

Women's History Month 2024

Virginia Whitaker

Virginia "Ginny" Whitaker was a women's sports pioneer in New Jersey, first as an athlete and then as a teacher, coach and ground-breaking administrator.

Born in 1932 in North Carolina, she moved to New Jersey as a young girl. She graduated from Haddon Heights in 1951 having participated in field hockey, basketball and softball during a time when athletic opportunities for girls was very limited.

She graduated from Temple University before embarking on a long and impactful career in education.

When the passage of Title IX, the federal legislation which granted unprecedented opportunities for female athletes, happened in 1972, Ginny was an ideal person to take on a leadership role.

In 1974, she was named athletic coordinator for Cherry Hill schools. With that job, she was in charge of athletics at Cherry Hill East, Cherry Hill West and three junior high schools.

The job was loaded with tasks, and all of it in age without technology to help. Instead of computers to aid in scheduling, bussing and the hiring of officials, she relied on an organized set of binders. And in terms of dealing with people, her personality was legendary, as was her mentoring of athletes and coaches.

In doing all of that, she became the first woman athletic director in South Jersey, and among the first in the state. And with Title IX in its infancy, and with the newly-created opportunities for girls meeting with some confusion and resistance, she was a fierce advocate creating not just opportunity, but respect for girl athletes.

She worked more than 30 years in Cherry Hill, and was an active during that time with the NJSIAA.



She was also among the first women to serve on the association's Executive Committee. She was part of the second induction class into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame, in 1997, making her one of the first six women to be so honored.

She also was inducted into several other Hall of Fames, including Haddon Heights, Camden County Sports, Cherry Hill West and South Jersey Women's Basketball. She also served for nine years on the Middle Township Board of Education.

Ginny passed away at age 82 in 2015.

She was involved with the Al Carino Basketball Club, which has promoted high school hoops for over 60 years in South Jersey. Ginny played an integral role in the creation of a girls chapter of the club, and was its first president. Upon her death, the club renamed its scholar-athlete award to the Virginia B. Whitaker Scholar-Athlete Award.

Her name stays current in other ways. Among them, the annual boys basketball holiday tournament at Cherry Hill West is named in her honor.