

100 Best Coaches + Ties

A young follower once told Dr. James A. Naismith, inventor of the game of basketball, that he wanted to be a coach. "You can't coach basketball," Naismith told him, "You just play it." Naismith could not have been more wrong. Experience quickly showed that a full-time, paid, professional coach resulted in more wins for his team. Still, coaches only became *de rigeur* among Minnesota high schools around 1920-1925. Before then, the physical education establishment simply couldn't educate enough coaches, or fast enough. But, from then until now, coaches have had a huge impact on the game and on the kids who play it.

The drill sergeant remains the predominant role model for the coaching profession. Command and control. Tough love. They say of course that coaches today have to be more sympathetic. Who knows? But, teams today are going without a post, something that would have been inconceivable through much of basketball history. Tomorrow, they may be playing without a point guard. But every now and then you see a summer team without a coach. It is usually ugly. Yes, sir, the coach is here to stay.

The numbers here are updated through the end of the 2021 season.

Rank, Name & Schools	W-L, Pct.	Tournaments	State Titles	Other Highlights
1. Ken Novak, Jr., Hopkins	907-162, .848	17	2002, 2005-2006, 2009-2011, 2016, 2019	A record 39 state tournament wins. Won 20 games or more for 28 straight years (1993-2020).
2 (tie). Bob McDonald, Chisholm	1,012-428, .703	11	1973, 1975, 1991	Played college ball at Michigan. Only coach to win a state title after induction into MBCA Hall of Fame. McDonald died due to COVID in 2020 at age 87.
2 (tie). Harvey Roels, Chisholm	499-170, .746	7	1934	

				Retired at #1. Kept the up-tempo game alive during the dead ball era. He died in 1967 at the age of 74.
3. Russell "Butsie" Maetzold, Hopkins	508-62, .891	5	1952, 1953	Won 16 letters at Hamline. Only 479 of the oft-cited 508 wins have been documented so he retired at #1 or #3. He also went 88-6-5 in football. He played in 3 tournaments and won 2 titles (1920-1922) as a player. He died in 1982.
4. Jim Hastings, Duluth Central	541-236, .696	9	1961, 1971, 1979	Retired at #2, 2 nd coach to win 3 state titles. Died in 2014 at the age of 90.
5. John Nett, Winona Cotter	580-297, .661	5 MSHSL, plus 6 times in the Catholic tournament final	1977, 1982	A 3-time letterman at St. Mary's, and played on their 1940 MIAC champions. Retired at #1, with 2 titles and 3 runnersup in 9 years. Charter member MBCA Hall of Fame.
6. Tom Vix, Rushford-Peterson	684-239, .749	16	1989, 2006, 2015	
7. Jack Evens, Bloomington Jefferson	554-193, .742	8	1976, 1982, 1986-1987	Led the WIAC in scoring twice at Wisconsin-Superior. 1 st coach to win 4 state titles.
8. Dave Thorson, DeLaSalle	527-136, .795	15		Thorson, a South Dakota native, played college ball at Hamline. He won 20 straight

			1998-1999, 2006, 2012- 2017	conference titles at DeLaSalle, and once won 72 straight conference games.
9 (tie). Ove Berven, Austin	462 wins	14	1946, 1958	Berven retired at #4, Fortier at #8. Both charter members MBCA Hall of Fame. Their co-record of 14 state tournament appearances stood for almost 50 years. Fortier also had a then-record 7 straight appearances 1963-1969. He died in 1982 at the age of 70. Fortier died in 2001 at the age of 84.
9 (tie). Clarence "Bun" Fortier, Bemidji	424-92, .822	14		
10. Ziggy Kauls, Mounds View	739-357, .674	12	1972, 1999	Ziggy played his college ball at Hamline under the legendary Joe Hutton. He retired at #3 in wins, and is still #5 today.
11. Larry McKenzie, Minneapolis Patrick Henry, Minneapolis North	430-142, .752	9	Henry 2000-2003, North 2016-2017	1 st coach to win 4 straight state titles. Now, 3 rd with 6 overall.
12. Lloyd Holm, Red Wing, Duluth Denfeld, St. Louis Park	542-244, .690	4	Denfeld 1947, St. Louis Park 1962	Some records show his win total as 514. Retired at #2 or #3. 1 st coach to win state titles at 2 different schools. Charter member MBCA Hall of Fame. Was Ove Berven's roommate at Luther College. He died in 2005 at the age of 93.
	481-227, .679	6		

