

St. Joseph's Pingatore sets state wins mark

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St. Joseph's Gene Pingatore became the winningest boys basketball coach in Illinois high school history Friday night after his team beat Carmel 49-26 in an East Suburban Catholic Conference game in Mundelein.

Pingatore's 827th victory put him past Dick Van Scyoc, who capped a 44-year career at four schools with a Class AA state title at Peoria Manual in 1994.

Pingatore started at St. Joseph in 1969-70 and has spent his entire head coaching career at the Westchester school. Four of his first seven teams finished with losing records but he has had only one losing season since 1976.

The Chargers have a full set of top-four state trophies capped by a 1999 Class AA state championship. Pingatore's 1978 team, lead by future Indiana University and Detroit Pistons star Isiah Thomas, finished second in the state.

Also looking to pass Van Scyoc is Rockford Boylan's Steve Goers, who had 825 career victories going into Friday night's game with Rockford Jefferson.

The only other boys coach with more than 800 wins is the legendary Arthur Trout, who was 810-330 at Centralia.

Dorothy Gaters of Marshall is the girls all-time record holder with 897 wins.



The Gene Pingatore Profile (through 08-09)

Gene Pingatore was born and raised in Cicero, Illinois, the son of Annette and Frank Pingatore.

His formal education began at Cicero Grade School and continued at St. Mel High School on Chicago's west side.

While at St. Mel, Gene was an Honors student and three year varsity letter winner in basketball. The 1954 St. Mel team, on which he was a regular, went on to capture the City Championship by defeating a highly regarded DuSable High School team.

Upon graduation from high school, Gene received an athletic scholarship to play basketball at Loyola University of Los Angeles. A three year varsity letter winner, he captained the Loyola team in his senior year.

After receiving his B.A. Degree in History, Gene returned to the Chicago area to do graduate work at Loyola University and DePaul University. In 1960, he began a coaching and teaching career at newly built St. Joseph High School in Westchester, Illinois. He served as an assistant basketball coach and social studies teacher until 1970. In 1970, Gene became Assistant Principal and varsity basketball coach at St. Joseph. From 1970 until the present, he has also served as Director of Development, Acting Principal for one semester in 1986 and, is currently Director of Building and Grounds, Special Events Coordinator and Alumni Director.

In 40 years as head coach, his Charger teams have captured 27 East Suburban Catholic Conference Championships, 9 prestigious Proviso West Holiday Tournament Championships, 25 state regional titles and 11 state sectional titles. In 1978, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, and 1999, his teams qualified for the Elite Eight Tournament in Champaign. The 1978 team was the state runner-up; the 1984 team placed 4th; the 1987 team took 3rd place; and the 1999 team captured the Class AA State Championship. St. Joseph had the most wins in the State of Illinois in the 80's! Gene attained the title of the most winning coach in Illinois on January 16, 2009 with his 827 wins. As of today the total has risen to 838 career wins.

During his 39 year tenure as head coach and with an overall record of 814 wins and 270 losses, Gene had the good fortune to coach many fine players, the most notable of whom was Indiana All American and NBA great, Isiah Thomas '79. In addition to Thomas, he coached two other high school McDonald All Americans: Daryl Thomas '83, Indiana University, and Deryl Cunningham '89, Kansas State. Other all staters coached by Gene were Kenny Williams '81, Robert Morris; Tony Reeder '83, Marquette; Tony Freeman '86, UIC; Brian Molis '87, Northern Illinois; Carl Hayes '88, Nebraska; Marty Clark '90, Duke; William Gates '91, Marquette; Gerald Eaker '92, Kansas State; Rodney Horton '94, Dayton; Marlon London '98, Kansas; Brandon Watkins '99, Penn State; Jabari Mattox '00, Bowling Green; Tony Freeman '05, Iowa; Jonathan Peoples '06, Notre Dame; Evan Turner '07, Ohio State; and

Demetri McCamey `07, Illinois. Other professional players coached by Gene were Clifford Scales `87, Nebraska and Finland; Amal McCaskill `91, Marquette and Orlando Magic of the NBA; former Dallas Cowboy and Chicago Bear offensive lineman, Andy Frederick `72, Daryl Thomas, Europe and Deryl Cunningham, Europe and the CBA.

Gene received District Coach of the Year honors from the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association in 1978, 1979, 1988, 1990, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. In 1999 he was the IBCA Coach of the Year for the state of Illinois. He was also honored as Coach of the Year in the East Suburban Catholic Conference in 1978, 1979, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. In 1980, Gene was honored by the Christian Brothers as the recipient of the LaSallian Award. In 1985 he was selected St. Joseph's Man of the Year. He was inducted in the Illinois Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in 1987, the St. Joseph High School Sports Hall of Fame in 1991, the Catholic League Hall of Fame in 1993, the Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame in September of 2005 and the East Suburban Catholic Hall of Fame in 2005.

He was also the recipient of the Coach of the Year through the Pioneer Press and Suburban Life papers in 1978, 1979 and 1999, and again in the Suburban Life in 1981, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1995, and 2004.

In 1999 he was Student Sports Magazine National Coach of the Year and the Village of Westchester Man of the Year. In 2000 Gene was named the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Boys Basketball Coach of the Year for Region 4.

Gene has been a charter member and on the executive committee of STAY since September of 1998. STAY is Cook County State's Attorney Dick Devine's Youth Initiative, coordinated by the late Gene Sullivan. The STAY program was conceived to help keep kids from showing up in the criminal justice system. He was also a board member for the Westchester Chamber of Commerce for six years.

In the spring of 2008 Gene was honored by the Illinois State Crime Commission/Police Athletic League of Illinois as Educator of the Year at there 12th Annual Awards Dinner. The Commission is committed to working with at- risk teens across Illinois.