

The Pueblo Chieftain

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May 21, 2008

South's Harrison retires after 18 seasons



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/FILE Longtime South High School girls basketball coach Jim Harrison works the sidelines during one of the games in his 18 seasons guiding the Colts.

Colts coach won three-consecutive state girls basketball titles.

By **TOM PURFIELD**
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

One of Pueblo's great high school coaching careers has come to an end.

Jim Harrison retired after 18 seasons as the South High School girls basketball coach.

"Life's been good," Harrison said. "The time is right and you know when it's time to go."

Harrison's success has been unrivaled by any other prep basketball coach in the city's history. His start couldn't have been much better, as the Colts went 108-7 during his first five years, including back-to-back-to-back Class 4A state championships from 1992-94.

No other Pueblo basketball team Ñ boys or girls Ñ has won even two consecutive state titles. "Talk

about living the dream, I had it. It would have been very easy to quit after those five years," Harrison said. "I've had great kids, we worked hard and had common goals. We just wanted to be the best."

The Colts were certainly that in Pueblo for much of Harrison's career. The bookend years to the trifecta of state championships were narrow losses in the semifinals and South didn't lose a South-Central League game for more than seven years. In addition to the state titles, Harrison's Colts reached the Final Four and Elite 8 four times each.

Harrison leaves South with a 352-80 career record, winning an impressive 82 percent of his games. He was the 1994 Colorado Coach of the Year and was named S-CL coach of the year 10 times.

He was inducted into the Greater Pueblo Sports Association Hall of Fame in 2006.

"I've always said since I started coaching basketball that if I could become half the coach Jim Harrison is, I'd be a great coach," said East girls basketball coach Ben Garcia, who has coached against Harrison the longest of any remaining S-CL coach. "When it comes to Xs and Os, what had to happen in a game, he knew it all. Jimmy was a natural and a great coach, somebody I looked up to.

"I think a lot of us coaches thought if we could get our programs up to what Jimmy ran, we'd be pretty good."

In 2006, Harrison retired from a 31-year teaching career in physical education. He and his wife of 35 years, Jackie, have two sons, Todd and Brandon.

Harrison also had a distinguished 25-year officiating career in basketball, working his way up to becoming one of the top refs in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference. He was a standout point guard at South and the University of Southern Colorado.

Harrison had a stable-full of standout players, led by Dee Dee Dominguez, Nadia Lopez, Tia Morenz, Shiloh Justice, Timmi-Jo Miller and Lisa Siders. He credits much of his success to assistant coaches Bruce Colvin, Tim Mondragon, Regina Pollard, Michelle Thomas, Michelle Dilorio and Shannon Lane.

"I've had some super kids, hard-working kids, and I've had super people to work with, great assistant coaches," Harrison said. "If you surround yourself with good people, it's not hard to have a really good program.

"I'm proud of everything we've accomplished at South. It's been great."