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'I'm so grateful to Mohawk College': badminton coach Tony Leite on his induction into the Mountaineers Hall of Fame

By **Stephanie Ribson** February 25, 2024

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Leite points out friends, colleagues, and athletes in the Mohawk Mountaineers Hall of Fame.

After two decades of coaching the Mohawk College badminton team, Tony Leite was inducted into the Mohawk Mountaineers Hall of Fame last year. Leite came to Canada from Portugal as a young child and immediately gravitated towards playing sports.

Leite explained he was inspired to coach because of all the coaches who helped support him.

"I was excited to be trained and coached by people who cared for me and my advancement and improvement," Leite said. "So that was always open to me as a future option."

Leite helped his athletes win 19 OCAA medals and four CCAA medals. More than half of Mohawk's badminton medals were awarded during his 19 seasons as coach.

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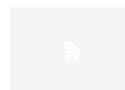
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"The secret is the ability to see where to position a player," Leite said. "Take badminton, for example. Some people are better at singles, and others are better at doubles."

During practice, Leite would have athletes play various positions to see where they excelled and then help them advance those skills.

Jose Morales met Leite while playing badminton recreationally. Leite drew Morales into playing competitively even though he had not grown up playing badminton or received any official training in the sport.

"Tony has an infectious personality, and he makes friends with anyone around," Morales said. "Not only would he greet everyone at tournaments, but he also knew them well enough to ask about their family's well-being."

According to Leite, the college was always cordial, helpful, and accepting of anything that he did or wanted to do.

"I'm so grateful to Mohawk College," Leite said. "They always promoted badminton, myself, and my team. For all the work I did, there was always so much more work they were doing behind the scenes."

Many careers require some type of sacrifice, including coaching.

According to Leite, the most challenging aspect of the job was being away from his family.

"My wife and I were talking about how there used to be tournaments scheduled regularly on Halloween," Leite said. "So for a few years there, I didn't get a chance to celebrate Halloween with my kids when they were still of that age or hand out candies."

Leite worked at St. Joseph's Hospital for 22 years as a technician, being promoted to management three years before his retirement. He had to arrange his schedule to fit work, quizzes, coaching, and being away on weekends for games, which often required a bit of strategizing and collaboration with management.

"I had to schedule vacation time at work, my manager was very generous with me and my time," Leite said. "I appreciate all the time off because it allowed me to participate in extracurricular activities."

Leite took a year off work after retiring from Saint Joseph's Hospital in 2022 before starting his medical device reprocessing (MDR) consulting company. He's part of the Medical Device Processing Association of Ontario and was elected president. But he's still a coach at heart.

"I presented at an MDR conference to talk about innovation and empowering the staff and people on the ground floor to do a better job," Leite said. "And be recognized and realize that they are professionals working in a career that deserves respect, and we should give it to them."

Leite explained that in his field, hospitals aren't as organized as convenience chains like 711, which scan all their products into inventory upon delivery and then scan them out again when customers purchase them.

"We aren't at that point in most hospitals, although some are getting better," Leite said. "Materials management is a big part of the hospital. Is there enough anesthesia equipment to do operations? Do we have enough resources to cover the cost of the equipment? Do we have enough space to store it?"

Leite enjoys staying active, playing badminton with a student he used to coach at Bishop Bryant High School every Thursday, and teaching his grandchildren the game. He also travels regularly with his wife, most recently visiting Cuba last year.

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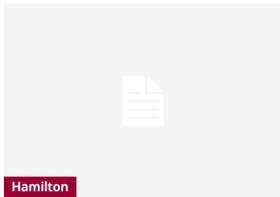
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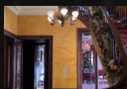
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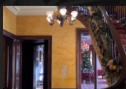
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