13. Herman Woock, Crosby- Ironton				Retired at #2. He also coached 4 straight unbeaten football teams, several track relay state champions and a state Legion baseball champion. He played pro baseball, and pitched in MN amateur ball until he was 52. He is a member of the MN amateur baseball Hall of Fame.
14. Dick Reinhart, DeLaSalle	373-107, .777	Probably 16 or 18 Catholic tournaments	Catholic titles 1954- 1957, 1959, 1961-1962	373 wins was #9 at the time. He died in 2021 at the age of 91.
15. Ray Parkins, Duluth Central, Minneapolis Edison		6	1937	His 1937 Edison team was regarded as the greatest to that time. He retired in 1943. Parkins also officiated games among the teachers' colleges throughout the 1930s.
16. Chet Bisel, Lynd	344-155, .689	1		Bisel's 1946 Lynd runners-up were famous for their fast-breaking style. Bisel moved to Butterfield in 1950 and coached for 6 more years before becoming superintendent. He was probably in the top 5 in wins at retirement.
17. Vern Simmons, St. Paul Johnson	358-135, .726	8	2010	Also played in the tournament for St. Thomas. He retired in 2020 after 20 years at the helm.
		7	1928-1929	

18. Glenn Hanna, Moorhead				Hanna played college ball at Valley City State. His record of 6 straight tournaments stood for more than 30 years. (Moorhead went to 8 straight tournaments, 6 under Hanna.) 1 st coach and team to repeat as champions.
19. John Oxton, Lakeville North	662-331, .667	12	2014	8 straight tournaments 2012-2019. 2 big upsets of Hopkins including 2014 final.
20. Bob Brink, Rocori	936-327, .741	13	1988	A South Dakota native, Brink passed away in 2021 at the age of 84.
21. Del Schiffler, Melrose, Woodbury	475-138, .775	6	Melrose 1974, Woodbury 1983	2 nd coach to win state titles at 2 different schools. Schiffler died in 2000 at the age of 59.
22 (tie). Leonard Froyen, Braham	402-176, .696			#8 at retirement. Never got to a state tournament, having to compete vs. St. Paul teams in Region 4 in the single class era. Froyen died in 2003 at the age of 97.
22 (tie). Bob Vaughan, Braham	632-171, .787	7	2004-2006	Vaughan retired in 2015 after 34 years teaching and coaching at Braham.
23. Fred Kellett, Brainerd	368-130, .739	4	1954	Michigan native Kellett attended Marquette, then Moorhead State. He taught and coached at Brainerd from 1946 through 1977. He died in 1997 at the age of 81.

24. Frank Cleve, Minneapolis Patrick Henry		2	1944-1945	Cleve played in the 1920 state tournament for Minneapolis South. He then taught Jim McIntyre how to play the game. Previously coached Concordia to its 1 st MIAC title. First coach ever elected to football coaches Hall of Fame. He died in 1970 at the age of 70.
25. Lloyd Stussy, Wells	522-209, .714	3		Retired at #2. Charter member MBCA Hall of Fame. Stussy died in 2003 at the age of 85.
26. Ed Prohofsky, Minneapolis Marshall-U	161-31, .838	3	1976	Prohofsky attended St. Paul Humboldt and the U of MN. Began his coaching career in the army. Won 53 straight games in 1975-1977. Later became the "father of adapted sports" in Minnesota.
27. Louis Todnem, Mankato	442-196, .693	9		Founded the Big 9 conference. "Louie" died in 1997 at the age of 98. His wife Mary was a letterwinner in basketball at Mankato State in 1925. She lived to 99.
28. Len Horyza, Cretin	553-241, .697	Several Catholic tournament s plus 7 MSHSL tournament s	Catholic champion 1971, 1974; MSHSL champion 1991, 1993	Retired at #6, after writing the best-seller, <i>The Pick-and-Screen Offense for Winning Basketball</i> . Everybody knew what coach Horyza was going to do, and he beat you anyway. He played college ball at St. Thomas (1954), where he is a Hall of Famer. He died in 1995 at the young age of 62.

