

**Dennis Gorsline:**

A Football Coach And A Man Who Has Encouraged  
Many Young Men To Continue Their Studies In The  
Ministry

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After tying together the title of this paper and the class that it is for, the reader may wonder: What does football have to do with Church History? We've never connected our church fathers or the great theologians to sports. In fact, we may say that sports really have nothing to do with the church. After all, we do not remember Luther as being a power hitter on the baseball field. We do not look to Chemnitz for his knowledge of how to execute a pressure defense on the hardwood. Nor do we remember Walther for his soccer skills. The Wauwatosa men are not remembered as being the best athletes any team could put together. Yet we remember them for their contributions to our church body. They used their gifts and talents to pass on to us the importance of Scripture. This paper will focus on someone who has also used his gifts and talents to serve the Lord in our worker training schools to help mold and shape young people for the full-time ministry. He does however differ from the men listed above. We would not necessarily categorize him as being one of our church body's star theologians. But we would categorize him as being someone who has served the Lord by encouraging young men and women to go into the ministry via the athletic field. Luther, Chemnitz, Walther, and the Wauwatosa men all encouraged men through their teaching and theology and their persistence to stay true to God's Word. Coach Dennis Gorsline also encourages men into the ministry through competition. This paper will focus on how Coach Gorsline has used the sport of football and the love of a game to help encourage men both on and off the field to continue their studies for the full-time ministry.

In a year that college football has kept a close eye on two great Division I coaches in order to see who is going to leave the game with the most victories there has also been a man who has finished his 33<sup>rd</sup> year of coaching on the college level. He has not posted

the same number of victories nor has he received the same amount of press coverage that Coaches Bobby Bowden of Florida State or Joe Paterno of Penn State, but he has had an influence on two generations of football players. Coach Dennis Gorsline just finished his ninth year of coaching at Martin Luther College and his 37<sup>th</sup> year overall of teaching young men to play the sport that little boys dream of one day playing.

Gorsline was born on April 9, 1943 in Saginaw, Michigan, to parents Jack and Agnes (Wegner) Gorsline. He was their second child. James was his older brother. He attended public school from the 3<sup>rd</sup> until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He also attended Christ Lutheran Church in Swan Creek, Michigan, where he received his confirmation instruction. During this time there were two big decisions that ended up having a large impact on his life. The first came after playing in the state baseball tournament when he was 12 years old. This is when he decided that he wanted to be a coach. The other big decision came when he decided to go to Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS) for high school. The man who helped encourage this decision was his pastor, LeRoy Lothert. Pastor Lothert's second assignment was to the small country church in Swan Creek. He also served as a tutor at Michigan Lutheran Seminary before going to Swan Creek. When asked about his influence on a young Gorsline and about his influence of promoting Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Lothert responded, "It was a good opportunity for a good Christian education."<sup>1</sup> Pastor Lothert had noticed that Gorsline was in church regularly and his parents were receptive to the idea of sending their son to MLS. Coach Gorsline also made reference that his pastor had noticed that he liked sports and figured MLS would be a good place for him to grow academically and have a good opportunity to play sports as well. And Coach Lloyd Thompson was one of the best coaches in the area.

While at MLS, Gorsline was active in sports. He played football, basketball, track, and baseball. He won 14 of a possible 16 letters there. He enjoyed playing for Coach Thompson who also was an influence in his life. Yet he did have some struggles. One particular memory as both Gorsline and Lothert stated were problems academically. Gorsline did not have the same educational background as many others and struggled with languages. He especially had problems with his English class. This is where his pastor also helped him. During the summer Pastor Lothert would tutor him 3-4 hours everyday <sup>in</sup> with English. This helped Gorsline maintain eligibility and graduate in 1961.

Then the decision came as far as what he should do after graduation. He had shown interest <sup>in attending</sup> to attend both Michigan and Michigan State and also ~~to attend~~ some military academies. However, his grades were not good enough to get into those schools. So he decided to work for a telephone company in Owosso for a year. There he was noticed by a Northern Michigan graduate who liked his basketball ability. So Gorsline sent some film of his high school football games to Northern Michigan. And they offered him a scholarship to play football. Gorsline went and played football there as a tailback. He had received the award of Honorable Mention, All-State College. Gorsline also wanted to run track and be part of the track team but one of the coaches told him no, he was there for football. He graduated from Northern Michigan in 1967 with an education degree and then had to decide what he was going to do after college.

