El Camino College men’s volleyball Head Coach Richard “Dick” Blount looks toward winning the state championship. The Warriors ended the season as the No. 4 seed in the Western State Conference. (Greg Fontanilla | Warrior Life)
El Camino College men’s volleyball Head Coach Richard “Dick” Blount reacts to a referee call during the March 11, 2022, volleyball match against the Long Beach City College Vikings at ECC. The Warriors upset the No. 2 ranked-Vikings to improve their conference record to 4-1 and 7-4 overall. Dick has been the head coach since 2001. (Gary Kohatsu | Warrior Life)
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carefully watching his players running drills at the new El Camino College volleyball courts, he gives advice to his players, always in a helpful and calm way.

The two most important things in his life are volleyball and his players.

Richard “Dick” Blount, 66, is the head coach for the men’s volleyball team at ECC. He is entering his 21st season.

He has enjoyed a tremendous amount of success with the team, but he insists that his players are the reason for the success.

The way that he cares about them is the main reason for Dick’s long success coaching at El Camino. The team has a 66-32 record and has won six state championships in the last six years.

He is also a coach for beach volleyball, but unfortunately for him it has to be outside El Camino, as the College does not have a men’s beach volleyball program.

“I told them that I would coach for free,” Dick says of the possibility of having the program.

Living in Manhattan Beach, where beach volleyball is very popular, Dick was able to coach many stars in his long time coaching.

One thing that Dick enjoys about it is that there are many international players who come play for him. By having different cultures, he is able to learn more about the game, and then adapt his way of coaching.

“I’ve coached players from all over the world, including countries like Canada and Brazil,” Dick says.

But with all of his success, it took a lot of hard work for him to be able to achieve his dream of working with the sport that he loves.

Volleyball only became a team sport for men in 1971, which was the year that Dick graduated from Mira Costa High School. He then went on to play for the El Camino team the next two years.

When remembering his time defending the Warriors as a player he recalls that he was much younger than his competition.

“I was playing against guys that wanted to stay out of the draft, you know, for the Vietnam War,” Dick says. “So there I was a 17-year-old, playing against guys that were 22, 23.”

During that time, you could stay out of the draft if you had 12 units and grades of B or higher, but the volleyball path, especially at that time, was not very profitable for players.

Fernando Gomes, the current head coach of the professional Brazilian volleyball club, São Cristóvão, says that a volleyball player’s salary in 2021 do not even compare to those of other sports, like soccer or basketball.

“A soccer player at a middle tier club in Europe makes at least 1 million euros a year, while the biggest volleyball stars dream of getting near that,” Fernando says.

So after a couple of years at El Camino, Dick transferred to San Diego State where he majored in business management. He then went on to earn his master degree in physical education at Azusa Pacific University.

Through all that, he still had volleyball on his mind. He wanted to come back to the sport, and he could only do it as a coach.

“I was only 5 feet, 9 inches, and couldn’t jump for my life,” Dick says. “So I knew I had to be a coach.”

His first opportunity came as the head coach of Palos Verdes High School in 1989. He only stayed there a couple of years, as the schools in Palos Verdes merged.

Former Palos Verdes High School basketball coach Wendell Yoshida remembers Dick’s time at the school very well.

“He was a very influential player,” Yoshida says.

His impact in the program was very clear,” Wendell says. “There was a lot of success in his short time there.”

Wendell continued his work with the Rancho Palos Verdes
schools, just recently retiring as the Athletic Director at Peninsula High School.

As for Dick, he continued to pursue his dreams of becoming a volleyball coach full time, and another opportunity came, as Mira Costa gave him the chance of coming back.

Costa was regarded as one of the best programs in the South Bay and Dick recalls his time there from 1992 to 1996. He left because of an opportunity of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He was asked to work at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, but for the rowing events.

“What would you choose?” Dick says. “Coach volleyball at a high school, or go run the Olympics?”

The glow in his eyes when talking about the Olympics was noticeable. Dick ended up being part of three silver medals and a bronze medal for the United States team in 1996.

“I would have made that choice 100 times over 100,” Dick says.

