

VIEWFINDER: LU's DePagter coaches team like a family

From B-1

which sometimes is great," DePagter says. "At times, it's earlier than 9 and much, much later than 5 - sometimes 5 in the morning if you travel to go recruiting. I'm tired, but it's worth it, especially with the type of guys we have in this program. It makes it all worth it."

In those hours on the court and the longer hours on bus rides across Wisconsin and parts of the Midwest, a coach, if not always through words then certainly through behavior, imparts on his players how to handle life.

Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden is often celebrated as a thinking man's basketball coach and former Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy's calmness on the sidelines of the NFL mirrored the same in the world of football.

When you meet DePagter, you see the same seeds of how they approached their work and life. You can see it in the hug DePagter's father gets in after a game, or the way the coach spends a few minutes with the children of assistant coach Jon Meyer before practice starts.

If they're paying attention, the players can learn more than X's and O's.

"It really changes guys for the better that go through the program," DePagter says. "You see it afterwards. ... Alumni games or the amount of weddings we've been to. People don't talk about how many points somebody scored or how many wins you had. People talk about being together. It really becomes a pretty close-knit family."

Though this team hopes to be playing in the NCAA Division III tournament in March, just as meaningful is the coach looking forward to another big day. Joel and his wife, Alicia, are expecting their first baby that month.

And no matter how the games turn out during the rest of this season, years from now, when this team looks back, most will probably remember it as the year their coach became a father.

It's what you would expect from your family.