29. Jerry Snyder, Lake City	574-245, .701	4	1979-1980, 1990	
30 (tie). Al Wold, Faribault, Rochester John Marshall	482-297, .619	5	1969	Wold was the best coach Faribault ever had. So says Jim Ohnstad (1965) and father or Mitch and Chris. He would know. Wold died in 2016 at the age of 90.
30 (tie). Orris Jirele, Rochester Lourdes, Albert Lea	271-166, .620	At least 3 Catholic tourneys	Catholic titles 1966, 1967, 1968	Led Austin Pacelli to the 1958 Catholic state title, and played college ball at St. Bonaventure. The Bonnies were rated as high as #3 in the nation at the time. He won 3 Big 9 titles at Albert Lea. He died in 2013 at the age of 73.
31. Edwin McKee, St. Paul Mechanic Arts	125-38, .762	2	1925	The dean of early St. Paul coaches, still #1 in winning percentage in the city conference.
32. Mario Retica, Austin St. Augustine, Buhl, Hibbing	362-154, .702	6	Buhl 1942	The Iron Range native (Virginia), also won 3 so-called Catholic championships but they were actually southern MN regional titles. Retired at about #10 in career wins. Retica passed away in 1995 at the age of 83.
33. Mark Klingsporn, Tartan	614-263, .700	9	2000	Set a record, since tied, with 8 straight state tournament appearances, and had 22 straight 20-win seasons, #2 all-time.
		5		

34. Duane Baglien, Fergus Falls, Edina			Edina 1966-1968	1 st coach to win 3 titles. 13-2 vs. state tournament competition. Died in 2011 at age 85.
35. George Roberts, DeLaSalle			Catholic champion 1927; National Catholic champion 1931	Roberts pioneered athletics at DeLaSalle.
36. Marty Crowe, Austin Pacelli		Several Catholic tourneys	Catholic title 1958	Crowe grew up in Stillwater, and played baseball at St. Thomas. He coached at 7 different high schools, and also won a couple of Catholic titles in Wisconsin. He also coached the Manitowoc Chiefs semi-pro football team. Crowe died in 1999 at the age of 85.
37. Wes Mitchell, Minneapolis Central		3	1921	Mitchell graduated from WI-Stout, and later coached the Minnesota Gophers for one season. He died in 1962 at the age of 71.
38. John Carlson, Litchfield	469-307, .604	5	2000, 2002-2003	
39. Dave Galovich, Crosby-Ironton	754-370, .667	8		Passed Ziggy Kauls to become the #4 winningest coach in state history.

40. Lynn Peterson, Staples-Motley	683-250, .732	11		Retired at #5.
41. Franz Boelter, Faribault Bethlehem	613-290, .679	4		A graduate of Mankato State, Boelter played baseball in college, but not basketball or volleyball. #9 all-time. He also coached Bethlehem Academy to 9 state volleyball titles. He once said that the first volleyball match that he coached was also the first one he had ever seen.
42. Dave Cresap, Perham	626-281, .690	4	2011	
43 (tie). Tony Queen, Minneapolis North	194-28, .874	7	1980	Tied the then-record of 7 straight state tournaments.
43 (tie). Robin Ingram, Minneapolis North		6	1995-1997	
44. Bruce Kugath, Shakopee	570-289, .664	7	2005	6 straight state tournaments 2000-2005.
45. Jim Galvin, White Bear Lake	346-282, .551	3	1984, 1985	
	403-144, .736	6	2012	