Before discussing this decision it is also worth knowing that during this time he got married. He married Barbara Truesdell on April 10, 1965. With regards to how he won her heart, he explained that they had gone steady and had given her his class ring while at MLS. He was a year older than <sup>she</sup> her so when he went away to college they broke

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<sup>1</sup> Phone conversation with Pastor LeRoy Lothert, December 2, 2003

up. She told him that she'd still go steady but he didn't have to. Coach did not date much in college yet they kept in contact. Her father would go and watch him play. But all it took was the information that she had gone to a track meet with a former classmate who was a star athlete, and Coach said that he immediately went home and got engaged. Or as Mrs. Gorsline said, "he was afraid he was going to lose me and he got on the stick."<sup>2</sup>

So as a couple after his graduation from Northern Michigan, they had to decide what they were going to do. Mrs. Gorsline was a registered nurse and had been working so they were not in immediate financial trouble. Coach Gorsline had also received an *invitation* ~~invite~~ to tryout out for the Houston Oilers. However, he felt it was in his best interests to decline. This was due to injuries he had struggled through and also because he knew how difficult it was for his brother James when he tried out to play professional baseball for the Detroit Tigers. He had also just gotten married and he did not want to mess anything up with finishing his education. So he decided to finish school and then to teach. He had received an offer to teach in the Marquette Senior High that was in the area and was intent about it but he did not sign the contract. His parents had gotten ill so he went "down south" to find work there. He found work in Davison, Michigan, which is a suburb of Flint. At Davison High School he was coaching football and was also a world history and a contemporary events (which now would be called a current events) teacher. Gorsline taught there for four years. He also played semi-pro football for the team there in Flint.

Then one of the big events took place. This was an event that would have an impact not only on Gorsline but also for many young men who would end up playing for

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<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Gorsline phone interview December 1, 2003.

him. In 1971, Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) was looking to restart their football program that they had ended in 1937. So they were looking to call a coach. One of the men that was considered qualified was Lloyd Thompson but he had just accepted the call to be the head football coach at Northwestern to replace Coach Umnus. There had been a recommendation somewhere along the line to put Gorsline's name on the list either from Coach Lloyd Thompson, who was Gorsline's high school coach, or from DMLC's president, Conrad <sup>Frey</sup> Fry, who had been the president of MLS while Gorsline was a student there. ~~And~~ The Board of Control, whose president was Otto Engel at the time, sent the call to Gorsline to restart the program at DMLC. Coach Gorsline, not knowing much about how our synod's ministerial system worked, received and accepted the call to restart the football program in New Ulm. As he put it, "I had never really been around church workers."<sup>3</sup> But that would soon change.

The Gorslines then made their move to New Ulm, Minnesota. The atmosphere there was one ready for football. DMLC had always had a good music program but with football there the school would be able to reach out to <sup>young men</sup> guys with different interests. This would also help diversify the different gifts and abilities that the young men would be able to use when they went out into the field. Some of the challenges Gorsline would face involved starting a program. But to his benefit he was young, gung-ho, and excited about football. Most schools that the Lancers would soon play had experience with <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ level of competition. And this would be an obstacle in their first few years. But it would not take long for DMLC to build a program. They had one year of a junior varsity program in 1971 but the following year they entered into a higher level of competition. With sports, it is difficult to lose sometimes both as a player and as a coach. But Gorsline

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<sup>3</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003

remained positive and his comment on the first year was, “we suffered and didn’t have the best of talent but they played hard.”<sup>4</sup> And that has always been something that Gorsline has wished of his teams, that they play hard. The program did not continue to suffer though. DMLC had started to win a few games and in 1977 the program had its first .500 season. And during those years it had experienced having friendly rivalries with a few schools. Two rivalries that both the coaches and players would say was with Northwestern College (NWC) of Watertown, Wisconsin, and also Pillsbury Bible Baptist College of Owatonna, Minnesota.

