



## Men's Ice Hockey's Jaymie Harrington

### *The Road to Becoming a Leader*

*By Doug DeBiase, Director of Athletic Communications*

In the waning seconds of the Franklin Pierce men's ice hockey Northeast-10 Conference semi-final victory over Southern New Hampshire last winter, Athletics Director Bruce Kirsh '71 made his way around the rink toward the team's locker room to congratulate Head Coach **Jaymie Harrington**. When any of the teams on the Rindge campus had a monumental win, Kirsh made it a habit of personally congratulating the respective head coach with a handshake and a pat on the back.

As Kirsh inched his way closer to the locker room, Harrington saw him coming and sprinted over to meet him. This time, however, no handshakes were given. The two men reached out and gave each other giant bear hugs with several hard pats on the back.

Yes, it was a huge win for Harrington and the men's ice hockey program; the Ravens were tasting post-season success for the first time in history. But it was much more than that. The victory and the resulting trip to the conference championship game was the culmination of four years of hard work by both men to put the date of Jan. 13, 2009, behind them.

It was four years of the athletics director never giving up on the head coach

and providing valuable guidance and leadership. And four years of the head coach taking a professionally low moment, looking deep into himself, listening intently to the advice offered, and making the necessary adjustments to become the well-rounded leader he has proven to be today.

"I can't say for sure, but things could have been different if there was another athletics director in that chair," said Harrington. "Bruce Kirsh didn't cast me aside. He took the time to work with me, not just on a coaching level, but on a personal level as well. He's been like a father to me."

#### **JANUARY 13, 2009**

Jaymie Harrington's intensity and passion for the sport of ice hockey is evident anytime someone speaks with him. Those traits served Harrington well as a player; he played in more than 100 games in the United States Hockey League (the top junior hockey league in the U.S.) before going on to play collegiately at the Division I level for Iona. When the school dropped the program in 2003, he played the remainder of his career at Canisius. Harrington landed the assistant coach's job at Franklin Pierce in 2007 following his graduation from Canisius. After just one

year on the job, Harrington was elevated to the position of head coach.

Bruce Kirsh saw in Harrington a young man driven to become a successful head coach in his chosen sport. In fact, Harrington was no different from Kirsh when he was handed the reigns of the men's basketball program in 1977, just six years after he had graduated from Franklin Pierce. "His passion, not just for the sport of ice hockey, but to be a good coach was evident right from day one," Kirsh said. "He was fiery and had a vision for the program, but at the same time we both knew he needed to control his intensity and funnel it down the right avenues."

Kirsh knew those same traits could come back to haunt Harrington as a coach if not channeled properly. Sadly for both men, that is exactly what happened in a 4-1 home loss to Saint Michael's on Jan. 13, 2009. The game that night featured a lot of aggressive play by both sides. Harrington felt that player safety was being jeopardized by the lack of calls from the referees, especially in the way his goalie was taking several charges from the opposition. The rough play continued, and Harrington had had enough and began arguing with the referees. He was quickly ejected from the game, but he did



not stop yelling. The arguing continued and grew in intensity as he left the bench area. Before Harrington knew it, security was escorting him from the arena.

### WHAT TO DO?

Bruce Kirsh was not in attendance for the St. Mike's game, so when he got a call informing him of what had happened, myriad thoughts and emotions ran through his mind. He was on his way to the NCAA Convention when the news broke to him, so his conversations with Harrington were over the phone. Kirsh, as anyone close to him can attest, does not mince words and is straight to the point. He spoke to Harrington about his disappointment in his actions and stressed

that the coach understand the gravity of the issue. Harrington was allowed to speak as well, to give his side of the story.

"We talked – mostly him – but I still didn't know what the final outcome was going to be," Harrington said. "Bruce was brutally honest, and some of things he said were tough to hear, but I knew he had to say them, and I knew I had to listen, even though the conversation was a tough one to have." The conversation ended and the outcome was clear. Harrington would not be relieved of his duties, but he was suspended for a week. The assistant coaches would run the practices and coach the team during games, while a senior staff member from the athletics department would oversee their handling

of the squad. The two men would revisit the situation when Kirsh returned from the convention and Harrington returned from his suspension.

After Harrington returned to the school, Kirsh laid out a course of action; he would serve as a mentor to the young coach to avoid a repeat of the situation in the future. "My job as an athletic director is not to just cast people aside who make a mistake," said Kirsh, who held roles as an assistant coach, head coach, athletics director, and Vice President for a combined total of 40 years at Franklin Pierce. "My job is to also provide guidance and leadership and to help my coaches grow and evolve, not just in the profession, but as people. I was given the chance to be a head coach at a



young age, and I was fortunate to receive a lot of guidance from then (Franklin Pierce) President Walter Peterson. He was invaluable in helping me to grow as a leader and that's the approach I've taken with any of my coaches."

