

Nagel Reaches No. 600

Panama Central School Product Is In 19th Season At Duke University

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Duke University women's volleyball coach Jolene Nagel won the 600th match of her career last week against Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. Nagel is a Panama Central School graduate who has coached the Blue Devils for 19 years.

Photo courtesy of Duke University Athletics

Palmer didn't receive a phone call or a text message to alert her of the special milestone. Then, again, she really didn't expect one.

That's not Jolene Nagel's style.

So when Nagel, the Duke University volleyball coach and Panama native, won the 600th match of her

career last week against TCU in Fort Worth, Texas, Palmer only became aware of it courtesy of an online video produced by www.goduke.com.

“She doesn’t keep track of that stuff,” Palmer said.

“I honestly had no idea,” Nagel told that same website after the victory. “As a coach, you just keep thinking about how to get the next one. It means I’ve been coaching a long time, but what sticks out the most is what a tremendous group of motivated, talented and determined young women and coaching staffs I’ve had the pleasure to work with over the years. It’s really been a joy and an honor to be their coach.”



Duke University women’s volleyball coach Jolene Nagel won the 600th match of her career last week against Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. Nagel is a Panama Central School graduate who has coached the Blue Devils for 19 years. Photo courtesy of Duke University Athletics

With the victory, Nagel became the 22nd active NCAA Division I head coach to reach 600 career wins and joined Florida State’s Chris Poole and North Carolina’s Joe Sagula as the only three Atlantic Coast Conference coaches to reach the milestone.

Admiring the journey, which has taken her from Cornell to Georgetown to Duke, is Palmer, who was

Nagel's volleyball coach beginning more than 40 years ago at Panama Central School.

"She is one of the most intense players I've ever been around," Palmer said earlier this week. "She's a perfectionist. She was one of those kids who wanted to stay after practice and work on something. She never wanted to leave. That drive was there way back."

It's served her well on the Durham, North Carolina campus.

Now in her 19th season with the Blue Devils, Nagel has led them to 12 NCAA Tournament appearances over the past 16 seasons, including an ACC-record seven consecutive trips to the postseason event from 2005-11. A perennial contender in the ACC, Duke has recorded 20 or more wins in 14 of Nagel's 18 campaigns and consistently finished among the top three in the conference.



Current Panama volleyball coach Tammy Hosier, left, is pictured with former coach Deb Palmer, center, and Duke University coach Jolene Nagel. Submitted photo

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In addition, Nagel, the winningest Duke volleyball coach on record, has guided the Blue Devils to four ACC regular-season championships, and ranks among the league coaching leaders in overall winning

percentage, ACC winning percentage, ACC wins and NCAA Tournament appearances.

That's quite a resume, one Nagel began filling in 1983 as a graduate assistant at Kent State University following graduation from Edinboro University. In 1985, she accepted a position as first assistant coach at the University of North Carolina and spent three seasons in Chapel Hill before moving on to Cornell in 1988.

Nagel was only getting started.

"She always had a great understanding of the game," Palmer said of the 1979 PCS graduate. "That's probably first and foremost, and that helps you as a coach. You have to get the little nuances of the game and she always wanted to know those fine points. She was able to break these things down and learn what others were supposed to do on the court even back then."

In August, Palmer was able to see how those early lessons have evolved when Nagel conducted a clinic at PCS that was attended by student-athletes from her alma mater, as well as from Randolph, Chautauqua Lake and several Buffalo-area schools.

"It was a great experience, because I never had really watched her teach," Palmer said. "You always wonder how they present things. It was kind of reassuring for Tammy (Hosier, Panama's varsity coach) and I, because the way we teach things is the way Jolene does. The kids were just in awe.

"How often do you have a Division I coach give a clinic, and she did it free of charge."

Nagel's accomplishments on the NCAA's biggest stages have placed her in some rarified air and others have taken notice. For example, Palmer noted that Duke men's basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski sent Nagel a congratulatory note upon her 600th career win.

"I admire the fact that she's stayed in it this long," Palmer said. "I don't think I'd like the pressure."

But it's clear that Nagel has found a way to handle it all without forgetting from where she came. In fact, earlier this year she returned home to attend the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame banquet to see Palmer be inducted. Nagel was enshrined into the CSHOF in 2007.

"That was awesome," Palmer said. "I really wasn't sure she was going to be able to make it. ... She flew in (earlier that day). It was a perfect evening."

Also in attendance that night was the 2016 New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class D champion volleyball team.

From where?

Panama Central School.

Naturally.