

## Edina's coaching legend – The man behind the statue

Willard Ikola recalls great moments in Edina boys hockey

By **JOHN SHERMAN**  
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When Willard Ikola arrived in Edina as head boys hockey coach for the 1958-59 season, he had no previous coaching experience, but an outstanding pedigree as a hockey player.

Thirty-three years later, when he retired from coaching high school hockey, Ikola had a state-record 616 wins along with eight state championships, 18 section titles and 22 Lake Conference titles. More than that, he put Edina on the map as a hockey community - not only in Minnesota, but nationwide as well. He was even the subject of an article in Sports Illustrated.

On Saturday, March 7, a statue honoring Ikola was unveiled outside the



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

This statue of Edina High boys hockey coach Willard Ikola stands outside Braemar Arena as a symbol of greatness in the Hornet program.

front entrance of Braemar Arena, Edina's home rink. A crowd of 300, many of them former players and their families, were on hand to witness the historic event.

Ikola talked about his latest award in an interview last week, and then

shared his thoughts on his coaching career.

"I was surprised at the number of people who came to the ceremony," he said. "I have never been involved in anything like this before. It was very humbling. I always wanted to be a teacher



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Over 33 years, Willard Ikola coached Edina High's boys hockey teams to eight state championships and 616 victories.

and a hockey coach when I was growing up, and Edina gave me that opportunity. Once we got indoor ice [with the opening of Braemar Arena in 1966, our kids came out of the youth hockey program with better skills. And that's when the high

school program took off."

The Hornets won their first state championship in 1969, when Skip Thomas scored to beat Warroad 5-4. That team featured star defensemen Bill Nyrop and Steve Curry along with a line that many consider the best in Edina

history - Bruce Carlson, Tim Carlson and Bobby Krieger.

As the years passed, Ikola's teams had even greater success. The pinnacle of achievement might have been Edina-East's perfect (24-0-0) season in 1973-74. For most of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, Edina had two high schools - East and West.

"Just before the start of my first season at Edina, the Richfield coach, Gene Olive, called and asked me to meet with him," Ikola said. "He asked me, 'Do you want to be a varsity coach or an intramural coach?' 'A varsity coach,' I told him."

Olive told Ikola that the "intramural coaches" never got to state and always played a lot of seniors instead of promoting younger players. Olive had one more tip for the rookie coach: "Make sure you watch your youth program."

Ikola took the advice to heart, and based on the success he would have against Richfield, Olive

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(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

All-Lake Conference guard Ella Campbell of Edina drives to the basket during a girls basketball game against Chaska at Edina High School Activity Center. She is the only Edina player on the All-Lake team this season.

## Ella Campbell is Edina's only All-Lake girls player

Hornets land three honorable mentions

By **JOHN SHERMAN**  
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Sophomore guard Ella Campbell is Edina High's only All-Lake Conference girls basketball player for the 2019-20 season.

As the Hornets' leading scorer in her second year as a starter, Campbell showed promise of things to come.

"Ella had another good season," Edina head coach

Jaime Gaard Chapman said. "We started two sophomores in the back court, Ella and Dorothy Stotts."

They will return next season along with starting forwards Allie Murphy and Caiya Wulf, who joined Stotts as All-Lake Conference honorable mention selections.

Gaard Chapman predicted that the Lake will again be the best conference in the state next season. "This year, three Lake Conference teams - Hopkins, Eden Prairie and

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# Tonka boys and Wayzata girls head All-Lake Nordic teams

By **JOHN SHERMAN**

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After winning Lake Conference Nordic skiing championships this winter, the Minnetonka boys and Wayzata girls top the All-Lake selections.

Members of the honor team were determined by performances in Lake meets, including the Lake Conference Championships, which were held at Baker Park Reserve in mid-February.

Minnetonka, coached by Sean Kern, won six of the places on 14-member boys team.

Junior Austin Hunter and senior Thomas Graupmann head the list for the Skippers. The top two individual skiers in conference competition, senior Zach Spears of Edina Prairie and Colin Freed of Wayzata, are all-conference picks, as well.