## SUCCESS: COACHING & LIFE

The two men agreed to a weekly meeting on Tuesday afternoons. There would not be much hockey talk, but rather coaching lessons on dealing with stress, players, referees, growth, and maturity. The meetings not only covered athletics, but also life. Harrington's longtime girlfriend (now wife), Emilie, was working and living in Canada, which was stressful for him.

"It was rough at that particular time, and it still is today, not having her around all the time," Harrington said. "I typically keep stuff to myself, but she seems to have a way of knowing what I'm thinking and ultimately getting it out of me. She is my best friend and biggest supporter, so naturally I missed not having her there. We would talk on the phone, but it's different when the person isn't there next to you."

That's where the life conversations came in during those Tuesday meetings. When Bruce Kirsh was that young coach building the men's basketball program in the 70s and 80s, he too, was pulled away from his family at times. The two men understood where the other was coming from. "Bruce really became a father figure to me," Harrington said. "Sometimes the meetings wouldn't be long, but he would always ask how I was doing. Those little things are actually big things." Harrington took the talks to heart, and as the two men continued to meet, the coach was growing and the ice hockey program was growing with him. "Harry worked his butt

off through those years," said a modest Kirsh. "He did all the work. I just talked with him."

Franklin Pierce hosted the first Northeast-10 playoff game in program history at the end of the 2008-09 season, and then posted a school-record for wins in a single season in 2009-10, while also hosting a second consecutive playoff game. The Ravens continued to set records in 2010-11; they produced a new program mark for single-season wins, finished third in the conference regular season standings (the highest finish in program history), and once again hosted a playoff game.

Harrington was not just growing as a bench boss, but also as a leader off the ice. He handled player discipline problems with swift, decisive action. Players that did not want to conform to his vision for the program, both on and off the ice, were dismissed and replaced with ones that wanted to take the program to the next threshold, which was post-season success. Players that had made mistakes but were working to get back into good standing were ones that he personally met with to serve as a mentor.

Harrington keeps a copy of the box score from that Saint Michael's game in his office and will show it to players he works with. It is to serve not merely as a reminder of that night, but as a visual aid into how someone can go from making a mistake to fixing it through hard work.

"The box score illustrates that mistakes can be made," Harrington said. "But more importantly, the success this program has had since shows that through hard work you can rise above them. The players, current and past, have made this program

grow throughout the last several years. I've learned a lot from them, and hopefully they've taken a lot away from me. That's why I will defend my players when needed. As I said before, I will always defend my players until the day I'm done coaching."

**Mark Gibbons**, a former player in the Ravens men's ice hockey program, never played for Harrington. But now, Mark is a high school coach, and has worked closely with his alma mater, sending several of his players on to play in Rindge. "What Jaymie has done with the Franklin Pierce program is amazing," Gibbons said. "It's a recognized program in New England, and a lot of people in the hockey community are impressed with what he has done. I've sent several players to play for him, and I stay in contact with each guy and they rave about how the program is a real positive in their college experience. Jaymie is an honest guy who doesn't pull any punches, and the players respect that."

As the program continued to rise in stature, and Harrington continued progressing into a strong leader, the Tuesday afternoon meetings became less frequent and ceased altogether in the fall of 2011. "Jaymie had grown and it was remarkable to see," Kirsh said. "I always let him know my door was open, but he didn't need to hear from me weekly."

In fact, Kirsh was so proud of Harrington's transformation that when the Athletic Department decided to form a leadership committee of student-athletes in the summer of 2012, Harrington was one of two head coaches selected to lead the panel. "I was very honored to be a part of the program," Harrington said. "It meant a lot to me that Bruce put that much trust in me to lead a very important initiative."



## "HOW ABOUT THAT WIN?"

As Jaymie Harrington and Bruce Kirsh finished their bear hug following the playoff win over Southern New Hampshire, Harrington gave a fist pump and shouted out, "How about that win?" Kirsh congratulated him once again and made his way back out to the entrance of the rink so Harrington could be alone to celebrate the victory with his players and family.

Harrington spoke to his team in the locker room after the game and congratulated them on all they had accomplished. He told the players to enjoy it, and then they would get back to work on focusing for the next NE-10 championship matchup at Saint Anselm. "The instant the final horn sounded I said to myself, 'All right, it's time to get ready for Saint Anselm,'" Harrington said.

