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One Illinois Wesleyan Athletic Legend will Replace Another on Coaching Staff

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Pronunciation: GRAMM-coe

Apr. 10, 1981

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.--One Illinois Wesleyan University athletic legend will replace another on the university's coaching staff.

Tom Gramkow, a 1970 IWU graduate who was a four-year regular in baseball and provided the Titans some of their most memorable moments in basketball, Friday was named IWU's head baseball coach and assistant basketball coach by Dr. Robert S. Eckley, the university's president. The appointment is effective Aug. 1.

Gramkow will succeed the retiring Jack Horenberger, as baseball coach. Basketball coach Dennis Bridges had already been named Horenberger's successor as athletic director.

Horenberger has been the university's baseball coach since 1942 and the athletic director since 1947. He also coached basketball through the 1964-65 season.

Gramkow recently completed his sixth season as basketball coach at Clinton High School and is in his fourth year as the school's athletic director.

He also coached at Yorkville Junior High School two years and was basketball and baseball coach at Leland High School for one year prior to taking the Clinton position.

While his basketball won-lost record at Clinton is only 60-90, he has coached three of the school's four teams with winning records since 1961. His 1980-81 team had a 14-12 mark.

Gramkow, 33, called his appointment "a dream come true. I've known that whoever got the job couldn't really replace Coach Horenberger. I just hope to maintain the level of respect and integrity that he brought to IWU. I'm really thrilled and looking forward to working with Coach Bridges, Coach (Don) Larson and Coach (Bob) Keck.

"You always dream of returning to your school as a coach, especially if you've been an athlete. I look forward to the challenge although we'll miss some things about Clinton. It has been a happy coaching experience the last two years, the school system is a good one in which to work, and we have developed some ties there," Gramkow said.

Gramkow is married to another 1970 IWU graduate, the former Jane Jackson. They have two daughters, Tracie, 4, and Marijane, 1.

"I'm happy for Wesleyan and Tom," Bridges said. "It is an important move for us and for him. He was a heck of a competitor as a player and I expect him to be that way as a coach.

"I know he'll work at maintaining a strong baseball program and he'll be a great lift to me in basketball. He should be a great help in developing young players. He'll also help in scouting other teams and potential students.

"Our main goal was to make sure we hired someone who would really bear down on our baseball program and I know Tom will. Our entire staff is anxious for him to become a part of things," Bridges said.

Horenberger also was pleased with the selection.

"Gramkow meets my requirements in many ways. I preferred an IWU graduate although I wouldn't have shut the door on someone else. I also preferred someone who had played for me. In Gramkow we're getting a guy who was a regular each year in baseball. He was a good centerfielder and outstanding baserunner. He has a way with young people. He's modest but effective. And he has a great love for the school.

"The continuity and longevity of our coaching staff are two things that have made Wesleyan strong over the years and I think Tom will fit in great style," Horenberger said.

Gramkow came to IWU from Moline High School, where he had been a starter as a junior, on the 1965 team that reached the state basketball quarterfinals.

In basketball, he was the No. 3 guard as a freshman, then started for three years. He was named to the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin all-stars three years and was named the league's most outstanding player as a senior. He was IWU's Most Valuable Player twice and co-most valuable player once.

His 1,418 points set a career record that now stands No. 3 on the IWU list--and he made two points that Titan fans will never forget when his basket as time ran out secured a 69-68 victory against Illinois State in the 1970 game that concluded the series between the two local universities. He was captain of the 1969-70 team that became the first to have a 16-0 record in the CCIW. That team lost an eight-point decision to the ultimate champion, Kentucky State, in the first round of the NAIA tourney at Kansas City.

Gramkow has a masters degree from Illinois State University.