He'll leave a legacy of everything that he taught," she said. "Young pitchers all around need to start with a good base, and with his teaching style they will get the base they need to become an elite (player)."

The videos are available at www.championshipproductions.com by searching "Casciato" and cost \$39.95 apiece, or \$69.95 for the pair.

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