

INDUCTEE PROFILE

# Moschella created Lady Marauder dynasty

## Won four PIAA titles and county-record 603 games at BG

By Buck Frank  
Altoona Mirror

**M**ark Moschella coached more than 750 games at Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School, winning 13 district titles, reaching 13 PIAA final fours and nine state championship games while capturing four state titles.

His 603 victories in 26 years stands as a Blair County all-time record and was a big reason he was selected to the Blair County Sports Hall Fame Class of 2024.

“My friend Tony Labriola once told me,” Moschella said recently, “You don’t have a basketball team — you have a basketball program.”

The dynasty Moschella created with the Lady Marauders lasted from 1991 until 2018 and featured many star players like Altoona Mirror first-team all-stars Kelly Adams, Michelle Taddei, Elaine Colyer, Ann Sral, Kori Sisto, Angela Greaser, Mary Forr, Alli Williams, Christine Conrad, Rachel Rea, Halee Adams, Kayla Bates and Lili Benzel.

His teams went 25 seasons without having a losing record and accumulated 30-plus victories in four different seasons.

“We stayed solid for many years,” Moschella said. “That’s because we had a lot of great people, all the way from junior high up to the varsity.”

Although his resume now appears to be one of a person who was born to coach, Moschella didn’t exactly take the normal path to coaching supremacy.

Moschella grew up in Altoona and graduated from Bishop Guilfoyle in 1972, having played basketball in the local parochial league and junior high. After graduating from Robert Morris College, he returned to Blair County to work in the insurance industry and got back into basketball by becoming a PIAA official.

Moschella refereed for more than 15 years and worked a PIAA boys basketball championship game as an alternate.



**Mark coached Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School to nine appearances in the PIAA championship game.**

During that time, he started coaching a group of fourth-grade girls that included his daughter, Nikki, and kept moving up with them to the junior high level.

After three years as BG’s junior high head coach, he joined varsity coach John Frederick’s staff as an assistant and was part of the Lady Marauders’ state championship team of 1990-91.

When Frederick stepped down after the season, Moschella applied for the job opening and was hired as head

coach by athletic director Pete Mitchell.

“The first thing I did when I was named head coach was drive to (former BG player and friend) Bill Adams’ house and knock on his door,” Moschella said. “I had so much respect for him as the coach of St. Mary’s in the parochial league, and I asked him to come with me.”

Adams joined Moschella and stayed

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on as his top assistant for most of Moschella's career, along with Rich Consiglio and Pat Callahan.

The first season, though, proved to be a big test for the new coaching staff. With 10 seniors graduating from the previous state championship team, BG returned only two experienced players in Gina Myers and Jade Consiglio, and both sustained knee injuries.

Moschella, however, was able to produce a 19-11 season and build a foundation for future success.

"It took a year to get everybody on board," he said. "We never looked back or too far ahead. Whatever what was in front of us, that's what we focused on as a group."

Moschella instilled in his players what he referred to as the "five priorities" of their program. Those were, in order: 1. God. 2. Family. 3. Academics. 4. Basketball Team. 5. Good Social Life.

"Winning a state championship was a goal, but not a priority," said Moschella, who coached in a low-key manner that resulted in just three technical fouls – by his count – called against him during his 26 seasons.

"Certainly, (Moschella) taught us how to execute an offense and play defense with heart, but those weren't the most important things he taught us," said Mary (Forr) Szoch, who later played at Notre Dame. "The far greater lessons I learned from Coach Mo were about responsibility, hard work, humility and most importantly, love of my teammates. Coach led by example. He never swore at or demeaned a player, he always focused on the positives, and he loved each of us like we were his kids."

Moschella won a state championship in just his second season as head coach, taking the 1992-93 team, led by Taddei, Kelly Adams and Liz Runk, to a 30-1 record and a 52-26 win over Lourdes Regional in the PIAA final.

His next two seasons, with Colyer and his daughter, Nikki, leading the way, BG went back to the state finals in Hershey but came up short to Lourdes Regional and Merion Mercy.

The 1994-95 season produced one of Moschella's best wins. After moving up to Class 2A, BG faced three-time champion Cranberry in the PIAA semifinals at IUP.

"It was a packed arena with more than 3,000 people, and so many (Cranberry) fans were wearing 'Four-peat' T-shirts," Moschella said. "The atmosphere was incredible. It was so loud in there, that we had to use cards to signal plays to the players."

BG received a big game from Kim Ratzesberger and won the contest, 51-42.

The schedule Guilfoyle faced during the regular season – regularly meeting teams like Altoona, Hollidaysburg and State College in the Mid-Alleghenies Conference and later playing powerhouses in the Mountain League and Laurel Highlands Athletic Conference – prepared the Lady Marauders for postseason runs.

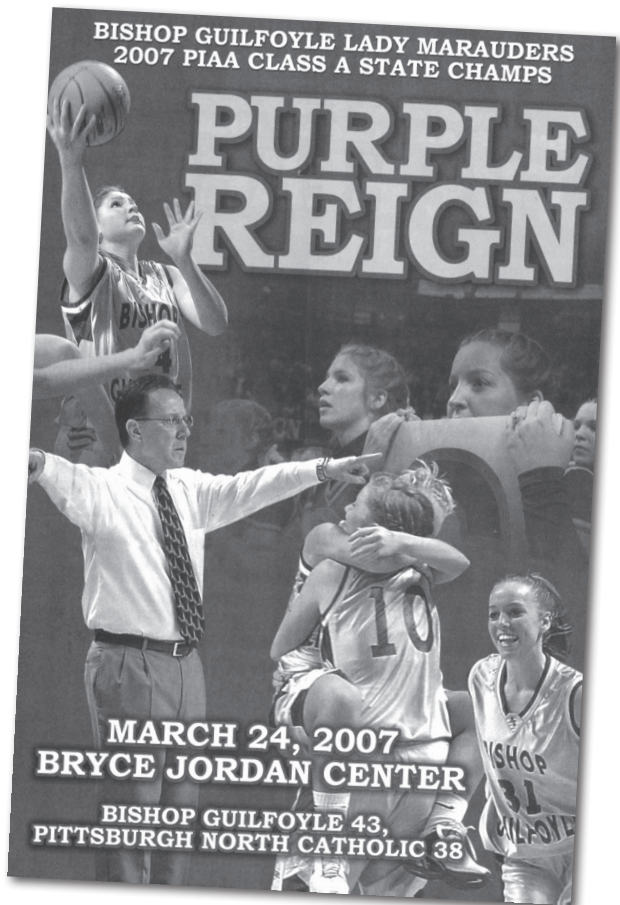
"There weren't many breathers," Moschella said. "By the time the playoffs came, with the schedule we had, there wasn't anything we hadn't seen."

