

Friend's Paul Martin: It's more than a game
by Lee De Bevoise

Talking with Friend's Head Basketball Coach, Paul Martin, it does not take long to see where his passions lie. It also becomes quite evident that basketball is more than a game to him. Martin lives in Friend with his wife, Lori, and his son, Kyle.

The then 23 year-old Martin joined the Friend Public School as both a social studies teacher and the head basketball coach for the 1988-89 season. In his 20-year career with the Bulldogs, he has had 15 consecutive winning seasons amassing just shy of 270 wins, and a trip to the State Tournament in 2004.

"I had to grow up quickly," Martin explained. "It was overwhelming at times."

Would he have done anything differently? "I would have handled certain situations differently ... the things that you tell players," Martin stated. "The words come out and you can't put them back in. I didn't understand the impact that my words had."

Enjoyable moments? According to him, "Our success in the Crossroads Tournaments in York. We won it three years in a row, 1994-1996. Several team members even came back to my house and we watched one of our wins over again!"

Another special Bulldog moment for Coach Martin was the 2004 District Championship and going to the State Tournament. "We had a 10-point lead going into the fourth quarter against a team that was ranked #2 in the state. I had to pinch myself - it just didn't seem real. The team played extremely well in the fourth quarter," he explained.

"I believe that the teams in mid-1990s would have also had a chance to go to the State Tournament if the wildcard had been in place," Martin added.

He explained, "I have been blessed with fine athletes, and good families to work with. Overall, the parents have really been good to work with. One of the reasons for our success has been good parents who were behind the team."

When asked what his goals were for the next five years, Coach Martin responded, "A turnaround from this year. We have young, inexperienced fine athletes. For them to have success and to compete in the District and State."

"It's been fun coaching my son [Kyle]," he added.

Does Martin love coaching? "I enjoy its competitive nature. It's like a chess game," he explained. "You wonder if your decision will counter the other coach's action. I also enjoy the relationships with the boys."

"Tom Osborne and Ron Brown are my coaching models. I think that it was Coach Osborne who said, you need to enjoy the journey and not get caught up in the score or record," stated Martin. "The boys on this year's team have a very good attitude."

According to him, "It's exciting and fun to watch my previous players grow in careers and family, and become positive contributing citizens."

You really need to have a passion to be a coach. As Martin explained, "There are rewards and challenges being a coach. Since you spend a great deal of time with your team, it can be a challenge for and with your family. You have to

be a teacher and a motivator. You need to remain competitive and have a thick skin.”

“God has really blessed myself and the teams over the years,” stated Martin. “I wouldn’t be near the person I am without Him. I’m also grateful to the community for the opportunity to coach Friend basketball for 20 years.”

What more can anyone say but, Go Dawgs!