



Darrel Landers Class of 1976

Growing up in Grants Pass was a very special time for Darrel Landers; riding bikes, swimming at the Caveman Pool, and watching Caveman Football. He loved the “home town” feel. It was a fun, safe place to grow up and Darrel thought he would live here forever.

As a young boy he went to the Caveman games where the grandstands were packed with people. He knew about Coach Mel Ingram and the great football teams he coached, and Coach Bill Ryder leading his unbelievable wrestlers to a multitude of district and state tournament championships. He knew as early as 5th grade that being a Caveman was something he wanted to be.

Darrel began playing football in the 6th grade and began wrestling as an 8th grader at South Junior High where he was recruited to wrestle up a level on the 9th grade team. In high school, Darrel was an outstanding athlete from 1973-1976, excelling in both football and wrestling.

In football, Darrel was a Varsity starter three years. His senior year, Darrel was in the starting line-up on both offense and defense and was selected “Player of the Game” multiple times during the season. Darrel was recognized by the Southern Oregon Conference coaches, being named to the SOC All-Star team for offense and defense. In addition, Darrel was selected to the 1st team All-State Defense and was also selected on offense and defense to play in the Shrine All-Star game.

As a Varsity Caveman wrestler for 3 years, Darrel excelled at the highest level. He began by earning a state berth as a sophomore and by the time he was a senior in 1976, Darrel went undefeated in the 168-pound weight class, including at the Southern Oregon Conference Championship and State Championship.

After high school, Darrel went to Southern Oregon State College, majoring in Accounting and Economics. He played football for one year and then focused on wrestling. That turned out to be a good decision because in 1978 he won the Conference Championship at 177 lbs., qualifying for the National Championships. At the National Championships, his SOSC team was in 2nd place by 1.5 points when Darrel stepped onto the mat for his championship final. He had to win for the team to win. *Darrel won his match and became the National Champion in the 177-pound weight class and SOSC won the National Championship as a team.* Darrel was selected to the NCAA National Wrestling Team and with the National Team, he traveled overseas for a month and had the opportunity to compete in Japan and South Korea.

When Darrel left college to enter the work-force, he came back to Grants Pass. Everyone seemed to know him, and wanted to give him a chance. He was hired as an Operations Manager at 1st Interstate Bank. He later moved to Vancouver to take a job as a Ford car salesman and became the Finance Manager where he worked for many years.