On the girls side, the top performer throughout the conference races, Wayzata junior Lauren McCollor, is a repeat All-Lake selection. Edina's Morgan Richter had an outstanding senior season as she placed in the top 10 at the State Meet for the second



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Edina's Peter Mans earns All-Lake Conference honorable mention for the 2019-20 boys Nordic skiing season.

straight year. She is another multiyear All-Lake skier. Edina, Edin Prairie and Wayzata all qualified their girls teams for the State Meet.

## Nordic Boys All-Lake Team

Minnetonka: Seniors Justin Calder, Thomas

Graupmann and Dylan Green, juniors Austin Hunter and Hari Chidambaram and sophomore Alexander Hemink.

Wayzata: Senior Alexander Pemberton, junior Colin Freed and sophomore Noah Kaster.

Edina: Junior Eli Frenkel and freshman Andrew DeFor.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Morgan Richter of the Edina High girls Nordic skiing team has the lead in a race at Theodore Wirth Park.

Edin Prairie: Senior Zach Spears and freshman Benon Brattebo.

Hopkins: Senior Caleb Dunnewind.

## Honorable Mention

Minnetonka: A.J. Carroll, Tristan Green and Jack Siegwart.

Wayzata: A.J. Karn,

Preston Langland and Daniel McCollor.

Edina: Eric Crosby Lehman, Quentin Loxtercamp and Peter Mans.

Edin Prairie: Anthony Hilligoss, Riley Marble and Nile Timmerman.

Hopkins: Colby Branch, Tim Sandford and John Struyk.

## Nordic Girls All-Lake Team

Wayzata: Senior Taya Vokaty and juniors Lauren McCollor, Ingrid Halvorson and Kathryn House.

Edin Prairie: Seniors Rachel Boelke, Liesl Paulsen, Kareena Bovitz and junior Ella Bakken.

Edina: Seniors Morgan Richter and Claire Wagner and sophomore Maggie Wagner.

Hopkins: Sophomores Elsa Bergman and Lauren Munger and seventh-grader Sydney Drevlow.

## Honorable Mention

Wayzata: Maria Fahlander, Diane Meyer and Claire Parham.

Edin Prairie: Mila Finch, Silje Busklein and Eleanor Thomas.

Edina: Heidi Engman, Addie Hinkie and Sadie Schreiner.

Hopkins: Ella Firehammer, Ellie Munger and Laci Provenzano.

Minnetonka: Olivia Graupmann, Elena Hicks and Anna Wander.

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## Ikola

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might ultimately have regretted giving it to him.

The Hornets dominated Lake Conference hockey, winning two-thirds of the league titles during Ikola's tenure.

"Winning championships wasn't easy at first," Ikola said. "My first year, our record was 4-9-5, and I was worried that I might not be asked back after we got knocked out in our first region game."

Things got better quickly, and Ikola never had another losing record.

"For a number of years, we couldn't get past the first round at state," Ikola said. "But later on, we went there expecting to win."

## Outdoor Days

Before Braemar Arena opened in 1966, Edina hockey was largely an outdoor sport, although

games were played at the Ice Center in Golden Valley, and later at the Blake Arena.

"December was usually a pretty good month outdoors," Ikola said. "But January was brutal. The temperature overnight might be 25 below, and sometimes it wouldn't get up to 15 below during the day. In my early years, we had about 50 kids in the youth hockey program. But the number jumped to more than 300 after Braemar was built."

To get ready for the outdoor season, the Edina players and coaches had to flood the rink. That was the easy part. Once it snowed, they faced a bigger challenge - clearing off the rink with snow shovels.

"Sometimes, we only shoveled half the rink," Ikola said. "If we would have done the whole thing, there wouldn't have been time to practice."

## Ikola, The Player

Growing up in Eveleth, Minnesota, Ikola was the star goalie for his high school team, leading the Golden Bears to three consecutive state championships.

He considered going on to play for the University of Minnesota after that, but when Michigan offered him a full scholarship, he became a Wolverine. Ikola won two NCAA titles with Michigan, and then he reached the apex of his playing career as the starting goalie for the U.S. Olympic team in 1956. The Americans took Olympic silver, losing to the Russians 4-0 in the championship game. In the key game of the tournament for the Americans, Ikola's goaltending was instrumental in a 4-1 victory over Canada.

