

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2008

Up close
with ...

Mike Pavlansky



It seems safe to suggest that Mike Pavlansky's career was one of destiny. Mike's dad, Dave, was a biology teacher and head football coach at Poland be-

fore a malignant brain tumor cut short a distinguished career.

Not only did Mike follow in the footsteps of his dad, but he followed the footsteps of three brothers who also coach and teach. Pat coaches girls basketball at Canfield. Dave Jr. is the Boardman track and cross country coach. Tom is the head football coach at Lakeview.

On Friday, Mike will begin his eighth season as the head football coach at Canfield when the Cardinals host Chardon to kickoff the 2008 season.

Mike owns a 59-22 record at Canfield, where his teams have advanced to the playoffs on five different occasions. In 2005, the Cardinals were the Division II state runners-up.

This season, Pavlansky and his Cardinals will be seeking their fifth consecutive playoff appearance.

Q. What is more challenging, to get to the top or to stay there?

A. "It's tough either way, but staying there is definitely a challenge. Sometimes before you're proven, you can weave your way toward the front of the pack unnoticed. However, once you're there, opponents begin circling your name on the calendar, and all of a sudden you become a target. It's a nice problem to have, but sometimes young athletes have an easier time handling adversity than success."

Q. From a coaching standpoint, what was the biggest lesson you learned from your dad?

A. "Remember that every day is a new day, and when you wake up in the morning you need to make the best of that day. Good or bad, you can't hold on to the past or you can't always focus on the future. You have to enjoy and make the best of what is right in front of you."

Q. If not coaching and teaching, what is the one other profession in which all of the Pavlansky brothers might share?

A. "We've never tried anything else. Once you get past the sports, we all have different interests, so I don't know if there is anything else we could all make a career out of together. Our biggest bond is in teaching. That's the thing that really connects the family."

Q. Are the new mega-conferences such as the All-American Conference good for high school sports?

A. "I think so. You look at the short history of the Inter-Tri County League, and you see how it helped some of the smaller schools once they began competing against equal-sized opponents. The same thing will happen in the AAC, where there will be three very competitive league races. In the end, you'll likely see teams reach the playoffs from all three tiers"

Q. If Mike Pavlansky was in Beijing, in what event would he participate?

A. "Spectatorship. If I was swimming, I'd drown, and if I were running I would not finish the race. You have to marvel at the athletic excellence you see in the Olympics."

Q. What would you rather see your team accomplish, a conference title or a playoff berth?

A. "That's a tough one. Since the inception of the playoffs, I think the value of a conference championship has diminished in the eyes of many fans. That's a shame. The traditionalist in me loves competing for a league crown. The vast majority of the playoff teams shooting for a state title end up very disappointed. But once you have that conference trophy, it's yours to keep. Fortunately, a conference championship usually results in a playoff berth."

Q. Is a five-week playoff system too lengthy?

A. "I don't think so. When we made our run in 2005, five weeks went by pretty darn fast. As long as a coaching staff doesn't overwork its players, the kids of today can handle the physical demands of a long season. Every kid who plays this game would welcome five extra weeks of practice in order to play for a state title."

Q. What is on Mike Pavlansky's iPod?

A. "I don't own one. I am very technologically challenged. The closest thing to an iPod for me is the sports radio shows that I listen to whenever I'm in the car. Mike and Mike in the morning, Colin Cowherd, Dan Patrick...that's usually the only type of radio I'm tuned to."