

INDUCTEE PROFILE



When he retired, John Hayes was the 10th winningest coach in PIAA football history with 323 victories. He now ranks 12th.

Hayes felt right at home in Bellwood

Blue Devils' coach won 323 games, 12th most in PIAA history

By Jim Lane
Altoona Mirror

John Hayes coached football and taught at Tyrone Area High School for 10 years but, ironically, he made his mark at neighboring Bellwood-Antis High School, the Golden Eagles' chief rival.

In fact, Hayes coached the Blue Devils for 38 years, the longest tenure in Blair County history for a coach at one school, and his 323 victories at B-A rank 12th all-time in Pennsylvania scholastic football history and first in Blair County history.

Six of Hayes' Bellwood-Antis teams won District 6 championships and three of them reached the PIAA Final Four.

Hayes was inducted into the Pennsylvania State Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2019.

However, John Hayes was more than a football coach. He served as B-A's athletic director for 37 years, administered the East-West all-star game from 2001-2010 and was the PSFCA president in 2002.

His record and statewide recognition through athletic leadership earned him a place in the Blair County Sports

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**FOLLOWING IS A LIST
OF THE TOP 12
WINNINGEST COACHES
IN PIAA HISTORY:**

(as of April 2022)

Jim Roth

Southern Columbia
469-64-2

George Curry

Lake-Lehman, Wyoming Valley
West, Berwick
455-99-5

Jack Henzes Jr.

Dunmore
444-164-8

Jim Render

Carrolton (Ohio), Uniontown,
Upper St. Clair
406-141-6

Don Bailey

Forest Hills
375-120-8

Mike Williams

Manheim Central
348-75-3

Frank Pazzaglia

Metuchen (NJ) Blakely,
Valley View, Mid-Valley
344-141-8

Joe Hamilton

Midland, New Brighton,
Hempfield, Blackhawk
342-168-11

Bob Wolfrum

Wyomissing
337-86-1

Kevin Clancy

Archbishop Carroll, Strath Haven
332-143-2

Mike Pettine

Central Bucks West
326-42-4

John Hayes

Bellwood-Antis
323-103-2



Front row from left: Chuck Erickson, John Hayes, Bill Crowell, Nick Lovrich, Scott Boyer. Back row: Charlie Burch, Rick Schreier, Brandon Hexcox, Chris Walker, Rob Tyler; Travis Martin.

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Hall of Fame.

"John bled blue and gold," Bellwood-Antis former principal Mike Sakash said from his home in North Carolina. "He was football coach for about 20 of the years I was principal, so we made a lot of trips together, and we became quite close.

"He was such an inspiration to every kid who played under him," Sakash added. "He was really good natured and cared about the kids. He went the extra mile and put in extra time."

Born in Mount Pleasant, Hayes went to Juniata College and arrived in Tyrone in 1969. He applied for the head coaching job at Tyrone several times but was unsuccessful and almost gave up his quest to become a head coach.

However, when he heard about the opening at Bellwood-Antis, Hayes applied and was hired July 14, 1980.

"I wasn't sure if they trusted a Tyrone guy," Hayes said with a chuckle, "but I had some supportive (school) board members and that helped me.

"When I was hired, one board guy told the (Mirror) reporter, 'I wish him luck, and he's going to need it,'" Hayes recalled. "I took that to drive me so I'd never be outprepared."



Hayes bio

Sport: Football

High school: Bellwood-Antis

College: Juniata

Hall of Fame achievement: 323 victories in 38 seasons at Bellwood rank 12th all-time in Pennsylvania scholastic football history

Current residence: Tyrone

Lovrich later became a member of Hayes' staff for 20 years and then replaced him as the Blue Devils' head coach in 2018.

"It didn't matter if you were junior high or varsity, you were part of his staff," Lovrich said. "He treated everyone on the staff first class from top to bottom."

Lovrich noted that of the 11 members on Hayes' staff, all but two played for him.

"That's how important the program was to him and to us," Lovrich said.

Over the years, the Bellwood-Tyrone rivalry has been one of Blair County's best.

"I loved competing against him and his teams," said Tyrone coach John Franco. "They brought out the best in me and our teams.

"The Tyrone-Bellwood rivalry has been so much fun," Franco continued. "I've been part of some great rivalries — Altoona-Johnstown, Altoona-Hollidaysburg, Bishop Guilfoyle-McCort — but there's nothing like Tyrone-Bellwood. It's special."

Franco noted that Hayes was active in coaching associations and did a lot for the good of the game.

"His Hall of Fame selection is a well-deserved honor," Franco said.

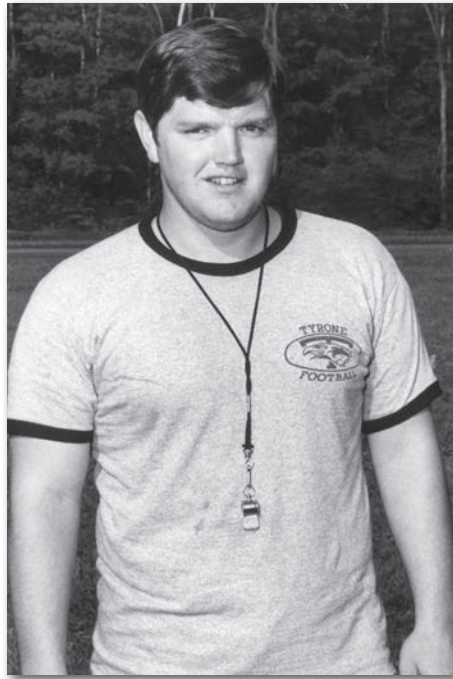
Lovrich couldn't agree more.

"He's so deserving of the honor, not only as a football coach but his impact on our community," Lovrich said. "He's been such a part of everything."

During his tenure as athletic director, Hayes was a champion for all B-A programs, both girls and boys. B-A won a PIAA state baseball championship, the girls basketball team won state honors, wrestling, softball and track teams were successful and track product Brian Leap went to the NCAA nationals.

"Plus, our academic program is very strong," Hayes noted. "We've had a number of (Blair County) Hall of Fame academic winners. The district has so much to be proud of and I'm proud to have been a product of it for four decades."

Since retiring, Hayes has received a number of accolades, including



John as a young assistant at Tyrone ... and later with his wife Vicky.

election to the state coaching association's hall of fame.

"Having the (Bellwood) field named after me is something I'll never forget," he said. "However, this (Blair County Hall) goes beyond Bellwood. It takes in a huge number of individual performances.

"My success is based on hundreds of young people who committed themselves to being successful."

At the top of the list of people to

whom he's grateful is his wife, Vicky.

"Vicky has made it possible for me to be the coach I wanted to be," he said. "From the first day meeting the English teacher across the hall, until 50 years later, she has been my rock, my sounding board, my best friend. I was able to attend meetings, go to clinics knowing she was taking care of the home. She is a huge part of my recognition and, most importantly, in my life today."



John was the center of attention at Bellwood, not only as football coach but also as the Blue Devils' athletic director.