



Dick Ford Has Glorious Homecoming With EHS Sports Hall Of Fame Induction

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**Former Edwardsville Football Coach, Athletic Director Dick Ford Returns Home
For Tigers' Hall Of Fame Induction, Was Main Driving Force Behind District 7
Sports Complex**



EDWARDSVILLE - For former Edwardsville High School football coach, athletic director and assistant principal Dick Ford, it was a glorious homecoming as he and many others were inducted into the revived Edwardsville High Sports Hall of Fame Feb. 12 in a banquet held at the Edwardsville American Legion Post.

Most importantly, Ford was recognized as the driving force behind the construction of the District 7 sports complex, located on Center Grove Road, across the street from the current high school.

It was a great homecoming for Ford, and he was very happy to return to Edwardsville for the induction.

"I'm feeling super, because I'm being recognized for something I thought I could never do," Ford said in an interview conducted before the Tigers' boys basketball team played East St. Louis on the team's Senior Night Feb. 11. "I built the sports complex. I designed it, I laid it out and I got enough people running it. And all the various sports participated."

The idea for the sports complex came about by necessity, as girl's sports were starting to expand and the high school's teams were spread out all over the city of Edwardsville to play games.

"That was when we had girls' sports that came into existence," Ford said. "We had no place to take them to practice. We needed a place where we could call home. And it turned out to be super."

Indeed it did, as the District 7 complex and its facilities are among the best of their kind in the entire St. Louis area. The complex includes Tiger Stadium, which has a turf field and is the home of the football, boys and girls soccer, and girls field hockey teams, Tom Pile Field, where the baseball team plays, two softball fields, and a combination turf and grass junior varsity baseball field. The complex also has the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center for swimming, the Jon Davis Wrestling Center for Tigers' wrestling, and on the campus itself Lucco-Jackson Gym for boys and girls basketball, the Winston Brown Track Center for track and field, and the Edwardsville Tennis Center for boys and girls tennis.

And also currently under construction and opening soon will be the Gori Family Ice Center for ice skating and Edwardsville hockey. The center will be the first-ever on-campus ice arena for both the Mid-States and Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Associations, the local high school hockey leagues.

It was a project that Ford is very proud of to this day, and he beams when he talks about the complex.

"I feel great," Ford said, "because I accomplished what I needed to do. I needed a place for all my sports. Of course, I was athletic director and I was responsible for that. And before we had the sports complex, we were sending teams every which direction. And

we weren't sure from time to time we were going to keep that place. It was always up in the air. So that was my goal, to make a place for all our teams."

Ford was head coach of the Tigers' football team from 1972-1984, compiling a record of 61-59 and an appearance in the IHSA Class 5A playoffs in 1975. Ford has many fond memories of coaching the Tigers.

"We accomplished more than I thought we could," Ford said, "because we were the smallest team and the smallest school in the Southwestern Conference. And we had to outcoach a lot of the other teams who spent so much time preparing for every game and it really made a difference."

Today, Ford, 81, lives in Naples, Fla. ("I don't like cold weather anymore," Ford said with a smile and laugh.), and stays in the area from October to May, when he migrates up north.

"It gets so hot down in Florida during the summer," Ford said. "It's not a good place to be."

Although Ford lives in Florida today, he still calls Edwardsville home.

"This is home," Ford said. "I lived here more than any other place in my lifetime. This is my home."

And Ford is very grateful for his accomplishments for both the Tigers and the Edwardsville community.

"I'm just so thankful to do what I did for the school district," Ford said. "It's an outstanding place. And I knew if I got the sports complex started that it would continue to grow."

As have the Tigers' sporting programs as well.

"Oh, yeah," Ford said with much pride and a smile. "And I knew that once they had the practice fields and enthusiasm from the community, it would be great for the sports."

And Ford is grateful for other things as well.

"I'm very thankful for my health," Ford said. "You know, at my age, anything can happen. I feel great."