

Mark Van Achte

Athlete

Playing for Lynden was a dream come true for Mark Van Achte, who, as a young boy, attended all the high school basketball games and knew all the players by name. "They were my heroes," he admits.

A few years later, Van Achte joined his childhood heroes by establishing himself as one of the most successful athletes in Lynden history. A four year, three sport letter winner, Van Achte excelled in basketball as well as cross country and track.

Van Achte's parents moved their young family from Canada in the early '60's in time for Mark to begin kindergarten here. In sixth grade, his father, George, coached his son's team in basketball. Although George knew hockey rules, he wasn't familiar with basketball; Mark remembers being called for three in the key several times before they figured out what that meant. The team went winless that year, but with his new daily regime of shooting one hundred free throws every night, the next year that same team went undefeated, and from then on, Van Achte dominated the court.

In high school, Van Achte started on varsity his sophomore year. The 6'3" forward averaged 9 points per game that year, and the team went on to win district and place fourth in state. By his junior year, the Lions had developed into a force to be reckoned with, averaging 72.7 points per game in league play and going into district with a perfect 20-0 record. Ranked #1 in the state, they suffered a disappointing loss to Lakeside in the district final, and they entered the state tourney as the #2 team. At state, Van Achte was the leading scorer with 20 points in their opening win against Pomeroy, and he contributed a game-high 23 points in their loss to Castle Rock.

With four returning starters, the 1977-78 team was considered one of the best Lynden teams of all times. The Lions defeated LC for the district title, and Van Achte contributed 20 points and 18 rebounds. The team set a tournament record for team scoring with an average of 87.3 points per game. Advancing to state, the Lions were handed an unexpected loss at the hands of Kalama; however, he was responsible for one of the most memorable comebacks in state history in their next game against Riverside. Down by six with less than a minute to play, Van Achte put in a rebound and

added two free throws. The Lions stole the ball and Van Achte was fouled. Riverside called time out but received a technical foul because they had no time outs available. This sent Van Achte to the line, where he made all three shots, resulting in a win for the Lions. The Lions ended up with a 5th place finish, and Van Achte was named to the first team all-tournament squad.

The legacy of Van Achte can be seen in the statistics he amassed during his basketball years at LHS. He is the all-time leading rebounder in Lion history, with 816 total rebounds, and he also holds 4th place in field goals with 464 and 6th place in career points with 1205.

Van Achte also enjoyed success as a cross-country runner and a track athlete. His cross-country team made it to state during his last three years here, and he placed 31st overall during his senior season. In track, he ran the mile, the two mile, the 800, and relays, along with competing in the triple jump and anywhere else they needed him.

After graduation, Van Achte attended Northwest Nazarene College in Idaho, where he was the leading scorer on the junior varsity basketball team. He was also a bench player for the varsity and got to travel with the team.

From there, he moved to Spokane to attend an x-ray program for two years, after which he moved to the Seattle area, where he took a job at Overlake Hospital. He has worked at Overlake for over thirty years and is currently the lead MRI technician. Over the years, Van Achte has continued to share his love of sports with young people, both by coaching his sons' teams and by coaching the Cascade Striders, a junior Olympic track and cross-country team for junior high age athletes. Van Achte also competes in triathlons, including the Iron Man in Hawaii, and this past September he finished 7th in the Black Diamond race.

Van Achte enjoyed his years as a Lynden athlete and acknowledges that he had an "awesome life experience at Lynden."

