

Mascoutah Boys Basketball Coach Justin Love Dies Suddenly On Campus At Age 41

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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MASCOUTAH - Justin Love, the head boys basketball coach at Mascoutah High School, died suddenly this morning after being found unresponsive on the Mascoutah campus.

Love, aged 41, was the head coach for the Indians since the 2017-18 season, and played two seasons at Saint Louis University, where he was named to the first team of the Conference USA team in 1999-2000. He was the conference's fourth leading scorer that year, averaging 18.2 points-per-game.

"This morning, June 23, 2020, coach Justin Love, head basketball coach of the Mascoutah High School boys basketball program, was found unresponsive on campus," said Mascoutah superintendent Dr. Craig Fiegel in a statement. "He was rushed to the hospital, and later pronounced deceased. No other information is available at this time."

A native of San Francisco, Love was signed by the National Basketball Association's Phoenix Suns as an undrafted free agent, and went on to play 12 years professionally in China and Europe. He served as an assistant coach for Joe Muniz at Belleville West before becoming Mascoutah's head coach. In his three seasons coaching the Indians, his record was 55-42, including the IHSA Class 3A regional championship in 2019, and went to the Sweet Sixteen before losing to eventual state champion East St. Louis in the sectional final.

For those accomplishments, Love was named the Illinois Basketball Association's boys Coach of the Year.

"Coach Love was a beloved member of the Mascoutah family, and will be greatly missed," Fiegel said in the statement. "Keep his family in your thoughts and prayers."

Love earned his BA degree in Communications Disorders and his master's degree in Education at SLU. His coaching philosophy was very simple: "Play tough, play smart and be unselfish."