

# DECADES OF EXCELLENCE: Edwardsville coach Mike Waldo reflects on 600th win, astounding career

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
December 6 2016 9:37 AM



**EDWARDSVILLE** - There is nothing ordinary about **Mike Waldo** as a head basketball coach. The word "extraordinary" has to be used any time a word is used to describe Waldo and his abilities to lead a high school basketball team.

Recently, in a **Battling Bulldogs Thanksgiving Tourney game** against **Highland, Edwardsville High School coach Waldo** captured his **600th win** as coach of the Tigers, ranking him high on the list of all-time winningest Illinois high school basketball coaches.

Waldo had a simple way to respond to winning No. 600: “I think it shows I have been fortunate enough to coach for a long time in a couple good places .”

Waldo has been head coach at Edwardsville High School for 29 years after a five-year stint at Marquette. He began coaching at Edwardsville as a volunteer assistant in baseball in the spring of 1979. He, to this day, remains the pitching coach for the EHS baseball team in the spring.

Waldo said the real key to his life has been his wife of 36 years, Diane.

“I think being able to coach for a long time, a lot of the credit there goes to my wife, because we work hard at it,” he said. “Our coaching staff and our players spend a lot of time practicing basketball and getting ready to play. I have spent a lot of time coaching and away from home. My wife has always taken care of everything at home and was a great mother, wife and a very strong person. She never, ever, made me feel guilty about being gone. I think the fact that we have a great situation is that she has allowed me to do what I had to do.”

Coach Waldo said during basketball season, his wife had to take care of many things around the house and with the family.

“My wife is a great mother and grandmother,” he said. “The fact that I have been able to do this as long as I have and spend as much time as I have is because we have a very good family and that is because of her. I have never had any pressure to not coach or pressure to not work hard at it and I owe that to her. We have two children and one granddaughter together and a wonderful family because of her.”

Waldo became the EHS coach in the 1988-89 season after a five-year stint as head coach at Marquette.

The highly regarded coach said he has also been fortunate to have some great players and mentors over the years who have helped lead him to such success.

“We have had a lot of guys over the years who practiced well and gave us a good look at who we would be playing,” he said. “I know those kids aren’t going to get a lot of accolades, but there are many who have taken pride of being a scout team player, who

have led to our success. I think in basketball, as in most sports, your practice is everything. How well you play in games is determined by how you practice.

The mentors Waldo has been lucky to have over the past several decades have greatly influenced him.

"I had a lot of excellent mentors and guys that cared enough about me to talk to me about how to do things and cared enough about me to tell me when I could have done things better," Waldo said. "It takes compassion and courage to tell you you should do things another way. I never took a mentor's criticism in a negative way. I wanted to try to improve and get better. I have had really good kids in Edwardsville and good assistant coaches and a good administration. I have enjoyed it and feel very fortunate to have coached in Edwardsville."

Waldo was originally a strong athlete out of Granite City and a graduate of Granite City North. Granite City has always been known for producing athletes of strong will and character and Waldo fits that bill perfectly. He is relentless on the basketball court and expects nothing but the best in character from his players.

The coach said his support from previous superintendent **Dr. Ed Hightower** and all the Edwardsville School District administration over the years has also been a critical key to establishing a highly successful basketball program.

"We have had a good administration," he said. "I have had very, very strong support previously from Dr. Hightower and the current administration."

Waldo said Dr. Hightower was always "a great backer of mine."

"I will always be thankful to Dr. Hightower and the leadership he gave me and District 7," Waldo said. "For me to have lasted as long as I have in Edwardsville, a big part of it is because of him."

As far as his future plans, Waldo simply takes things one year at a time.

"I love kids and really like working with all the great assistant coaches I have over the years," he said. "I have had some great assistant coaches and they have also been a big key to my success."

"I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to coach at Edwardsville," he said.

"We have a good work ethic and high character in our kids who play sports at Edwardsville High School."

