

Sharon O'Connor

Inducted January 24, 2003

Sharon O'Connor became involved with youth soccer in 1978 while living in Hawaii. As with most soccer volunteers, she agreed to help her son's team and instead of assisting a coach, became one herself. After that decision was made, Sharon embraced soccer with a passion that still burns today. An amateur softball and racquetball player, once she was introduced to soccer, she never went back to those sports.

A daughter of United States Air Force parents who traveled frequently during her school years, Sharon married Jerry O'Conner, who was also in the Air Force, and they were stationed in Hawaii when the coaching opportunity arose. The O'Connors moved to Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force base in 1979.

Settling in the Del City area, both O'Connors became involved as coaches in the OK Country Soccer Club, Sharon quickly signed up both son Sean and daughter Sherrie to play and then promptly began her climb through the coaching ranks of Frontier Country. Unwilling to just coach, Sharon managed to register on her husband's adult soccer team, the Internationals. No women's adult teams were playing at that time, but the team provided her with the skills development and experience to deal with players from a diverse cultural background. During the 1980's Sharon coached both recreational and competitive boys' teams for OK Country and began work to attain her United States Soccer Federation licensing. She also became a referee to assist the club's soccer program.

By 1981, Sharon had received her "F", "E", and "D" licenses from USSF and was ready to acquire the national "C" license. She gained that license and promptly began preparing herself for the "B" which she attained in 1986. By 1991 she was awarded the USSF "A" license and was one of the first females in the state to acquire such a high-ranking badge. All during the licensing process, Sharon continued to coach at the club level and work with young players by selecting them to become assistant coaches on her team. Many of today's coaches began their careers as assistant coaches with her teams.

In 1987, Oklahoma Soccer Association's Executive Board asked Sharon to become the state's first Director of Coaching. She agreed and began to create a standardized curriculum for entry-level coaching that would enable coaches from across the state to obtain their license. Her hard work increased the number of licensed coaches in the state and created a statewide coaching cadre capable of providing training at all levels leading up to the USSF national badges. Sharon continued as Director of Coaching until 1997.

Sharon coached the Norman Fury U19 girls to two state championships and regional competitions in 1993 and 1994 before retiring from active coaching. Her work in the Norman area led to an association with Oklahoma University and USSF that produced National "C", "B," and "A" licensing at OU. After taking several years off to tend an ailing husband (Jerry passes away in 2002) and mother, Sharon is once again participating in adult women's soccer matches.