

# Here's to you, Mr. Robinson

For the past 18 years, Clackamas has had an instructor who goes beyond the classroom and onto the field



Robert Crawford Clackamas Print

Mr. Robinson instructs the baseball team on the field. Robinson started coaching the team in 1990 after coaching ball and football at North Salem High School and Oregon High School.

## Kenton Benfield

The Clackamas Print

Robin Robinson has a great life. As the Cougar baseball coach for 18 years running, he has found what few others have – namely, a job that doubles as his life's passion.

When not directing the efforts of his athletes, Robinson teaches karate and swing dancing classes on campus as well as abroad.

"I have been here 18 years – that's how much I love it here at Clackamas," he said. "It is a great place to be; a lot of really good people (are here). Very few people in life can get up in the morning and love what they do.

"To get up and teach a karate class, a dance class, maybe another karate class, go spend four or five hours doing baseball with some really good athletes and some good kids – it's a pretty good life."

Robinson has an extensive background in education, athletics and coaching, including two master's degrees from Lewis and Clark College.

He is originally from Junction City, where he graduated from Junction City High School in 1975. He played baseball at Umpqua Community College for a year, followed by two years at Willamette University before graduating.

His coaching and teaching career began at North Salem High School, where he worked for five years. It continued at Oregon City High School on the heels of his successes in baseball and football, allowing him to land the positions of head baseball coach and assistant football coach.

Before he came to Clackamas, he would often use its sports facilities for games on behalf of OCHS, which lacked such resources at the time.

"What we did at OCHS was we moved our games up to play at the campus here, 'cause we did not have a baseball field," he said, "so I got to know a lot of the coaches and the athletic director. The job opened up here, it happened to be timely ... so I moved up here."

## Beyond baseball

Robinson's long history of coaching has touched more than one generation.

Tyler Waters, a former Cougar baseball player, was coached by him last year. In addition, Waters' father was a player under Robinson back during their time at North Salem High.

"The way he sticks up for our team is pretty amazing," Waters said. "Some coaches don't do that; some coaches just sit back and watch everything. If he disagrees, he gets out there and lets them know and tries to get it figured out."

Jim Hoppel has been the assistant coach for Cougar baseball for seven years, all of in which he has worked with Robinson.

"Robinson is the most knowledgeable guy I

know in baseball," Hoppel said. "He knows all of its details. But he does not just teach it – he focuses on the life lessons learned from baseball that extend beyond baseball."

Not simply committed to teaching these athletic arts, Robinson lives them outside of the classroom and field.

"I go to the Portland Beavers. I go to the Salem Keiser Volcanoes. I love those guys to watch the minor league, to see what we're trying to get our guys to do one day," he said. "I watch baseball and go watch high school kids play. When I really want to just be social and enjoy my life, I go dancing and have fun social dancing."

While at the high school games, he always keeps an eye out for potential talent that he might like to recruit for the college baseball team.

## A common thread

It is not common to find a baseball coach who also loves karate, let alone someone who enjoys swing dancing as well. For Robinson, there is a common thread of interest in all of these seemingly disjoint athletics that appeals to him.

"My favorite free family time is with my three grandkids, and I go and spend time with them," he said. "If you ever have kids or grandkids, it is fun to watch them crawl, then walk, then run – just make steps – and it is kind of fun to watch."

"You know, I will see a student come in, and for three weeks they can't really figure out how to move their feet in a dance move. Then, it will click one day, and on the fourth week, it will hit and all of a sudden they are a dancer now. It is the success of the students you are looking at."

Along the same lines, he has enjoyed numerous activities beyond the scope of campus athletics.

"I have worked for a couple of security companies," he said. "... Bodyguard work, security at different concert settings, is mainly what I have done."

"I also teach at a couple of different dance clubs. (With) my karate stuff, I mainly take lessons."

His role as a teacher has not been limited – not to baseball, nor to dance.

"I have taught for police departments, the Coast Guard, the Portland Guides," he said. "I have taught for many different organizations in hand-to-hand and self-defense for military people."

"But I don't do a lot of that," he continued. "I've done a few more lessons trying to expand my (skill) in the karate area, but dancing – I take lessons (and) teach at dance festivals."

An entire 18 years at Clackamas has failed to bore him.

"I believe this place is really student-oriented," he said of the college, "and that's why I think I have been very happy here. I think I want to teach here till I can't."

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