The success continued with another state final appearance in 1999, led by Kristen Toomey and Sral, finishing runner-up to Nativity BVM.

Moschella took the 2001-02 season off from coaching but returned and led BG back to the state final in 2004 with Greaser and Lindsey Sissler, falling to Delone Catholic.

At that point, Moschella was 1-4 in state final games.

"After a loss in the state final, I'd go into the locker room in front of the team and explain to them how fortunate they were to be one of just a handful of teams to have the opportunity to bring their gym bags through those doors and compete in a state final,"



Moschella said. "I thought that was the kind of perspective that needed to be delivered – 50% of the teams in state championship games lose."

With a new group of players, Moschella's success reached its highest levels from 2006-2011. During those five seasons, BG went 147-8, won five district titles and reached the state finals four times.

The Forr-Ashley Helsel-Courtney Carroll team of 2006-07 set a BG record with 31 wins and beat North Catholic,



## Moschella bio

**Sport:** Basketball

**High school:** Bishop Guilfoyle

**Hall of Fame achievement:** Coached the Bishop Guilfoyle girls basketball team to four PIAA championships and nine appearances in the state title game. In his 27-year career, he won 603 games, most in Blair County history for girls or boys.

43-38, in the state final at Penn State University. Two years later, with Williams and Rea leading the charge, BG beat Nativity BVM, 49-27, for its third state title under Moschella.

Williams, Halee Adams and Kaleigh Floyd helped BG go 30-0 in 2009-10 and win back-to-back state titles with a 49-29 win over Northern Cambria. After Williams graduated, BG went back to the final in 2011 with Halee Adams, Kelsey Livoti and Elyssa Ehredt, but lost to Steelton-Highspire, 73-60.

“I was willing to learn and adjust each year,” Moschella said. “With all the different players with different abilities, my coaching staff and I would adjust to their strengths. The success of the program came from the commitment the players made, the hard work they put in and the way they treated each other.”

Moschella stepped down after the 2017-18 season with a career mark of 603-166 in 26 years and was an Altoona Mirror Coach of the Year six times. He had worked 43 years as vice president of the Warren Gingrich Insurance Agency.

Moschella said his coaching career would not have been possible without the backing of his wife of 47 years, Diane, and children Mark and Nikki.

“I would’ve stepped away if I wouldn’t have had their support,” he said, while also thanking the BG administration that included multiple athletic directors and principals during his reign.



Mark holds grandson Trent Query after BG’s title in 2010. Trent is currently on the golf team at Penn State Altoona.

He also deflected talk about himself when asked what being inducted into the Hall of Fame means to him.

“It’s a tribute to everyone that was involved in the program,” he said.

Moschella’s former players, though, would give him all the credit.

“Coach Mo knew the Xs and Os of basketball better than anyone, but that’s not what made him great,” Forr (Szoch) said. “What made him great was that he cared about each of his players far beyond the game of basketball. Coach knew how to push each of us to become the best basketball player we could be, but more importantly, he knew how to help us become the best person we could be.”



Mark’s staff included, from left: Pat Callahan, Rich Consiglio and Bill Adams.

## Moschella’s coaching record

<b>1991-92:</b> 19-11
<b>1992-93:</b> 30-1 (PIAA champ)
<b>1993-94:</b> 28-3 (PIAA runner-up)
<b>1994-95:</b> 23-8 (District 6 champ, PIAA runner-up)
<b>1995-96:</b> 14-13 (District 6 champ)
<b>1996-97:</b> 16-13
<b>1997-98:</b> 16-14
<b>1998-99:</b> 23-7 (District 6 champ, PIAA runner-up)
<b>1999-00:</b> 25-6
<b>2000-01:</b> 21-10 (District 6 champ)
<b>2001-02:</b> Year off sabbatical – team went 24-7
<b>2002-03:</b> 21-9
<b>2003-04:</b> 25-7 (PIAA runner-up)
<b>2004-05:</b> 26-5 (District 6 champ)
<b>2005-06:</b> 18-9
<b>2006-07:</b> 31-1 (District 6 champ, PIAA champ)
<b>2007-08:</b> 27-4 (District 6 champ)
<b>2008-09:</b> 30-1 (District 6 champ, PIAA champ)
<b>2009-10:</b> 30-0 (District 6 champ, PIAA champ)
<b>2010-11:</b> 29-2 (District 6 champ, PIAA runner-up)
<b>2011-12:</b> 24-3 (District 6 champ)
<b>2012-13:</b> 27-3 (District 6 champ)
<b>2013-14:</b> 23-6 (District 6 champ)
<b>2014-15:</b> 21-6
<b>2015-16:</b> 22-7
<b>2016-17:</b> 23-5
<b>2017-18:</b> 11-12
<b>Total: 603-166</b>