While the players whooped and yelled in the locker room, Harrington went out to offer thanks to family and friends for coming to the game and offering support. He left the rink and got in his car to drive home. He allowed himself to stop thinking about Saint Anselm for a moment, and started to focus on all the players who had come through the program during his watch who had helped the program reach this point, through all the highs and lows they had gone through together.

"Anyone who has ever played for me in this program has a right to share a piece of this win," Harrington said. "Like myself, all of those players have gone through their own ups and downs, but they never quit and kept fighting back. We had lost home playoff games for three straight years. A lot of the seniors on this year's team were a part of those losses and they

could have packed it in, but they didn't. That's what this program has been built upon. I hope everyone is enjoying this win as much as I am."

Kirsh, too, was driving home from the rink and allowed himself to drift off into thought. He was happy for the program, the student-athletes, and the school. But what made the win even more special was that it was Harrington who guided the team to it. "He deserved that win more than anyone," Kirsh said. "I've been fortunate to work with a lot of great coaches, and Jaymie has the makings of being one. His experiences and his hard work have made him not just a better coach, but a better person. He has a great support system in place with his wife and family. I can't stress how proud I am of him."



# Athletics Announces New Additions to Women's Sports

## *Women's Bowling, Women's Golf, and the Enhancement of Women's Rowing*

*By Doug DeBiase, Director of Athletic Communications*

Franklin Pierce University President Dr. James F. Birge and Director of Athletics Bruce Kirsh '71 announced in early May that the institution will add the sports of women's golf and women's bowling to its varsity athletics lineup beginning in the 2014-15 school year. In addition to those new offerings, the University will also enhance the sport of women's rowing beginning in that same year.

With the addition of the two sports and the enhancement of women's rowing, the University plans to create participation opportunities for approximately 40 new female student-athletes. Franklin Pierce will now feature 13 varsity athletic programs for female student-athletes; in addition to the new golf and bowling programs, there are basketball, cross country, field hockey, ice

hockey, lacrosse, rowing, soccer, softball, tennis, track & field, and volleyball.

### WOMEN'S GOLF

Franklin Pierce is reinstating women's golf, after sponsoring the sport 13 years ago. In the past 10 years, however, more than 80 other Division II institutions have added the sport of women's golf to their programs, raising the total to more than 170 competing schools. Franklin Pierce becomes the fourth school in the Northeast-10 Conference to sponsor the sport, joining Le Moyne College, Merrimack College, and Southern New Hampshire University, which announced its sponsorship of the sport last March.

The NE-10 does not currently offer a women's golf championship, because conference bylaws mandate that a minimum of six schools sponsor the sport. However, the Eastern College Athletic Conference offers a Division II/III championship tournament during the spring season. Eleven other Division II and Division III schools in the New England region offer women's golf at the varsity level. Franklin Pierce joins Southern New Hampshire and Dartmouth as the three colleges in the state of New Hampshire to offer the sport at varsity status.

## WOMEN'S BOWLING

Since the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) officially offered a championship opportunity in the sport of women's bowling in 2004, the sport has grown at a rapid rate with 63 schools across all levels (Divisions I, II, and III) sponsoring the sport. The NCAA conducts a National Collegiate Championship in the sport, which means that Franklin Pierce would compete against schools from all three NCAA classifications if it were to advance to the national finals.

A significant number of the schools that sponsor women's bowling are located in the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast corridor of the country, including Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Just as it does with women's golf, the ECAC offers a championship opportunity in bowling during the winter season for the Northeast schools.

The sport has seen interest and growth at the high school level, especially in New England where a pair of states, New Hampshire

and Connecticut, have created high school state championships. The New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association introduced a co-ed bowling championship in 2012, and currently 12 high schools throughout the state compete in the sport.

## WOMEN'S ROWING

Franklin Pierce currently sponsors the sport of women's rowing. The program competes in several prestigious races throughout the Northeast, including the New England Rowing Championships and the Dad Vail Regatta in Philadelphia. By enhancing the program, Franklin Pierce will increase its roster size, thus providing more opportunities for female student-athletes.

Head Coach Jeff Allen will continue to lead the rowing program through its enhancement. Allen, who also serves as a professor of criminal justice at the school, guided the Ravens to an NCAA regional ranking in the spring of 2012.

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Franklin Pierce Athletics boasts a rich history of women's intercollegiate varsity sports. Some of the highlights of women's sports at the school include five NCAA Division II women's soccer national championships, three other NCAA title game appearances, three NCAA East Regional titles won by women's basketball from 2008-10, 31 all-time NCAA Division II Tournament appearances (including volleyball and women's basketball in the 2012-13 season), 22 conference titles, and six female student-athletes who have earned national player-of-the-year recognition in their respective sport.

