



NJSIAA Trailblazer

During a career that spanned more than 70 years on the New Jersey basketball scene, Dr. Rose Battaglia was more than just a trailblazing figure.

With her coaching success, commitment to give back to the game and her overall warmth, she was one of the most beloved figures in the history of female athletics in the Garden State. The culmination of her life's devotion to the sport came in 2018, when she was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Known affectionately to many simply as "Dr. Rose," she died in November, 2020 at the age of 91. She was active up until her death, as she worked with the NJSIAA as director of the girls basketball Tournament of Champions seeding committee, along with several other functions associated with the smooth operation of the state tournament. Throughout her life, she also took great pride in mentoring not just her former players, but many others she met in her travels.

Her career began in the 1940s. She was a player at Panzer College in East Orange, which later merged with Montclair State. She loved passing along stories of those days of women's basketball, which included six players on the court and other archaic rules that existed because the male rule makers didn't think women could handle the rigors of the sport like men could.

Her first teaching job came when she was fresh out of college in the early 1950s at St. Michael's High School in Union City, where one of her students was Tom Heinsohn, who would later be inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player and coach. It was there that she took on the job of coaching the girls basketball team for a salary of \$200.

She would next become coach at Benedictine Academy in Elizabeth before returning for a second stint at St. Michael's. Her most noteworthy success came at Paramus Catholic, where in 12 seasons ending in 1983, her teams went 274-26, winning numerous NJSIAA and Bergen County championships while becoming a national powerhouse with the help of players like the legendary Anne Donovan, who became an inductee into the Naismith Hall of Fame. Amazingly, during many of those years, she served concurrently as coach at Bergen County College where her teams also won several championships. She ended her coaching career in 1989 after several years as head coach at Iona College. Her final record as a high school coach was 412-105, and including her college career, she won more than 700 games.

Her list of honors and accolades was extensive. In addition to her national Hall of Fame honor, she was a charter inductee into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame in 1996. She was national girls basketball Coach of the Year in 1979, received lifetime achievement awards from the Women's Basketball Coaches Association in 1998 and the New Jersey Collegiate Basketball Coaches Association in 2000 and was inducted into several other Hall of Fames. Paramus Catholic named its gym in her honor in 2019 during a ceremony that brought back many former players to spend time and reminisce with their coach and role model.