Ikola said some of his best memories in hockey came in his teenage years in Eveleth.

"We never had jerseys until we played for the

varsity," he said. "But one thing we did have was indoor ice. I was the back-up goalie for the varsity when I was in eighth-grade, but I wasn't able to play in the State Tournament because the team took only 11 players to St. Paul. I listened to the games on the radio."

During Ikola's last three years at Eveleth and the adding the year after he graduated, Eveleth won 62 straight games and four state championships (1948-51).

"Back then the only Twin Cities team that could compete with the Northern teams was St. Paul Johnson," Ikola said.

Every so often, even now, one of Ikola's high school rivals will tell him: "I scored on you once."

Ikola's response is the same each time: "Did you win?" And, of course, the answer is no.

## Beyond 25 Years

Ikola thought he might retire from coaching fol-

lowing his 25th season with Edina. After all, his son Steve was a senior, and it seemed like a logical conclusion.

But the summer before that season, he was coaching at a hockey camp in Babbitt, Minnesota, and he saw a group of talented sixth- and seventh-graders wearing green hockey pants and white socks.

"I asked them where they were from and they all said Edina," Ikola recalled. "That night I told my wife Laurie that I planned to continue coaching a few more years."

## Changes in Hockey

Coach Ikola said the biggest changes he has seen in high school hockey over the years include the increased magnitude of the State Tournament and the growth of the girls program.

"When I played, the St. Paul Auditorium held maybe 7,000," he said. "Since the tournament

moved to Xcel Energy Center, there have been a few crowds over 20,000."

Add TV exposure and internet interest, and the State Tournament is an incredible statewide event.

As for girls hockey, which had not yet started at the time Ikola retired in 1991, the quality of play has increased dramatically over the years. Now the boys and girls teams share Braemar Arena equally, and the girls, coached by Sami Reber, have played in the state Class AA championship game four years in a row.

One thing about hockey that hasn't changed is the passion Edina shows for all levels of the sport. If there is one guardian of the passion, it is coach Ikola, and with his likeness standing outside the front door of Braemar, he will never be forgotten.

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# Two Edina basketball players make All-Lake team

**Forward Hutson, guard Crawford are chosen by league's coaches**

By **JOHN SHERMAN**  
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The Lake Conference boys basketball coaches recently selected their all-conference team for 2019-20, and two Edina Hornets made the list.

Six-foot-ten senior forward Jacob Hutson made the team for the second year in a row after leading the team in scoring and rebounding this season. New to the All-Lake squad is Edina's 6-3 junior guard Marcus Crawford, a first-year starter for the Hornets. The Lake Conference head coaches made the selections.

Edina head coach Joe Burger has had Hutson in the starting lineup for three seasons. He has seen the big man evolve from a competent low-post player to a power forward can score from many spots on the floor.

"Jacob really improved his outside shooting," Burger said. "He scores in a variety of different ways."

Hutson will play basketball on scholarship for Loyola University in Chicago next season. His goal for several years has been Division I, and now he is there.

Crawford will be back to lead the Hornets next season, and he will be joined by guard Sammy Presthus and forward Brady Helgren, and possibly center Bastian Sweeney, who is a future Division I football player as an offensive tackle.

"I am already looking forward to next season," said Burger, whose team finished 13-14 overall this season. "Marcus gained a lot of confidence in his outside shooting this year, and he's only going to get better."

Presthus played point guard for the Hornets and was the primary ball handler.

"Sammy's growth from November to March was huge," Burger pointed out.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Edina 6-10 senior forward Jacob Hutson, catching a pass against Wayzata defender Josh Gullickson above, is a repeat selection on the All-Lake Conference boys basketball team.

Helgren also made significant progress during the season and had a pair of 20-point scoring nights. "Brady is almost 6-8,

and I wouldn't be surprised if he is 6-9 by next season," Burger said. "He has the work ethic, and I know he will come back

stronger. As a team, we're in a good spot."

