

# Women's History Month 2024

## Shelly Dearden

Some people seem born to coach. Shelly Dearden is one of them.

Not only did she coach a variety of sports, from high school to junior college to NCAA Division 1, she also won many championships along the way, including one that made significant history.

Dearden retired last year after more than three decades coaching at her alma mater, Ewing High school, where she was a star athlete (Class of 1981) before returning as a teacher and coach. In addition to her years at Ewing, she coached the women's soccer team at Mercer County College for a dozen years, plus a year of softball at the same school, as well as a year of women's volleyball at Rider University.

After a stellar soccer, basketball and softball career at Ewing, where she became the school's first 1,000 point girls basketball scorer, Dearden attended The College of New Jersey, where she graduated in 1985. During her time at TCNJ (then known as Trenton State), she was a standout in softball and basketball. She was a key contributor on the softball team that won the NCAA Division 3 championship in 1983, and also became the fourth 1,000 point scorer in school women's basketball history.

During her 34 years coaching at Ewing, she was believed to be the first coach in state history to win NJSIAA state championships in three sports - she coached the school to Group 3 titles in girls soccer in 1991, girls basketball in 1999, and then the big one - the Group 2 boys basketball championship in 2012.

After winning 243 games coaching the Ewing girls from 1988 through 2002, she was named the coach of the boys team in 2004. That was news in itself, since few women have ever coached boys teams in the history of New Jersey basketball.



*Photo credit: Mary Iuvone/NJ Advance Media*

The Ewing boys teams thrived under her leadership, most notably winning the Group 2 crown in 2012 with a 59-50 victory over Pascack Hills, an unprecedented achievement for a woman coach.

She retired from coaching the boys basketball team in 2019 after winning a total of six sectional championships. She also won four sectionals in girls soccer and four more in girls basketball.

When the boys basketball team struggled in the two seasons after her retirement, she came back to lead the team to winning seasons in 2021-22 and 2022-23 before retiring again with an overall boys basketball win total of 325.

She is a member of the Hall of Fame at both Ewing and TCNJ, as well as the Mercer County Basketball Hall of Fame.