



Bob Rosen, right, has spoken with NHL Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman many times during the annual Scotty Bowman Hockey Showcase. Rosen has guided Williamsville North to five state titles during his 29 seasons behind the bench and has been selected to coach in nine of the past 11 Scotty Bowman Hockey Showcases at KeyBank Center. (Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News)

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When Bob Rosen left his position as an assistant at Canisius College 29 years ago to take the head coaching job at Williamsville North High School, he thought he'd do it for a "couple of years" and see where the position would lead him down the road.

Rosen still runs the show behind the bench for North. The job has taken him on the path toward immortality, as one of the all-time winningest coaches in New York State history has earned a distinguished honor. Rosen has been selected as this year's recipient of the American Hockey Coaches Association's John Mariucci Award.

The honor is bestowed upon the secondary/high school association coach who best exemplifies the spirit, dedication and enthusiasm of Mariucci. In addition to being a legendary college coach at University of Minnesota, Mariucci was a driving force in the growth of hockey in the United States.

Nominated for the award by his former college coach and longtime friend Brian Cavanaugh, former player Nick Carriere and current Fredonia coach Jeff Meredith, Rosen will be honored during a luncheon during Frozen Four week here in Buffalo in April. The site and time have yet to be announced, per Rosen.

“I’m very honored to get such a prestigious award, just amazed,” Rosen said.

Cavanaugh, who coached Rosen at Canisius College and has worked with Rosen behind the bench at college and high school levels, said Rosen is one of the hardest working coaches he knows and deserves the honor.

“This is a national award given out by the college coaches in the country named after a (coaching) legend. This is a huge national honor for a local guy,” said Cavanaugh, who hired Rosen as an assistant at Canisius and years later served as an assistant to Rosen at North. “He was certainly one of the hardest working assistants when I had him. He loves the game. He works so hard in his craft. It’s not that he has the best players. He works hard at developing players. He really works hard at his craft and is super dedicated. When other coaches are taking time off, Bob is looking at video and thinking what he needs to do better.”

Rosen said achieving this honor wouldn't have been possible without working with talented assistant coaches over the years. Besides Cavanaugh, the group includes Heinz Maier, John Burns, John Fromen, Rick Hopkins, Carl Koeppel, Brian Willson, Dan Mancuso, Tim DiGiulio, Greg Brown and Jake Rosen.

Rosen followed a standout amateur hockey career by having an even better one as a coach at the youth and scholastic levels.

Rosen is the winningest active high school hockey coach in the state with 483 victories. Among his accomplishments at North: five state championships including an unbeaten season in 2011; a three-time state coach of the year; selected to coach in the Scotty Bowman Hockey Showcase nine times over an 11-year stretch and coached New York State team in 1998 Hockey USA Select 17 National Tournament East.

He also coached 30 years with Amherst Youth Hockey, leading teams in the organization to four national championships.

The Williamsville native participated in four national championship games as a player. He helped Canton win a national junior college championship. He capped his playing career at Canisius College, earning second team all-conference honors.

"Bob was my high school hockey coach for the first couple of years that I moved to the United States," said former Buffalo State coach and current Montreal Canadiens scout Nick Carriere, son of ex-Buffalo Sabre Larry Carriere. "He has a very honest and direct way of dealing with players that lets you know what is on his mind, and at the same time showing that he genuinely cares about your well-being. He puts so much time and effort into hockey, business, and his family that he is truly a selfless coach."

The honor doesn't mean the end of the road for Rosen as a coach.

"I still love it. I still love going to the rink," he said. "What I liked as a little kid going to the rink playing hockey I still like. The friendships you make, the camaraderie, seeing teams develop. Just everything about it."

The John Mariucci Award is one of 10 given annually by the ACHA to individuals who have made various contributions to hockey at the amateur level.

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