After the Olympics, Dick took a couple of years to focus on his beach volleyball program in Hermosa Beach, but then in 2000, the El Camino job became open.

“They called me saying there was an opening,” Dick says. “So I applied and then got the job.”

Dick still says that it was the best decision of his life.

During his time here, Dick has exceeded expectations. Since 2014, the team has gone to the California Community College Athletics Association Men’s Volleyball State Championships every year.

All the success that the program has achieved during these 21 years can be credited to Dick’s outstanding job as head coach, as he’s won the South Coast Conference’s Coach of the Year award in 2001, 2011 and 2014, but in his point of view he barely had to do any work.

“It means that the players did it. I would never have won those awards if the players did not perform,” Dick says.

He pulls a file out of his backpack, which has the names of all of his players that had great achievements, on and off the court. It has a list of the recent scholars that the program produced, while also having the name of every player that has won an award while playing for him.

“When the players that I coached in the past come back to me and tell me what they are doing now,” Dick says, as he looks at his team practicing in the court beside him. “I don’t care what it is, as long as they are doing something, that makes me feel like I have done my job.”

Not all players end up transferring and playing at a four-year college after El Camino, but when scouts for some of the Cal States or University of Californias come watch the players in person it adds a little more pressure and motivation to them.

“We do have scouts from universities that come to see us in December, and they (analyze) everything that a player does, on and off the court.” Dick says.

That motivation helped former Warriors outside hitter Cinjun Coe succeed. Cinjun was the 2019 All-Conference Most Valuable Player in his first season at El Camino, after transferring from Illinois Institute of Technology, putting him on notice to the four-year universities.

In fall 2021, Cinjun transferred to the University of California, Santa Cruz. He entered his senior season and that was possible because of the work he put in playing for Coach Blount.

He won 2021 Athletics Newcomer of the Year at UC Santa Cruz.

That love for his players still makes him lament the two seasons that were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It sucked for them. There were guys that lost scholarships at four-year colleges, as their seniors were able to stay an extra year, leaving no room on the roster for new faces. We were top two in the state in 2020, so it was very sad for us to see the season end like that,” Dick says.

Former Warriors middle blocker William Lubs was one of those players who had his second and last season cancelled due to COVID-19 and he elected to stay and compete one more season in fall 2021 for El Camino and, especially, Coach Blount.

“It is a joy to play for him,” William says.

With COVID-19 behind them, the team prepared for a new season and had high expectations.

“We (had) 4 kickback players, which are players that played for us before, and came back with a year of eligibility left. They are more experienced, and that (helped) us a lot.”

Along with some returning players, there was an addition to the coaching staff last season, as Kyle Stevenson was added to assist alongside Kurt Peters, assistant coach for 16 years.

The Warriors ended the 2022 season on April 21 as the No. 4 seed in the Western State Conference, with a loss of 3-1 against the No. 1 seed Long Beach City College Vikings at the CCCAA Men’s Volleyball State Championship Semifinal held at ECC, and with numerous trips to the semis, the plan for next season is clear.

“Win state.” Dick says.
El Camino College men’s volleyball Head Coach Richard “Dick” Blount signals his approval during the March 11, 2022, volleyball match against the Long Beach College Vikings at ECC. The Warriors upset the No. 2 ranked-Vikings to improve their conference record to 4-1 and 7-4 overall. Coach Blount has been the head coach since 2001. (Gary Kohatsu | Warrior Life)

El Camino College men’s volleyball Head Coach Richard “Dick” Blount remains stoic as the Warriors erupt with elation after a winning set vs. the Long Beach City College Vikings. The Warriors won the match 3-1 on March 11, 2022, in the ECC gymnasium. (Gary Kohatsu | Warrior Life)

El Camino College men’s volleyball Head Coach Richard “Dick” Blount considers possible team matchups leading to the South Coast Conference playoffs on March 17, 2022, in the campus gymnasium. Players in the background are (L-R) left back Dylan Malit, outside hitter Dylan Garcia and setter Vladimir Kubr. (Gary Kohatsu | Warrior Life)