

Famed Basketball Coach Larry Graham Dies At Age 77, Coached Madison To Two State Titles, Was All-Time Wins Leader At SIUE

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
August 31 2020 6:08 PM



MARYVILLE - Basketball coaching legend Larry Graham, who won two IHSA Class A state championships at Madison and also became the all-time wins leader for the men's team at SIU-Edwardsville, died Monday at Anderson Hospital in Maryville, aged 77.

A native of Scotland, Ind., Mr. Graham, then known as Buddy Graham, set records at Odom High School for most career points (1,387) and rebounds (929), and helped lead the Bulldogs to their first-ever sectional and regional championships before losing the semi-state game, the Indiana quarterfinals, to New Albany in the last game in Indiana to have a sudden death ending. He played in college for both Vincennes University in Vincennes, Ind., and Texas Wesleyan University in Ft. Worth before turning to coaching.

After stints at various schools in both Indiana and Illinois, Mr. Graham was hired as boys basketball coach at Madison High School for the 1969-70 season, and immediately turned the Trojans into a state power. His career record at Madison was 312-103 in 15 seasons, going to the IHSA Class A state tournament five times, winning championships in 1977, defeating Aurora Central Catholic 71-55 in the final, and in 1981, winning the championship over Dunlap 58-47. The Trojans also finished fourth in 1980.

After leaving Madison, Mr. Graham coached at Florissant Valley Community College in Florissant, Mo., then took over the men's team at SIU-Edwardsville in 1984, moving into a new home arena at the Sam M. Vadalabene Center, and became the Cougars' all-time leader in wins with 147, taking the team to three NCAA Division II tournaments, in 1986, 1987 and 1989.

Graham once reflected on his long basketball coaching career during a Hall of Fame induction and said: "I am kind of amazed it happened. "I was a laid-back coach, but pretty big questioning the referees. I was just blessed to be in the right place at the right time."

Mr. Graham also served as an assistant coach for the men's team and head women's coach at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., before his retirement. In his career, Mr. Graham won a total of 806 games, was named Illinois Class A Coach of the Year in 1977 and 1981, and is a member of both the Illinois and Indiana basketball Halls of Fame, and is also a member of the St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame. He was also selected as one of the 100 Legends of the IHSA state basketball tournament on its centennial celebration in 2007.

Funeral arrangements are pending.