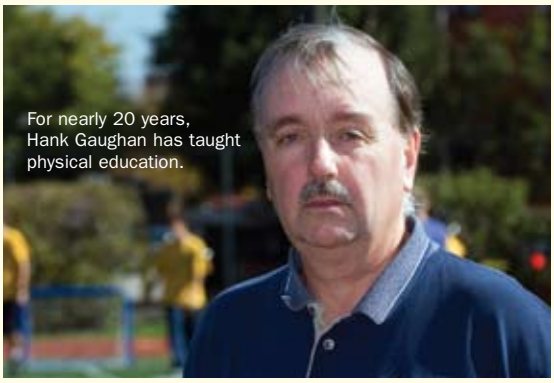
Hank Gaughan relishes role on the sidelines but deserves to hear the crowd cheer

BY *Brian Kantz '91*



For nearly 20 years, Hank Gaughan has taught physical education.

If there is any justice in this world, someday, some way, this will happen at a Saint Ignatius sports rally: The lights will dim as 1,400 pumped-up students sit impatiently in their seats.

Over the loud speaker, a voice will announce: "Wildcats, you know that commitment and dedication are keys to success. For the man who embodies these two qualities, please put your hands together for ..."

Before the voice can finish the sentence, the students will leap to their collective feet, whooping and clapping for the person they all know so well. He's the one who has roamed the sidelines of Ignatius athletic fields and courts since 1985, and Ignatius classrooms for nearly as long. He is health and physical education teacher, and athletic trainer Hank Gaughan. And he deserves to hear the cheer of the crowd.

"You would have a hard time finding someone who puts in more hours at Saint Ignatius than Hank," says Mike McLaughlin '85, theology teacher and head varsity soccer coach. "Sometimes I think there is more than one Hank Gaughan. He is everywhere."

Those words are not uttered lightly because the school has its fair share of hard workers. But it might be possible that no one – not even one with an S.J. after his name – logs more hours than Gaughan.

Gaughan's school year starts in the summer with double practices for football and soccer, which includes varsity, junior varsity and freshman teams. He puts in about 250 hours in August.

Need an ankle taped? Ask Mr. Gaughan. Need a cut or scrape treated? Ask Mr. Gaughan. Need someone to help you get your wind back after being sacked by a 270-pound lineman? Ask Mr. Gaughan. He does it all.

Then it's on to winter and spring sports. "There's a simple reason why I do this," says Gaughan, who lives in West Park with his understanding wife, Kathy. The two are the proud parents of Pat '00 and Tim '01. "I do this because I love it. Teaching keeps me young. And athletic training is hard work, but it's really fun. You can be standing in a stadium in lousy, cold weather and not care because it's great to be working with these coaches and these students."

And he does it all with his trademark good humor.

"Hank has been an important personality in the football program for many years. He's spent countless hours keeping our players healthy or helping our players back to health, and he's performed these miracles while maintaining a sense of humor," says Chuck Kyle '69, English teacher and head varsity football coach.

Caring for students, both mentally and physically, Gaughan has earned a high level of respect. "I think the kids take most of what I have to say to heart. I hear a lot of stuff in the training room – it's just the nature of the place – and there's a real trust and respect there," Gaughan says.

"Of course, it helps to have worked with LeCharles Bentley and Anthony Gonzalez and Matt Kata and Tim Mack. When you can tell students what it took for alumni to make it to the NFL or the big leagues or the Olympics, they really tune in," adds Gaughan, who spent a season in 1982 as the athletic trainer for the Cleveland Indians' Double-A farm team.

"We have a wall in the training room that the students who make it big in sports come back to sign," Gaughan points out. "And every year, I have new students tell me that one day they're going to add their name to that wall. It's a great incentive to work hard."

Hank Gaughan has tended to thousands of athletes throughout his career.