

Blade Announces Retirement As Edwardsville Softball Coach, Steps Down With Over 700 Wins In Both Basketball, Softball

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EDWARDSVILLE - Lori Blade, one of the most prolific coaches in Illinois high school sports history in both basketball and softball, announced her retirement as girls softball coach at Edwardsville High on Thursday afternoon.

Blade steps down with overall records of 781-128 in softball and 743-92 in basketball, fourth all-time in softball and eighth in basketball in IHSA history.

She was hired by the Edwardsville school district in 2002 to become the head girls basketball coach and added on softball in 2003. A 1988 graduate of Casey-Westfield High, where she was a standout basketball and softball player, Blade started coaching at Carrollton, going 233-27 in eight seasons at the helm in basketball, taking the Hawks to back-to-back state Class A championships in 2001 and 2002.

She joined the Tigers in the 2002-03 basketball season and won her first game Nov. 26 over Cahokia 60-51. Blade coached her first softball game on Mar. 22, 2004. an 8-1 win over Gillespie, and in her final season, lost the opener to Freeburg 10-6, then went on a 21-game winning streak in a season that ended with a 33-4 record and third place in Class 4A.

In her time at Edwardsville, Blade coached the Tigers softball team to 15 regional and six sectional titles, appearing in the state finals three times, finishing third in both 2007

and 2022, and a second-place finish in 2009, falling in the Class 4A final to Wilmette Loyola Academy 2-0. In basketball, Blade also coached Edwardsville to 13 Southwestern Conference crowns, 17 regional titles, 13 sectional championships, and six appearances in the IHSA Finals, finishing second in 2012 and 2016 and fourth in 2018, all in Class 4A.

Blade was a standout softball player in college and Edwardsville High School Athletic Director Alex Fox believed it was her first love of a sport as a coach.

She loved to teach the game of softball and basketball to high school players. In recent months, she said that is what motivated her to keep coaching, the fact that "I love the basics of teaching."

"She retired from teaching and I think now wants more flexibility," Fox said. "She has always put a tremendous amount of dedication into coaching and the school district. It is hard to find someone who has worked as hard as she has as a coach. Her attention to detail and her dedication separated her from all the others and brought the best out of our kids. She will be greatly missed."

Blade is also a member of four Halls of Fame, being inducted into the SIUE Hall in 2009, the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall in 2016, the Illinois Softball Coaches shrine in 2018, and most recently, the National High School Athletic Coaches Hall last month.

Fox said a search for the new head softball coach is now underway.