With these schools is where some of the highlights of his career at DMLC came. The biggest came in his 9<sup>th</sup> year. DMLC had fought in some tough games against NWC but had never come up the winner. And the comment had been made from the NWC side, “Don’t get discouraged Coach, you’ll win sometime, but not in my career.”<sup>5</sup> There had been some tough defeats handed to the Lancers by the Trojans from Watertown. 7-6 was the final score one year between the two schools. One game ended with a field goal due to an injury that stopped the clock giving the Trojans enough time to set up their field goal unit. And as a coach, he would often wonder if the Trojans just had his team’s number. But in 1979 that discouragement would end. And the tides turned through the use of a deceptive offense called the “polecat”. Professor John Brug, who had been Gorsline’s defensive coordinator, remembered the game well. The Lancers had been losing 19-0 going into halftime on a wonderful snowy Watertown day. Due to the cold and the lack of points most of the fans went to warmer quarters to enjoy the rest of their

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<sup>4</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Professor John Brug interview December 5, 2003. Professor Brug had been at DMLC and coached there from 1978-1983. He had also helped in the press box when his son played for Coach Gorsline at Northwestern during the 1990-93 seasons.

day. But not the Lancers. They had decided to try something new, something that would confuse the other team. So they came out at the half with an offense that only had the quarterback and center at mid-field and the rest of the team lined up on one side. The center would be eligible yet the defense would have to respect the side with all the other players. And this gave the quarterback plenty of room to operate and run. Instead of eleven verses eleven it was often two against two or two against three with a lot of field to work with. The defense came together and this creativity on offense ended up giving the Lancers a 21-19 edge over the Trojans and marked the first time that Gorsline's team had beaten their brotherly rival.<sup>6</sup> The biggest disappointment came to the fans who had all gone home for the day and were not able to see this memorable moment in DMLC football history.

Another memorable game came <sup>with</sup> ~~between~~ their other rivals from Owatonna. Pillsbury fans had held on to the tradition of holding balloons until their team scored and then let them go. Anyone who has played for Gorsline knows that he has some <sup>letting</sup> memorable pep talks before the game. This day was no different. Only the pep talk involved the balloons. The Lancers did not want to see the balloons fly that day so anytime the Comets had the ball, the cry "no balloons!" would come from somewhere. And that day no balloons flew because DMLC had shut the Comets out.<sup>7</sup>

Gorsline continued to coach the Lancers for fourteen years in all. And then another life-changing moment happened. He had received the call to replace his former coach, Coach Thompson at Northwestern. And this was a time when he had to make a difficult decision. The Lancers had just experienced their first winning season. He had

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<sup>6</sup> Facts taken from the game are from the Professor Brug interview.

<sup>7</sup> Facts also taken from the Professor Brug interview.

established a bond with the guys at DMLC. But he decided to go. Some of the things that influenced his leaving included the fact that the program was struggling a little bit and the attitude on the campus at NWC was a little different than what it had been in earlier years. And Gorsline felt there was a need on that campus to bring what he had established on New Ulm's campus, pride to their football program. And he also felt there was a better chance to win in Watertown. Yet he had these ties with his players at DMLC. But many people were supportive of whatever decision he would make. Gorsline took the call ending his era at DMLC with a 35-64-4 record over 14 years of coaching there.

Before moving on to his years at NWC there are a few things worth sharing of his time at DMLC. Gorsline had been a blessing to the school there and also to many young men who had entered into the teaching ministry. Some of his attributes that helped the program there were his enthusiasm and love for the game. He not only had been a football coach but had also helped with other sports there and <sup>taught</sup> teaching physical education influencing other athletes and students to use their love of sports to bring into the classroom of Lutheran Elementary Schools and Lutheran High Schools. Football at DMLC and Gorsline had also given young men who had no opportunity to play football in high school the chance to play football. Most colleges would not even consider doing this. But as Gerald Zeamer, who is a coach and teacher now at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School stated, "I didn't play high school football because I had to work on the farm after school. At DMLC it was a dream come true and Gorsline gave me a chance."<sup>8</sup> He has a good gift for developing players. Gorsline was and is known also for his flexibility

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<sup>8</sup> Phone interview with Gerald Zeamer who had been a former player in Gorsline's last year at DMLC, December 8, 2003.

with the players that he has. He was not a coach who is so into sticking to his system of play like so many are on both the college and high school level, but he adapts to the talent that he has. It's different every year. Another notable quality about Coach Gorsline is that he has a good relationship with his team captains. This was something he practiced at DMLC and still does now. If there is a problem he gives a lot of trust to the men that the team has elected to be their spokespersons. Another admirable quality was "if he was wrong or made a mistake, he wasn't hesitant to show his feelings."<sup>9</sup> And as one who played for him, he has not changed with that. If he made a mistake he would make amends for it with the team or a player. Some of his other strengths at DMLC were his dedication and the dedication that he taught his players. He was very strict with training rules and he taught his players the importance of them. In the interview with Professor Brug, he stated how despite the circumstances in which the team was outmanned, Coach Gorsline always had a good spirit.

