



From the Office of the President

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

Lonnie Porter Retirement Reception

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J. Remarks

Clarke Hall Atrium

Friday, February 06, 2015

I want to add my thanks to all of you who have come here tonight to celebrate with Regis University the remarkable coaching career and legacy of Coach Lonnie Porter.

Many of those who speak after me tonight at this reception and at the game will remind us of all that he has accomplished. I want to use my time to focus on this idea of his “**legacy**”: for Regis athletics, for the region and for all of college athletics. So just a few small points to cover, right!!!?

First, if I may, a couple of personal memories of how Lonnie has “mentored” me!!! So, I’m playing in the Porter-Billups Golf Tournament with Governor Ritter and Mr. Bill Fortune; they are already used to my horrible golf game! And then Lonnie drives up in a golf cart and checks out our swings. My turn comes and I whiff the ball. Now that’s bad enough but poor Coach got a hernia trying not to laugh!

Two years ago, we filmed our first e-Christmas card emphasizing how lonely our campus is without our students. One scene took place in the empty Field House with me shooting free throws in the semi-darkness. Coach Porter and Coach Raunig were on the second level looking down on the filming and my lousy form. Both coaches were holding their sides and their mouths to keep from laughing aloud. Coach Porter later told me in passing that it’s a good thing I’m president ’cuz my form stinks!

In addition to the decades of excitement, of games won, of challenges on the court mastered by this man who is the “winningest” coach in Colorado college history—Coach Porter’s primary **legacy** for us is the hundreds of athletes he has mentored, coached, encouraged—and often become a “father” figure to them—over these 38 years. His players have always been first for him, as you will hear from some of our basketball alums in a few moments.

He instilled in them not only a love for the game, but a desire to graduate, to succeed in life, to make a difference in their families and their communities—that’s the win-loss column that Coach Porter has lived for these many years as he has challenged his players to reach ever higher in their lives and aspirations.



For the Athletic Department and Regis University, he has also been our Ambassador to the wider community of Denver, of Colorado, and of our region—inspiring so many with his “ethic of service”—that to be a winner means to reach out to those who need us, to those who require our care, to those who need hope. Lonnie is our Ambassador of Hope, challenging us to reach higher.

He has also shown us what this commitment means through the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy that he created 20 years ago and that he now leads with his daughter, Staci, and Chauncey Billups. So to the hundreds of athletes he has mentored and inspired—we can add hundreds more young people given hope, given the chance for a college education at Regis University and elsewhere—and invited to reach for the stars in their lives as well.

I have to be honest that I was not happy when I learned that Coach Porter had decided to retire after 38 years of leadership for Regis on the court. My consolation has come in knowing that he will continue at Regis and in the community as the Executive Director of the Porter-Billups Leadership Academy, helping us to find, to mentor and to finance many more young people who need a hand up for many years to come. So he’ll stay part of the Regis family.

I’m also pleased to announce that he has agreed to give the Commencement address to our students and families at our graduation ceremony this May—a ceremony he has attended each year to celebrate the achievements of his players and his PBLA grads. Now we will celebrate him.

Finally, I am pleased to present him with a unique tribute, one that all of us can share in. Thanks to the creativity and generosity of Denver’s own sports cartoonist legend, Drew Litton, I present to Coach Porter this tribute from his Regis family: A cartoon tribute showing him hoisting one of his many players to reach for the stars.

We now put our hands together for the man who more than anyone else IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF REGIS UNIVERSITY: COACH LONNIE PORTER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!