



## 2015 Hall of Fame Inductee – Rudy Van Fleet

Rudy Van Fleet grew up on a farm near Viola, Wisconsin in Richland County. Rudy went to college at U.W. Platteville and graduated with a B.S. in Agriculture Education. Rudy met Nancy in college and they were married soon after graduation. Their family consisted of six children.

Rudy later went on to U.W. Madison and earned a M.S. in Agriculture Education. His professional career started as an agriculture instructor at Ithaca High School for three years and later at Columbus High School for 11 years. This was followed by 25 years with the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension in Columbia County.

Rudy has always been very involved in sports. He participated in basketball and baseball in high school and in college. He became a four year letterman in both sports at U.W. Platteville and was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame in 2001. Rudy's passion for basketball extended far beyond his playing days in grade school, high school and college. He saw officiating as a way to stay close to the game and it gave him many more years of enjoyment in the sport. He officiated in both the high school and college level and had the opportunity to work 30 regional tournaments, 20 sectional tournaments and two state tournaments in the WIAA play-offs. In 2007, he was inducted as a Hall of Fame Official by the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association.

After retiring from the UW Cooperative in 1996, Rudy found himself wondering what to do with his newly found spare time. He wanted a new hobby but didn't really know what he wanted to do. He didn't hunt, fish or play golf. By chance, he saw a good friend, Russ Farr, at the grocery store and Russ asked Rudy how retirement was going. That's when Russ asked Rudy about pitching horseshoes and invited him out to get acquainted with the sport. Rudy got the bug and became obsessed with the pitching horseshoes. He started practicing every day, expecting to become a high percentage pitcher. That didn't happen, but he still pitches every day and is known to at least once pitch a 60% game in a tournament.

Russ also introduced Rudy to the Deansville Horseshoe Club. They were looking for a person to be their record keeper. Rudy had the time and interest, so he signed on to help. Not only has Rudy held the position of secretary-treasurer in Deansville since his early days with the club, he has also become the soul and backbone of the club. He makes himself available at every league night. He is the caretaker of the facility and its members and has earned the admiration of the entire Deansville club with his devotion to making sure they have everything they need to enjoy the game. He has been tournament director for Deansville's tournaments since 2002. Deansville hosted 5 tournaments in 2014 alone which has made Rudy a recognizable figure across the WHPA. The effort that Rudy has put into his club and to the game of horseshoes is appreciated by all and we are proud to see him be inducted into the WHPA Hall of Fame.