And then there are some qualities about Coach Gorsline that are admirable off the field. He has always been someone that has time to talk to students. This was no different at DMLC. "I always enjoyed him as a coach. I often walked home with him because I lived off campus and he would often walk and chat with me on the way home."<sup>10</sup> Zeamer who played for him from 1981 until 1984 also remembered how he was a positive influence on the guys with how he always took his wife and kids along to the away games. His son Todd would attest to that. "Back in those days there were only 35-37 players on the bus. That left room for us and dad always took us along."<sup>11</sup> And this was something those men could remember when they were coaches and had families of

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Professor Brug, December 5, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Phone interview with Gerald Zeamer, December 8, 2003.

their own. The final big quality about Gorsline was his encouragement. It has been stated by many former players that if it had not been for football and for Coach Gorsline they would not be in the ministry today. This is something that was true about DMLC, NWC, and where he is now at Martin Luther College (MLC).

With that we move to the Watertown campus. Northwestern College had been a place where football was a strong tradition among the men who were studying to enter the pastoral ministry. It was often the focus of their extra curricular activities. This was a different school. The students studied Greek and Hebrew. It was an all male school. The students' education did not end here. After graduation they would go on to study for another four years at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There was already a friendly rivalry between Coach Gorsline's former school and his new school. And that would naturally only bring in questions of how the guys would receive him. The dean on the campus was Pastor Ed Lindemann. He also helped Coach Gorsline with football. This is how he stated Gorsline's acceptance on the campus. "I think that when he came and recognizing the contentious opposite sides, he didn't understand the NWC man. I think he was somewhat shocked that he was so accepted. NWC just wanted to win and do their best and wanted a coach who was a confident and enthusiastic individual."<sup>12</sup> As Pastor John Boeder, who was a senior at the time stated, "there was a general excitement about a new coach who could breath a little life into the program and I think the guys responded well

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<sup>11</sup> Phone interview with Todd Gorsline, December 10, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Ed Lindemann. December 2, 2003. Pastor Lindemann served at Northwestern College as their campus Dean for over 20 years and now is a pastor in Pardeeville, Wisconsin.

to him.”<sup>13</sup> The opening statement in the football program by President Carleton Toppe also showed the confidence that the school had in Coach Gorsline. It said,

There will be new methods of coaching, to be sure. No successful football coach is a clone of his predecessor. But we know that we can still look forward to many things remaining the same as they have been at Northwestern through the years. The same disciplined performance, the same spirited play, the same exciting moments, the same taste of victory, and the same satisfaction of having given it our best in defeat. Welcome Coach Gorsline. Have a good year!<sup>14</sup>

In an interview with Pastor Boeder, who played his last year at NWC under Gorsline, there were a few problems that had developed on the campus. In some people’s opinion, players were following loose training rules and the team discipline was not always there. With a new coach they were hoping things would improve. And after a situation, they did. That is one principle that Coach Gorsline has always stood by with his teams. You keep training rules. And like with everything it was something that had to be taught. The other principle that helped Coach Gorsline was his understanding of why those men were there. As he stated, “the faculty there realized that football was an integral part of the education there, but the tail didn’t wag the dog.”<sup>15</sup> What he means is that football was something the faculty appreciated there but it never was the first priority. School and the books always came first. NWC was not like many of the universities that players would miss classes due to practices or games. Players had to study and study hard. There was not a two-week mini-camp before the season. Everything was to be held in perspective. School first, then extra-curricular events. And Gorsline, wherever he has coached, has always encouraged that.

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<sup>13</sup> Phone interview with Pastor John Boeder who is the campus pastor at Martin Luther College on December 8, 2003. He played for Coach Gorsline in his first year at NWC and now is one of Gorsline’s assistants.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from the 1985 football program in regards to Coach Gorsline’s entrance into NWC.

