

# **Blade Retires As Edwardsville Girls Basketball Coach, Compiled 743-92 Record In 26 Years With Carrollton, Tigers**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Lori Blade, who coached the girls basketball team at Edwardsville High School for 18 seasons, winning 510 games and 17 of 18 IHSA Class AA and Class 4A regional championships, announced her retirement April 16 as coach of the Tigers' girls team.

Blade made the announcement to her team via a video conference, ending a 26-year career as head coach of both Carrollton and Edwardsville High Schools. Her career record was 743-92, and her teams went to the IHSA state finals five times, winning back-to-back Class A championships with the Hawks in 2000-01 and 2001-02, two second place finishes with the Tigers in 2011-12 and 2016-17, and a fourth place finish in 2017-18. Her 743 career wins rank her in the top-ten all time in Illinois girls basketball history.

In a statement on her Twitter page, Blade said that coaching wasn't always about wins and losses, but to help develop a deeper love and respect for the game of basketball.

"So, here I am, at the end of this season of my life," Blade said at the opening of her statement. "It has been an incredible season of life. After immense thought and prayer, I have made the decision to retire from coaching basketball after 32 years. I have always pushed myself, my players and coaching staff to work hard to compete. Truth be told, it has never really been about getting the win. The victory that I've always strived toward is that everything we did created a deeper love and respect for the game and for one another. Looking back, I believe we accomplished both."

Blade also thanked her family, her players and their families, her assistant coaches, supporters, friends and fans who helped support her and her teams over the years.

"Successful programs are not built alone, rather, are built by many individual and team contributions," Blade said. "I have been blessed to have been a part of two very successful basketball programs, and to have been supported by so many people who have strengthened our program over the years. Thank you to the dedicated coaching staffs who shared so much of their time and enthusiasm for building our programs and for building young ladies. I am thankful for each and every one of our parents for your support along the way.

"Thank you to our basketball community, parents, family and friends who cheered for our teams over the years," Blade continued. "Above all, I could not have done any of this without my biggest supporters, my mom, dad and family. Lastly, I want to thank all my players for all the games and practices; you always came ready to play and always delivered. Thank you for keeping your head high in good times and rough times, and thank you for supporting the team supporting each other, supporting all of our coaches,

and more than anything, thank you for the support you've given to me. I appreciate it more than you can imagine."

In 18 seasons as the coach of Edwardsville, Blade compiled a record of 510-65, which included a streak of seven consecutive 30-win seasons, from 2006-07 to 2012-13. Her teams at Edwardsville produced many all-state players, such as Que Love, Elle Evans, Jaylen Townsend, Sydney Harris, Kate Martin, Rachel Pranger, Makenzie Silvey, Criste'on Waters, Kortney Dunbar, Aailyah Covington, Emmonie Henderson, Lauren White, Mary O'Keefe, Caty Ponce, Cierra Gaines, Megan Sharpe, Anya Covington, Kara Frandsen, Tamara McCaskill and Amber Shelton. While at Carrollton, Blade also coached Shelton, Alicia DeShasier, Karen Brannan, Kristen Boss, Liz DeShasier, Stosha DeShasier, Shelby Mueth and Wendy Davidson to all-state honors.

Blade was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2016, joining Winchester West Central coach Brian Bettis and Lanark Eastland coach Colleen Finn-Henze as fellow inductees in girls basketball.

In addition to her basketball career, Blade has also won over 700 softball games, making her the only coach in the state to have won over 700 career games in two different sports. Blade will stay on as both a physical education teacher and softball coach with the Tigers.

In the final part of her statement on Twitter, Blade expressed how proud she was of her players for all of their contributions, both on and off the court.

"Coaching young people has been a privilege that has taught me something of value about the game and about life," Blade said. "Each one of you has not only made me a better coach, but a better person. Each one of you has created a lasting impression on me. To all of my players, past and current, we have laughed along the way, and at times, we have cried, but we've always done it together. You made me happy, and you made me frustrated, but mostly, you've made me proud; proud to be your coach, proud to be a part of your development, both as an athlete and as a person. I am proud to call you my kids. If I am remembered for being your coach, it only means that I have still instilled the love of the game inside your heart. Doing that has been my number one priority. It has been, unquestionably, an incredible ride. There are many things that I will never forget. On top of the list of memories are the relationships and friendships nurtured along the way."

The final sentence in her statement spoke volumes.

"Forever in my heart --- Coach Blade."