## Boys Basketball All-Lake Team

Eden Prairie: Senior forwards Austin Andrews and Connor Christensen, senior guards Drake Dobbs and John Henry and junior guard Will Foster.

Hopkins: Senior guards Kerwin Walton, Sawyer Shrake and Cornell Richardson and junior guard Andre Gray II.

Wayzata: Junior guard Kody Williams, sophomore guard Camden Heide and sophomore center Carter Bjerke.

Minnetonka: Senior forward Cameron Steele and junior guard Riley O'Connor.

Buffalo: Senior guards Matthew Willert and Brandon Maatz and sophomore guard Antonio Bluiett.

Edina: Senior forward Jacob Hutson and junior guard Marcus Crawford.

St. Michael-Albertville: Senior guards Kale Hoselton and Evan Wieker.

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# Tourney Time book captures state hockey memories

**Authors LaVaque and Nelson present stories of big event**

By **JASON OLSON**  
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David LaVaque

If you are unfamiliar with the Minnesota State High School boys' hockey tournament we might have a problem.

Being the State of Hockey, Minnesotans are a passionate group when it comes to the winter pastime. We also hold a deep-seated passion for basketball, baseball, and football, but among the most popular, stick-and-ball sports hockey is at the top.

Each February, boys' high school programs begin the march to St. Paul in a section tournament to determine the 16 teams that will compete in two

points to highlights from state championship performances by three other Lake Conference schools - Eden Prairie, Minnetonka and Wayzata.

Longtime StarTribune preps reporter LaVaque along with co-author Nelson, the main editor behind the Hockey Hub website among other ventures, produced what has to be the definitive collection of The Tourney, as it is now known as, with a foreword by Aaron, Neal and Paul Broten.

"The whole thing started as a love of the tournament and appreciation of it," LaVaque said. "We didn't know what it would look like but Loren and I have covered it together since 2014 and we have mutual admiration, know each other's work ethic and knowledge about the game and tournament."

In addition to the book, legacy.hockey is a website devoted to high school hockey in Minnesota offering up more content

that didn't make it into the book plus current information on the season at hand.

## Hundreds of Interviews

Over the span of 400 interviews, the co-authors take readers on a trek from Roseau to Rochester for all 75 tournaments, from the humble beginnings of an invitational-only tournament in New Ulm to Roseau then eventually St. Paul, Bloomington, Minneapolis and back to St. Paul.

"We set out to emphasize the storytelling," Nelson said who authored a book on the top 100 players in the tournament in 2011. "We wanted to look at [the tournament's] soul and not just storytelling."

A look at the cover illustrates that passion not only by the players tossing sticks and gloves around the ice in celebration but the student section joining in the pandemonium.

The book is divided into three eras with natural breaks which happened to occur 25 years apart: The Early Years (1945-1968), The Golden Era (1969-1991) and The Modern Era (1992-today).

Each chapter dives head-first into a tournament champion's run to victory.

What made that year and tournament unique from the perspective of the champion?

In addition to the entertaining chapters, there are sidebar items and top-10 lists including greatest games, championship-game performances, forward-line nicknames, top players never to make it to the tournament.

LaVaque liked the America's Game: The Super Bowl Champions annual documentary series produced by NFL Films as a style of story-telling as a template for how to present what ended up being a large amount of information into consum-

able bits to keep the reader engaged.

"We didn't want to get stuck in writing glorified game stories," LaVaque said as they named each chapter with a unique item from that tournament. "We wanted to write about the personalities, what it was like in the locker room."

To accomplish the necessary interviews, the two traveled to the far reaches of the state to meet with interviewees between the spring of 2017 and mid-December, 2019.

"To fit that many interviews into our time frame didn't allow for as many face-to-face interviews as we hoped but each one was so colorful because this was a big part of their lives and hopefully that comes through in their stories," LaVaque said who made a trip through Duluth and Eveleth.

At the start of the planning process, the pair

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**Book**

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decided to talk with those who played in the early tournaments from the 1940s, knowing by basic math that those still alive would be octogenarians then-current Division I college hockey players and those currently in the National Hockey League would be next recount their experience.

