Kathleen 'Rocky' LaRose Retiring at End of Month

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After a 34-year career at the UA, Deputy Director of Athletics Kathleen 'Rocky' LaRose will retire at the end of the month.

"I am so filled with gratitude as I look back over my career," LaRose said. "I've had this incredible opportunity to be on the front line of a growing athletic department and was able to see history unfold as we merged the men's and women's departments in 1983 and earlier moved from the WAC Conference to the Pac-10, now Pac-12."

LaRose has been a notable member of the UA community since she was selected as one of the first women to receive a full-ride athletic scholarship to study and play softball at the UA.

In 1978, she was elected Homecoming Queen and, in 1979, she led the Wildcat softball team to its first conference championship as a starting infielder and clean-up hitter.

She joined the University staff as head softball coach later in 1979 and worked in various positions until she became a member of the athletics' executive team in 1989. LaRose served as the UA's first woman athletics director, on an interim basis, from December 2009 to May 2010.

LaRose founded the Commitment to an Athlete's Total Success program in 1990. The program is designed to enhance the experiences of UA student-athletes by assisting them in developing the academic, personal and life skills needed over time to lead a healthy, productive, and positive lifestyle.

Additionally, LaRose has served the National Collegiate Athletic Association as a Senior Woman Administrator for 23 years. Throughout her career, she has chaired numerous Pac-10 and Pac-12 committees.

"When you think of University of Arizona athletics, you think of Rocky LaRose," said Greg Byrne, director of UA athletics. "She has been one of the most influential people in the history of our athletics department. She has positively impacted thousands of student-athletes, and countless coaches and staff members. She will be greatly missed."

As deputy director, LaRose has oversight over internal operations of the UA's 20 varsity sports and is the first woman in the University's history to have everyday responsibilities over the football and men's basketball programs.

The athletics department will hold an invitation-only retirement celebration on Saturday.

"Mostly I'm grateful for all the talented people I've had the chance to work with, from coaches to athletes and our dedicated staff," LaRose said. "As I look back it almost seems too good to be true to be an Arizona alum and get to spend your entire career working for a place you love so much."

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