<sup>15</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

With that understanding, Coach Gorsline began his years at NWC. His objective was to restore something he thought they lost. His statement to the team was that “they lost their football pride. He wanted to bring pride back to the black and red.”<sup>16</sup> In his first year the team finished with a 4-4 record. The big disappointment was losing to his former team in his first year. But as he put it, “when I left, I didn’t leave the cupboard bare.”<sup>17</sup> He left behind good players at DMLC and they beat the Trojans that year. But there was also a new thing awaiting Gorsline that year. It was a new cross-town rival. He had played against Maranatha Bible College while at DMLC but it was nowhere near the level of rivalry that existed between them and NWC. And that rivalry also brought a familiar face to Gorsline, Maranatha’s coach, Terry Price.

Coach Price started coaching college football around the same time that Gorsline did as an assistant at Pillsbury. And as he stated, “I’ve always enjoyed coaching against Dennis. There was nothing like the cross-town rivalry that our two schools had.”<sup>18</sup> These games along with the games against DMLC brought some very memorable games to players, coaches, and fans at NWC. It also always brought out school spirit. Coach Price had nothing but good things to say about Gorsline. They not only coached against one another but also would go to conference meetings together with Maranatha’s athletic director and NWC’s athletic director Jerry Kruse. And both coaches had two sons that were also the same age. The games between Maranatha and NWC were often the highpoint of the season. And there were some well fought games. They even split games a few seasons. And from an outsider’s standpoint, Coach Price stated, “I loved the

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<sup>16</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Phone interview with Coach Terry Price, December 8, 2003.

atmosphere and really miss the atmosphere that was there when we had that cross-town rivalry. Dennis' teams always worked hard, hit, and never quit."<sup>19</sup>

In his years at Watertown, Gorsline enjoyed his time there. He enjoyed the camaraderie that he had with the men on that campus. The campus also enjoyed him and was blessed by him being there. As Pastor Lindemann stated, "what we needed as a football coach we got. We needed someone who was going to relate well to the students and generate some enthusiasm for the game for the student body."<sup>20</sup> His teams also brought some conference championships to the campus. In his tenure at NWC, Gorsline had a record of 41-41-1 including three conference championships.

When reflecting on his years at NWC, Coach Gorsline stated how he had many good memories. In regards to his time as football coach, he really appreciated how close he was to the guys. Another blessing that campus had, along with the campus at DMLC and now MLC, is the fact that the players share the same faith and not only had unity when they were on the field but also off the field.<sup>21</sup> He also stated how he enjoyed that the players helped encourage the other men there to continue in their studies for the ministry when he said, "Friends and football helped them come back."<sup>22</sup> And when asked about what was the thing he enjoyed most about that campus, Gorsline said, "One of the neatest things there was when the bell for chapel would ring. You would see all these guys leaving the dormitory and they would go to chapel and you would be able to sing with all these male voices."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Phone interview with Coach Price, December 8, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Lindemann, December 2, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

During Gorsline's time in Watertown the synod made a difficult and somewhat controversial decision. They had voted to close the college campus and join it with DMLC and have one worker training school. This had an effect on the students and faculty at NWC. They had to get ready for a change. Also, the board for the new school would be calling professors and coaches. During the two years that the synod was planning for the new school there were recommendations for the football coach. Coach Gorsline was one of the men recommended in a few letters to the board and he received the call to be the head coach there.

Unifying the two schools and their programs was one of the challenges that would face Gorsline. Yet from a spectator's view, what a wonderful blessing to have a man who understood both programs and the two different types of ministry that the players would be about to enter. Coach Gorsline has been serving there in New Ulm since 1995. The program there has been the most successful ~~winning-wise~~ of the three that he has coached at. In his nine years there he has posted a 47-29 record with 3 conference championships. He has also had the opportunity to take his teams to play in the Metrodome.

Some things that are noteworthy about his years at MLC are that he has been able to coach with former players and he has not only had the opportunity to coach one generation of football players but many of the guys who once played for him now have had sons on his teams. Yet through his many years as a coach, he has always helped men keep their focus on why they are there. While at Northwestern, he emphasized that his players study their Greek and Hebrew and now at MLC he encourages the guys "not

to let two or three weeks go by before getting a handle on the languages.”<sup>24</sup> And also during his years at DMLC and now MLC he tells his players to make school number one. The men who served with him on the faculty in all three schools and who have coached with him will say he has always given player’s studies priority.<sup>25</sup>

As far as the blessings Coach Gorsline has had while being back in New Ulm, he stated,

Since the amalgamation of the two schools, there has always seemed to be some sort of big controversy on the campus. Whether it was the amalgamation, inter-faculty problems, curriculum changes, the synod deficit, or the budget cuts, there has always been one wonderful blessing for my wife and I. It’s been the students. Regardless of these problems, we have enjoyed the students and their positive attitude on the campus and their love for sports.<sup>26</sup>