**1969 Tournament**

One tournament that stood out for the authors was the 1969 tournament played at Metropolitan Center in Bloomington for the first time. A Henry Boucha-led Warroad squad came up short in the final against Edina 5-4

in overtime.

Attendance for the tournament reached 79,868 as Warroad's four goals were the most by a losing team until Hermantown equaled the feat three times (2011, '13 and '15).

"All of the elements cherished over the years game together," LaVaque said from outstate versus metro final played in the shiny new hockey arena for the first time. "That's when the hockey tournament surpassed the state basketball tournament and began to take a bigger foothold."

Something LaVaque and Nelson had on their site was the ability of time and context on their side. LaVaque said: "What are we going to get from 1946-47? Then from the modern days, 'What are we

going to bring new to the party?' that hasn't been talked about already."

One story that caught LaVaque's attention was Edina's 2014 run. "Why were they so passive against Eagan?" he asked, pointing out the seeming anomaly when the Hornets confidently powered past other foes but not Eagan. The 2014 chapter titled: E-Dynasty Reborn goes into depth about the topic before Edina captured the Class AA state title with an 8-2 win over Lakeville North.

The Hornets lost to Eagan 2-1 in early December.

Giles was quoted: "We were tip-toeing around. The whole game we were like that. And we're a big, strong team. So us coaches were going, 'What hap-

pened?'"

Eagan's 6-foot-5, 205-pound defenseman Nick Wolff could move and hit. "He terrorized our kids all the way up through youth hockey," Giles was quoted by LaVaque in the book. "They didn't want to go anywhere near him."

Two chapters came to mind for Nelson first, Thief River Falls' run to the titles in 1954 and 1956.

"I didn't know much about them but you could make a case for that group to be among the top five teams of all-time, maybe the best team ever, based on each era," Nelson said. The Prowlers downed Eveleth 4-1 for the '54. The group had cross country runners, football players and baseball players who also happened to

excel on the ice including Loren 'Sid' Vraa, Lyle Guttu, Joe Pool, Robert Helgeland and Marv Jorde. Twin hammers Mike McMahon and Les Sabo were known for their physical play and efficient puck movement in front of goalie Jack Hoppe.

The 1956 squad defeated International Falls 3-2 in the final with a battered group including senior defenseman Duane Glass who played nearly every minute of every game. A broken garage door mangled his right hand badly enough that his glove had to be taped in place during the playoffs.

Poole scored the title-winning goal, his fourth goal of the tournament to give the Prowlers a 3-2 victory.

Another standout chapter comes from the 1996 chapter titled, "The Game."

Apple Valley, coached by the legendary Larry Hendrickson, outlasted Duluth East 5-4 in the longest game in tournament history spanning 93 minutes, 12 seconds. The semifinal led to the Eagles downing Edina 3-2 in the final. The historic semifinal game came to a close at 1:39 a.m.

Erik Westrum led Apple Valley with four goals during that state tournament run and is now head coach of the Southwest Christian/Richfield program. Westrum's father, Pat, was an assistant coach with Hendrickson.

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**All-Lake**

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St. Michael-Albertville - made it to state," she noted. All three schools will have All-Lake players returning, as will Minnetonka and Wayzata.

"We will be tested and challenged every game," Gaard Chapman said.

**All-Lake Team**

Hopkins: Senior K.K. Adams and Paige Bueckers, sophomores Maya Nnaji and Amaya Battle and ninth-grader Taylor Woodson

Wayzata: Senior forward Annika Stewart, junior forward Jenna Johnson, senior guard Alivia Arnebeck and sophomore

guard Mara Braun.

St. Michael-Albertville: Senior forward Vanessa Alexander, senior guard Mackenzie Kramer, junior forward Kendal Cox and ninth-grade guard Tessa Johnson.

Minnetonka: Junior forward Sophie Haydon, sophomore guard Desiree Ware and eighth-grade forward Emma Dasovich.

Edina: Sophomore guard Ella Campbell.

Eden Prairie: Senior center Natalie Mazuerk, senior forward Nneka Obiazor, junior guard Destinee Bursch and sophomore forward Nia Holloway.

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