

Ruth Kellett

Ruth Kellett was truly a person ahead of her time, even though it wasn't all that long ago.

Born in 1945 in Paterson, she was a natural competitor at time when opportunities were clearly limited for girls. So when she was 11, she became the Paterson All-School Checkers Tournament champion.

She later lived in Pompton Lakes, and played as many sports whenever or wherever she could.

She was one of the first physical education majors at Paterson State College (now William Paterson) and aside from being a basketball star, was of 10 females to graduate with the initial class of phys ed majors in 1968.

She immediately landed a job at Pequannock High School, where she left an incredible impact as teacher, coach and administrator for over 30 years. It also became Ruth's home town for the remainder of her life.

She not only taught there for over 30 years, she won 299 games as the girls basketball coach from 1968 through 1988. That happened after she joined the school at the same time as another staff member, Carole Schoen. Both wanted to coach basketball, so they flipped a coin to determine who would. Ruth won, and got the job. Carole instead became the field hockey coach, a post she held for the next 43 years.

In those early years, the Morris County boys basketball tournament was launched. The idea for starting a girls tournament was met with major resistance by higher-ups who thought it would be a failure. But in 1975, Ruth and two other coaches - Marge Giles from Butler and Pat Vytell of Montville - took charge and made the girls MCT a reality.



Photo credit: Danielle Austen/Daily Record

Ruth also became one of the first female athletic directors in New Jersey when she took over that position at Pequannock through most of the 1980s. She also represented Morris County on the NJSIAA Executive Committee.

Her 300th basketball victory came in 1992, when she became the first woman in the state to lead a boys program. She would serve as the Pequannock boys coach for two years.

She coached several other sports at Pequannock, including softball and golf. Although she retired from teaching in 1999, she remained as golf coach through 2007.

Ruth passed away at age 76 on Sept. 17, 2022. In 2024, the Pequannock gymnasium was named in her honor.

