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## **Don "Swede" Larson, Longtime IWU Football Coach, Dies**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.-- Don "Swede" Larson, 68, head football coach at Illinois Wesleyan University from 1954 to 1986, died today (Nov. 29) at 8 a.m. at BroMenn Regional Medical Center in Normal.

In his 39-year association with Illinois Wesleyan, including four as a student, Larson coached tennis, track and field, golf, and swimming, but is best known as the school's winningest football coach. His career record was 166-121-6 for a .577 winning percentage and his College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin coaching record was 142-89-6 for a .618 percentage. His teams won undisputed league championships in 1964 and 1965 and tied for the conference crown in 1974, 1977, and 1980. Ten of Larson's teams won or shared second place in the league and six won or shared third place as only five of his teams lost more than they won in conference play.

Larson's 1965 football team won all eight of its games, joining the 1951 IWU squad as the only undefeated and untied football teams in school history.

A memorial service for Larson will be at 10 a.m. Thursday (Dec. 1) at St. Luke Union Church, 2101 E. Washington, Bloomington. Dr. Mark L. Hamner will officiate.

Family will receive friends following the memorial service at the church.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Luke Union Church, Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association, or Illinois Wesleyan University.

Off the field, Larson served as president of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Football Coaches Association, was a member of the NAIA rating board, and served as game chairman for several NAIA national championship games.

He was voted CCIW "Coach of the Year" in 1977 and 1980, was NAIA District 20 "Coach of the Year" six times and NAIA Area Six "Coach of the Year" once. He also served as chairman of the CCIW football coaches and golf coaches.

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After retiring from football coaching after the 1986 season, Larson continued to coach golf and teach physical education until his retirement from the IWU faculty in 1989. As golf coach he produced conference champions in 1959, 1960, 1968, 1970, and 1977.

Larson also coached the Titan men's tennis team to conference titles in 1963 and 1964.

A 1950 Illinois Wesleyan graduate, Larson earned four football letters as a fullback and linebacker. He was named most valuable player on the 1948 team that gave Illinois Wesleyan its first CCIW football championship and upset Eastern Illinois in the Corn Bowl. He received honorable mention on the 1948 Associated Press Little All-America team and was the captain of the 1949 Illinois Wesleyan team.

Upon graduation, Larson went to Rockford, Ill., where he served as a coach and teacher in the public school system before returning to IWU as head football coach in 1954.

Larson, who was born June 15, 1926, was an all-around athletic star at Princeton (Ill.) High School, where he helped the 1942 team go undefeated. He spent two years in the U.S. Navy before enrolling at IWU in 1946.

Larson married his wife, Betsy Seibel, on Feb. 12, 1953. She survives. He is also survived by two sons, Jim of Duluth, Ga., a 1976 IWU graduate who was a regular tight end on the 1974 CCIW championship team; and William, Honolulu, Hawaii, a graduate of Arizona State University; and a daughter, Mrs. Mary Howard of Aurora, Ill., who attended IWU. He is also survived by a brother, John, Blue Lake, Calif.; a sister, Margaret Johnson, Naperville, Ill.; and four grandchildren.

Larson was a member of St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington, where he was an elder.