



NJSIAA TRAILBLAZER

The 50th Anniversary of the passage of Title IX has generated increased attention to the impact of the landmark legislation which brought unprecedented opportunities, support, and equality to female athletes.

Still, compliance with the law, particularly in its earlier years, often required a watchdog. And in New Jersey, no coach may be more associated with Title IX than retired Shore Regional coach Nancy Williams, who in her more than 40 years at the West Long Branch school was a record-setter while coaching six sports, most notably field hockey. She was also a constant fighter for equality for her teams and female athletes, as dictated by the Title IX law, which in part states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Williams, a recent selection to join the NJSIAA Hall of Fame, graduated from Shore Regional in 1966 and returned there as a teacher of physical education and driver's education immediately after her graduation from Trenton State College in 1970.

When she attended Shore Regional during the first half of the 1960s, there weren't competitive sports opportunities for girls, so she was a cheerleader. At Trenton State, she was able to participate in field hockey, gymnastics, and softball.

Starting as a teacher and coach at Shore with the 1970-71 school year, during her time there she served at various points as a coach in basketball, softball, track, and swimming in addition to field hockey, where she led the Blue Devils for 44 years from the founding of the program in 1970 through 2013.

Williams won 530 games and a state title over 31 years in softball, added 205 more victories and two Shore Conference championships over 13 seasons in basketball, and a state title in her four years leading the track team. But as impressive as those numbers are, they pale compared to what she accomplished in field hockey.

In her 44 years leading the team (1970-2013), the Blue Devils went 839-67-55, making her the winningest field hockey coach in United States history. Her final 43 teams won Shore Conference divisional championships, and her teams also won 19 Shore Conference Tournament championships (ending with a string of 15 straight) and 13 NJSIAA state championships.

"What you have to remember about Title IX is that the law was designed for women's equality in education," she told writer Mike Lamberti on the occasion of the law's 45th anniversary in 2017. "This was to give women an equal chance with men to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, what have you. It was about total equality."

As the number of girls participating in high school sports exploded nationally during the 1970s, Shore Regional saw its interest in girls' athletics rise as well. And all the while, Williams was a constant crusader for equality in attention, support, and funding.

"I saw it as an opportunity for girls to excel, not just athletically, but all around," she said. "I knew right away that it was ground-breaking."

Although she may now be retired, her legacy is still felt around Shore Regional. Among other things, the field hockey alumni created a scholarship fund in her honor, and the team competes on Nancy Williams Field.



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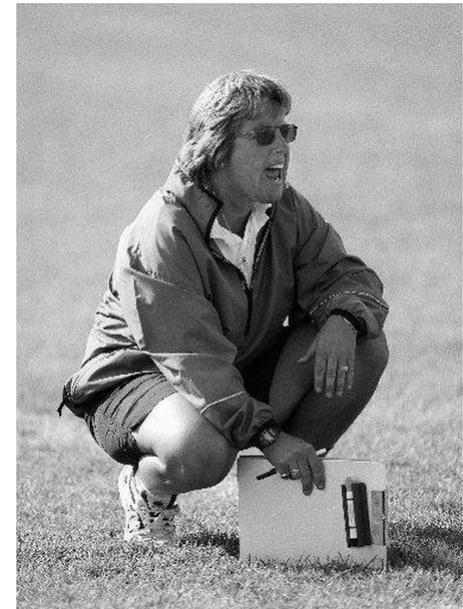


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