46. Tim Theisen, Osseo				3OT win over Hopkins in 2012 denied the Royals a 4 th straight title.
47. Kris Fadness, Caledonia, Austin	487-252, .659	8	Caledonia 1997	
48. Wayne Courtney, Minneapolis Roosevelt	235-73, .763	2	1956-1957	Jimmy Robinson said he was the best coach he ever saw. Tom Nordland thought otherwise. "None of us did anything in college. He didn't teach us the fundamentals." He was described as "pugnacious." He "grabbed jerseys and got in players' faces." He played football and tennis at Mankato State. He also served as mayor and on the city council of Edina from 1966 to 1988. He died in 1997 at the age of 88.
49. Zach Goring, Apple Valley	255-94, 731	5	2013, 2015, 2017	
50. Dan Brink, St. Paul Central, St. Paul Como Park	426-246, .634	9		
51. Hugo Goehle, Hills-Beaver Creek	539-220, .710			A graduate of South Dakota, Goehle retired at #7 in coaching wins in Minnesota. He was also 135-44-1 in football. He died in 1997 at the age of 72.
	545-198, .733	5		

52. Gary Schuler, Warren, Fergus Falls				
53. Rich Decker, Kenyon, Rochester Lourdes, Rochester Mayo	527-203, .722	4		
54. Mike Sjoberg, St. Thomas	395-155, .718	6	1998, 2007	
55. David Flom, Eden Prairie	370-144, .720	7		2020 team was 28-0 and clearly Minnesota's best team, but state tournament cancelled due to COVID.
56. Arnold "Judge" Veglahn, St. James	396-257, .606	3	1972	Veglahn passed away in 2015 at the age of 92.
57. Jeffrey Wall, Maranatha	616-273, .693	4		15 straight 20 win seasons, 2001-2015.
58. Ken Novak, Sr., Hopkins Lindbergh	459-231, .665	1		Novak played in several state tournaments at Crosby-Ironton, then played college ball at St. Cloud State. He is of course the father of and was long-time assistant to Ken Novak, Jr., until his death in 2021 at the age of 92.

59. Manny Beckman, Waseca	489-264, .649	4		Beckman won 11 letters in football, basketball and track at Mankato State, where he is a member of the Hall of Fame. He died in 2016 at the age of 85.
60 (tie). Dave Tank, Anoka	313-191, .621	3	1981, 1992	
60 (tie). Bill Wanamaker, Anoka	278-152, .646	4	1973	Wanamaker graduated from Anoka high in 1944, then taught and coached there for 25 years. He played basketball at Hamline under coach Joe Hutton. He passed away in 2015.
61 (tie). Darrel Kreun, Sibley East	587-217, .730	3		
61 (tie). Richie Olson, Edgerton, Virginia	241-85, .739	3	1960	Coached Kreun at Edgerton.
62. Al Andreotti, Hayfield, St. Cloud Tech	521-222, .701	5		
63. Kirk Thompson, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, Rochester John Marshall	491-226, .684	5	Plainview-Elgin-Millville 2012	

64. Bob Erdman, Alexander Ramsey	401-152, .725	4		Later coached at Gustavus.
65. Rex Haugen, Pelican Rapids	467-289, .618	3	1984	
66. Harold "Buff" Taylor, Aurora		1	1923	Was soon hired by the Minnesota Gophers.
67. Hartvick "Shocky" Strand, Moorhead		2		Shocky Strand lettered in 4 sports at Concordia, then coached Elbow Lake to an undefeated football season. He came to Moorhead in 1951, and coached the Spuds to state track titles in 1967 and 1968. He is a charter member MBCA Hall of Fame. He died in 2010 at the age of 87.
68. Rich Odell, Virginia	571-379, .601	2		11 straight 20 win seasons 2008-2018.
69. Ron Hested, Kenyon, Fairmont	506-260, .661	2		
70. Ron Ueland, Marshall County Central	534-331, .617			
71. Merv Sheplee, New Prague	505-261, .659	3		

