

James F. "Jim" Cussen

Inducted January 22, 2010

Soccer impacted Jim Cussen's life when his wife, Betty, informed him that she had signed up their son, Kyle, to play on a U8 team in Moore. From that day forward, Jim and his family have volunteered, coached, watched, played, and administered soccer in Oklahoma. Born in the Lawton Indian Hospital, Jim graduated from high school in Anadarko and attended Southwestern State College and Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts where he obtained a bachelor's degree. In 1971 he received a master's in special education from OU. From 1977 to 2008 he served as Health Administrator for the Indian Health Service and retired in 2008 as CEO of the Claremore Indian Hospital. A member of the Caddo tribe, Jim served in the US Army Airborne and spent his tour in France during the Vietnam era.

While at Moore Soccer Club, Jim held a variety of offices such as President and board member. He also became involved with Frontier Country as Classic Commissioner, First Vice President, and President. At the Oklahoma Soccer Association level, Jim held the office of Executive Vice President, Adult Division President, and chair of the appeals committee. For all his involvement in administration though, it was coaching that appealed most to Jim. "I enjoyed the thrill and satisfaction one receives from coaching. I studied the game and attended state and national coaching schools, attaining the USSF national C license and attending the B school." says Cussen. In order to better understand the game, Jim began playing for the Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League. His playing experience proved useful as he began coaching both youth and adults from 1978 through 1996. "I coached players from U10 through U19 and at COASL I coached a U23 team." Cussen also worked with OSA's Senior Select as coach for both the men's and women's teams.

With son Kyle and his wife Misti living in Tulsa, Jim now gets to be near Kyle's TU women's soccer squad and Misti's ORU basketball team. His granddaughters, Cassie, 6, and Caia, 2, will have "Pawpaw" around to watch whatever sport they choose to play. Jim now focuses his coaching at the high school level.

Currently he is on the staff at Union High School working with freshman, JV, and Varsity girls.

Jim quickly points out that he owes a great deal to the support his family gives him, but also to Oscar Quiroga who as president of Moore Soccer Club provided him with insight to managing a soccer club.

They attended a USSF coaching school together and Oscar asked Jim to assist in establishing and coaching the Mt. Saint Mary's high school soccer program Jim recalls that the USSF coaching school staff questioned coaches with "is your coaching having an effect, is your team getting better not just certain players getting better?" Cussen maintains that coaches need to keep the game fun and players will develop as nature takes its course both physically and psychologically.

Jim sees a bright future in Oklahoma soccer. "We have soccer year-round, we have skilled coaches who grew up playing the game, and we have soccer programs all the way through the university level. Those were only dreams when I became involved. But we are now living out dreams and many of our players are successfully reaching them."