

Margie Wright - Fresno State Softball Head Coach Emeritus

(Oct. 7, 2017)

In 27 seasons as head coach of the Fresno State softball program, Margie Wright directed the Bulldogs to a national title (1998) while guiding the program to the NCAA Women's College World Series 10 times out of the program's 12 appearances. As the first NCAA Division I softball coach and 24th overall in NCAA Division I history, regardless of sport, to amass 1,000 Division I career victories and the first to tally 1,400 fast pitch wins, she wrapped up a 27-year school mark of 1,294-450-1 (.742) and a 33-year career record of 1,457-542-3 (.729).

She became the NCAA's all-time winningest softball coach in 2000 and garnered 10 conference coach of the year honors, 17 outright or shared conference titles, three WAC tournament championships, 10 regional championship crowns while leading Fresno State to 26 consecutive NCAA postseason appearances.

Under Wright, Fresno State captured its first national title and gave the university its first NCAA championship crown by any sport on May 25 while capping its season off with a No. 1 national ranking in the final USA Today/NFCA Coaches Top 25 Poll. As the seventh seed, Fresno State posted a 4-1 record in WCWS action and became the first non-Pac-10 team to win the national title since Texas A&M (1987) after beating the top four seeds in the series (#1 Arizona, #2 Nebraska, #3 Michigan, and #4 Washington). Overall in WCWS play, Wright led the program to three national runner-up finishes, three third-place showings and three fifth-place finishes.

Directing Fresno State to an elite level, Wright had coached the program as one of the top two NCAA's all-time winningest DI fast pitch softball program with 1,478 wins – ahead of UCLA, Florida State, Louisiana-Lafayette, California, Michigan, CS Fullerton, Texas A&M and Oklahoma.

In the NCAA polls, Wright guided the program to final Top 25 ranking in 22 of her 27 years while also having the Bulldogs finish with 14 final Top 10 rankings. Still further, the Bulldogs averaged 48 wins per year under Wright who had made Fresno State one of just five programs in Division I softball to make 10 or more trips to the WCWS.

Wright had at least one academic all-district selection in 20 of her 27 years as the Bulldogs' head coach. On the Division I softball level, she finished her career ranked No. 1 overall among active coaches with 16 selections while the Dogs were third overall among DI programs with 18 picks.

Wright coached 53 All-Americans, 16 Academic All-Americans, four NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship Award winners, four Honda Awards Program softball finalists, 16 NCAA individual and 11 NCAA team statistical champions, eight professionals, 15 Olympians, two NCAA Top VIII Award winners and two No. 1 professional draft picks.

On May 3, 2014, Fresno State, who had unanimous support from the California State University Board of Trustees, renamed Bulldog Diamond to Margie Wright Diamond. A driving force behind the construction of the then one-of-a-kind softball stadium on the collegiate softball level, she also was bestowed emeritus status by the university.

Still further, she was inducted into her 15th hall of fame on November 10, 2013 when was enshrined into the ASA Softball Hall of Fame for meritorious service.

Wright led the USA National Team to a gold medal as the head coach at the 1998 ISF World Championship capturing an unprecedented fourth world title in Japan and served as an assistant coach for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games where she helped the first-ever United States Olympic Softball Team capture gold in the inaugural year of softball as a medal sport.

In addition, Wright also has served as a coaching consultant for the Netherlands Antilles fastpitch team for men and women in both the Latin American and Pan American Games. In 1989, she became the first softball coach to represent the United States Information Agency (USIA) in Czechoslovakia, where she conducted clinics in several cities.

Prior to her arrival at Fresno State, Wright was 163-92-2 (.638) in six years at Illinois State. She guided the Redbirds to the 1981 AIAW Softball College World Series. She also directed ISU to three State championships from 1980-82.

Serving on the Babe Ruth Advisory Board and a master instructor for the NFCA Masters in Coaching Program, Wright served as a National Governing Body assistant at the 1987 U.S. Olympic Festival and continues to be heavily involved in the National Fastpitch Coaches Association.

Originally from Warrensburg, Ill., Wright is a 1974 graduate of Illinois State University, where she was a four-year letter winner in softball and basketball as well as a three-year letter winner in field hockey. As a junior, she guided the Redbirds to a second-place finish at the softball nationals and that team was inducted into Illinois State's Athletic Hall of Fame in September 1998. Upon graduation from ISU, she accepted the head softball coaching duties at Metamora (Ill.) High School, while taking on the head coaching duties in volleyball, track, basketball, and bowling. In 1975, the Amateur Softball Association also

named her second team All-American. Wright then became an assistant softball coach and the head volleyball coach at Eastern Illinois University while teaching physical education.

Wright has played 34 years of softball, including 29 years in the ASA Major Women's Open Division and three years in the Women's Professional Softball League (1977-79) while sitting out two years conducting clinics. Wright pitched for the St. Louis Hummers (WPSL) and was selected as the 1977 International Pro Softball Association's Rookie of the Year.

Currently serving as player and coach development director for the Wheatland Spikes travel program in Naperville, Ill., Wright is a highly sought after public speaker who is nationally and internationally renowned as well as published author. Wright has been featured in USA Today, showcased in Sports Illustrated's "Faces in the Crowd" and featured in several books -- *She Can Coach!* and *Celebrating Women Coaches: A Biographical Dictionary*. She also has been one of the authors in "The Softball Coaching Bible" and "The Softball Drill Book" as well as being featured in "Mission Possible", "Hard Fought Victories" and "Women's Fast Pitch Softball: The Best Of The Best".

In August and September, Wright returned to her Alma Mater, Illinois State as an interim Volunteer Coach and has now returned to her duties as the player and coach development director with the Wheatland Spikes.

In September 2017, Wright was honored by the Fresno County Office of Education for her lifetime achievements and was the recipient of the FCOE Honors Athletics Award and now has a scholarship in her name for any softball athlete from Fresno County who will be playing softball at Fresno State University.