72 (tie). Barry Wohler, Marshall, Orono	486-258, .653	5	Orono 2011	Jerry coached son Barry to 2 state titles, then Barry coached son Brady to a state title.
72 (tie). Jerry Wohler, Bird Island-Lake Lillian	322-138, .700	2	1980-1981	
73. Mike Devney, Carlton, Esko	474-173, .733	5	Esko 2014	8 straight 20 win seasons 2011-2018
74. Louis Mitteco, Totino Grace	542-292, .650	4		
75. Mike Jerabek, Prior Lake	350-213, .622	3	1977-1978	
76. Archie Skalbeck, Stephen, Sleepy Eye, Virginia, St. Paul Washington		3		Skalbeck won 10 letters at Gustavus, and helped them to the MIAC basketball title in 1925 and 1926. He died in 1960 at the age of 55.
77. Lance Johnson, Minnehaha	570-217, .724	9	2013, 2017- 2019, 2021	
78. Wally Chapman, Appleton,		4		Chapman played ball at the U of M. His Minneapolis Marshall teams were favored in 1939 and 1940 but both lost in 2 of the

Minneapolis Marshall				biggest upsets of the era. He died in 2003 at the age of 96, and was thought to be the oldest living "M" man.
79. Alfred Jackson, Virginia		4	1916	
80. Dan Elhard, Grand Rapids	292-137, .681	9		
81. Ron Larson, St. Francis	473-353, .573	3		
82. Duane Mutschler, Stillwater	387-230, .627	7		Mutschler played ball at Kiester High School and Winona State.
83. Ted Pelzl, New Richland- Hartland- Ellendale-Geneva	520-308, .628			
84. Hartley Story, Walnut Grove, Thief River Falls, Osseo		2		Helped Walnut Grove to a then-record 72 straight home court wins. He died in 2020 at the age of 95.
85. Harry Nelson, St. Paul Washington	237-187, .559	2	1943	

86. Irwin "Irv" St. John, Duluth East		5		St. John played ball at Bemidji High and Bemidji State. He coached in Baudette, Warren and Duluth, where he won 6 conference titles and also started the soccer program. St. John died in 2015, two days after his 83 rd birthday.
87 (tie). Joe Odanovich, Crosby-Ironton		3		Odanovich graduated from Crosby-Ironton High and St. Cloud State, where he won 12 athletic letters. He coached at Wayzata, New Prague, Crosby-Ironton, St. Paul Murray and Alexander Ramsey. He died in 2003 at the age of 87.
87 (tie). Bill Selisker, Sauk Centre, Crosby-Ironton	304-163, .651	3		Selisker hailed from Brainerd and played college ball at Hamline and St. Cloud State, with a stint in the army in between. He died in 2010 at the age of 74.
88. Dave Montbriand, Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa	447-222, .653	3	2012, 2014	Montbriand played in the state tournament for Bloomington Jefferson. When the new, consolidated BBE schools were created, he saw to it that they were called the Jaguars.
89. Kraig Ulveling, Red Wing	358-150, .705	6		6 straight state tournaments 1999-2004
90. Tim Anderson, Maple River, Mankato West	408-168, .708	3		

91. Ed Cassidy, DeLaSalle, Simley, St. Bernard's	407-191, .681	7	Simley 1997	7 tournaments with 3 different schools.
92 (tie). Douglas DesJarlait, Red Lake	264-53, .833	5		
92 (tie). Dan Ninham, Cass Lake-Bena	266-154, .633	5		
93. Jack Campbell, Slayton, Anoka	300-105, .741	1		
94. Al Baumann, Little Falls	371-174, .681	3	1975	
95. Wade Grinde, Spring Grove	538-192, .737	2		
96. Loy Bowe, Winona	142-94, .602	4		Bowe taught and coached at Winona, but later operated a Culligan water service business in Northfield. He died in 1972 at the age of 74.
97 (tie). Mike McDonald, Cambridge	497-455, .522	3		

97 (tie). Tom McDonald, Ely	535-313, .631	1		
98 (tie). Levain Carter, Minneapolis Central, Minneapolis South	371-76, .830	3		
98 (tie). Whitey Thorson, Minneapolis Central		2		
99. Jeff Wagner, Waterville- Elysian- Morristown	546-144, .791			
100. Mark Torgerson, Morris	565-307, .648			