

## **Coach Ed Bailey – Athletic Coaching Inductee Holton Coaching Career: 1974 - 1994**

A graduate of Portage Northern High School and Western Michigan University, Ed Bailey came to Holton Public Schools to accept a teaching position in August of 1974. An athlete with a love for basketball, Coach Bailey originally accepted the varsity volleyball coaching position on an interim basis with the hopes that a head basketball coaching position would become available. Coach Bailey would coach men's and women's basketball for several years, along with men's track and field, freshmen football, and softball, before being presented with the opportunity to coach the varsity volleyball team in 1980. While his interest in the sport was limited at first, Coach Bailey spent countless hours being a student of the game by attending sport camps and clinics with every chance that he could take. Coach Bailey used this time to learn from some of the state and area's best volleyball coaches, working to be the best coach and mentor to student athletes that he could be. In an interview with the Local Sports Journal, Coach Bailey shared, "I fell in love with the sport. It's not only physically challenging, but a mental game. Any team can beat any team with the right attitude." It was this attitude that propelled Coach Bailey and his teams to the paramount of success.

By the early 1990's, Coach Bailey had developed Holton's volleyball program into an elite powerhouse program that opposing teams and coaches revered as being one of the best in the area and throughout the state. Described by one journalist as the "uncontested ruler" of the Newaygo County Athletic Association (NCAA), opposing players have been quoted as saying, "They were so good they would embarrass you." The Lady Red Devils, led by Coach Bailey, had won Newaygo County Athletic Association titles in 1992, 1993, and 1994. Coach Bailey's teams also won district tournament titles during those same years, and also won the Greater Muskegon City Volleyball Tournament in 1993 and 1994, with regional titles during that time. In 1992, the Lady Red Devils, led by Coach Bailey, amassed a record of 35 wins, 7 losses, with 8 split decisions, and had become the first women's team in any sport to win a District Championship at Holton. "On to State" became the team's focus, and by the following year, the Lady Red Devils were Class C Lower Peninsula State Runners-up in 1993, before returning to the finals to win the 1994 Class C Lower Peninsula Women's Volleyball Championship. In 2013, Coach Bailey and the 1994 Lady Red Devils' Volleyball Team became the first volleyball team to be inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame, earning unanimous support from several long-time volleyball coaching greats as being the first area volleyball team to be honored by the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame.

In 15 seasons as the head varsity volleyball coach, Coach Bailey accumulated a record of 276-166-32, highlighted by the 1994 season, where the team amassed an impressive 55-2-1 record en route to the Class C Lower Peninsula Women's Volleyball State Championship. Revered as one of the most athletic groups of dedicated female athletes in the history of Holton High School, the 1994 team, led by Coach Bailey, finished with a two year record of 111-5-3 over the 1993 and 1994 seasons, for a near 0.950 winning percentage, while also winning 47 straight. The volleyball team amassed an amazing 148-12-6 record over a three year period of time during the 1992 – 1994 seasons, again being led by Coach Bailey. For Coach Bailey's leadership and development of the Holton volleyball program, he was selected as the Michigan Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association (MIVCA) Class C Coach of the Year in 1994, and was awarded the Muskegon Chronicle Class C/D Coach of the Year in 1992, 1993, and 1994.

While Coach Bailey was always quick to give credit to the phenomenal athletes that he coached and mentored, pointing to the student athletes as the "secret of his success," former players for Coach Bailey would argue that it was Coach Bailey that was responsible for his team's amazing success. All-state outside hitter, Jennifer Thornton was quoted as saying, "We owe the majority of our success to him. Mr. Bailey is why we are where we are at right now. He's shown us just about everything that we know." Coach Bailey earned the respect of the student athletes that he coached, and would go on to later take over a troubled volleyball program at Muskegon Community College, where he made the program a consistent winner, and would continue on to various other coaching stops along his career, having built successful winning programs with every opportunity that was presented to him and his teams.