

KINNUNEN, ROB "COACH"

January 11, 1956

Sault Ste, Marie, ON

October 26, 2023

Irene, SD

The New Era – November 2, 2023

Rob "Coach" Kinnunen,

67

Irene S.D.

October 26, 2023,



Rob "Coach" Kinnunen, 67, of Irene SD passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls. A Memorial Service was held Monday, October 30, 2023, at Calvary Lutheran Church, Irene SD.

Robert Thomas Kinnunen was born on January 11, 1956, in Sault Ste. Marie, ON. He grew up in the Sault area with his parents, Heikki and Melba, brother, Terry, and sister, Lora. He enjoyed summers at "camp" at Desbarats Lake and cross-country skiing and running.

Rob then attended USD from '76-'81, where he ran for the Coyote track and field cross-country teams. Rob was a '79 cross country All-American, and an NCC 10k champion, breaking the school and conference records. During this time, he also ran numerous 10Ks and marathons, with his personal best marathon time being 2:17:25. After graduating, he spent the next few years at graduate school, training, coaching, and meeting the love of his life Debra Redepenning. Rob then served as head cross country coach and assistant track coach at Augustana College from '82-'99. During his tenure there, he coached 65 NCAA Division II All-Americans and four national champions in middle-distance and long-distance events. He was the 1989 NCC Coach of the Year and 1991 NCAA Regional Men's Coach of the Year. Rob returned to USD in the fall of 2002 as the headmen's and women's cross country and assistant track coach. His Coyote squads captured four straight NCC women's titles and had 14 combined NCAA Championship appearances. He guided the women to a ninth-place team finish at the 2007 nation-

al meet, the third-best finish in school history.

During his entire coaching career, Rob coached over 100 D2 All-Americans, one D1 All-American, five national champions, four Olympic trials qualifiers, and 6 NCC team champions. He was presented with the NCC Legacy Award in 2008 and USD's Hall of Honor Award in 2012.

Rob was united in marriage with Deb on August 11, 1984, at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Nassau, MN. The couple raised their children, Justin, Kelsi, and Kip, in Viborg, S.D., until they moved to Irene in 2010.

Rob had an infectious personality that lit up a room. He was always quick with a joke and could make anyone laugh. He enjoyed watching all kinds of sports and loved the Green Bay Packers. He spent his spare time golfing and playing cards. He loved the Glenridge Golf Course and even spent part of his retirement managing the clubhouse and working part-time there. His family and friends will miss his "Coach-isms", his catchphrases, and the immense love he had for them.

He is survived by his wife, Debra Kinnunen, and their three children, Justin (Julie Lyngstad) of Irene, SD, Kelsi (Jason) Burfeindt of Watertown, SD, and Kip (Mayumi) Kinnunen, of Brookings, SD. He is additionally survived by his brother, Terry (Diana) Kinnunen, Peachland, BC, Canada of his sister Lora (Chad Hill) Kinnunen, of Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Canada, and his parents, Heikki and Melba Kinnunen of Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Canada, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Rob had a dream shortly before his death that all attendees at his services wore USD coyotes or Green Bay Packers gear. His family asks that you wear your USD or Packers gear or red or green to honor Rob.