His characteristics of being a very personable coach have continued to influence both men and women. During his years of service he has also coached basketball, wrestling, track, baseball, and tennis. He has given athletes something to remember if they were to ever coach and also an atmosphere where it is fun to play the sports they love. And when asked if he realizes how much of an influence he has had on the men who have played for him he responded, “I don’t know if I have but it’s been football and the love of the game.”<sup>27</sup> Pastor Lindemann said, “He would sit with the individual. He spent time with them in the dormitory and was a counselor at the same time as a coach. He would talk about football with them but also about the ministry.”<sup>28</sup> Pastor Boeder spoke of him, “He’s been a positive influence toward the ministry, that is the first and foremost thing that he encourages the guys to do.”<sup>29</sup> A former player, Pastor Heath Butler said, “He was

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<sup>24</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> In the interviews with Professor Brug, Pastor Lindemann, and Pastor Boeder this point was made by all of them.

<sup>26</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Lindemann, December 2, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Boeder, December 8, 2003.

like one of the guys. He was not only your coach but also your friend who kept pushing you toward the ministry.”<sup>30</sup> Mark Jacobson who played receiver for Coach Gorsline said, “When my brother died, Coach Gorsline and Professor Deutschlander were the two men there who really took time out to talk with me in length. That really impressed me.”<sup>31</sup> The time that Coach takes for his players and for students to get to know them and see how they are doing is something very special about him.

And with this sort of topic the question has also been raised whether or not football or sports in general are a good thing for our synod’s schools to have. In response to this question Pastor Lindemann said,

First and foremost the most important thing is the teaching and studying of God’s Word and the power to do all things comes from God. But yes, I believe sports are tremendously important. Knowing how to win and how to lose isn’t natural. It’s important to be able to know how to go on after being let down. And just like with sports the ministry can really be tough sometimes.<sup>32</sup>

And there are those who have played for him who can attest to that.

The final question that was asked of Coach Gorsline had to do with the advice he would give the next coach who was going to mold young men for the ministry. He said, “I would tell them not to come in and take themselves so seriously with long gung-ho practices. Keep the game fun. These guys have enough pressure from school. It’s important to have good team chemistry. As I stated in my preseason letter, ‘to win is great, to play the game is greater, but to love the game is the greatest.’”<sup>33</sup>

In closing Coach Gorsline has been coaching 37 years and still lives in New Ulm, Minnesota with his wife Barbara who is the secretary in the athletic office. He has two

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<sup>30</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Heath Butler, December 10, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Seminarian Mark Jacobson, December 10, 2003. The Lord called home Mark Jacobson’s brother Andy, who would have been a junior, right before MLC started their school sessions in 1995. Mark was a freshman who was just entering college.

<sup>32</sup> Phone interview with Pastor Lindemann December 2, 2003.

children, Todd and Troy and two grandchildren. Both of his sons were able to play for him. Todd is a teacher in Milwaukee, and Troy now resides in Watertown, Wisconsin. During his lifetime the men who were the greatest influence in his life were his father, President Conrad <sup>Frey</sup> Fry, and Coach Lloyd Thompson.

Coach Gorsline will probably not be remembered for 118-135-5 record that he has posted so far. In fact most of the guys who have played for him may not remember the record they posted while under his helm. But what they will remember is his focus on encouraging students to continue in their studies so they can proclaim God's Word in the full-time ministry. Through his love of the game, many are grateful for the part he and those who played for him had in their encouragement to continue their studies for the teaching or pastoral ministry. The pastor that confirmed him and tutored him with English so he could continue to play sports wrote in a letter,

I am amazed at what the Lord has done with this lad who grew up in a rural area in a common but Christian home and placed him in the very heart of our synodical educational system as a coach to influence many, many of our future church workers! I had only a small part in his life. I consider it a privilege to have been there when he needed help and was grateful to see where the Lord has led him.<sup>34</sup>

And there are many of us who are either in the ministry now or studying to enter it who can say it was a privilege to play for him and can be very grateful for how the Lord has led and used Coach Gorsline in our lives. Thank you Coach!

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<sup>33</sup> Phone interview with Coach Gorsline, December 1, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Part of a letter received from Pastor LeRoy Lothert.

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