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Sun Prairie boys basketball

## Jeff Boos steps down as boys basketball coach

Jeff Boos has been the leader of the Sun Prairie boys basketball team for the past 27 seasons. On Monday, he decided to step away.

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Jeff Boos has stepped down as head coach of the Sun Prairie boys basketball team.

Jim Garvey/garveyimages.com

Jeff Boos has stepped down as the head boys basketball coach at Sun Prairie High School. The basketball lifer dedicated 40 years of his life to coaching basketball, including 27 as the leader of the Sun Prairie Cardinals. A career as illustrious as his was provides certain insights, but nothing on or off the court could have prepared him for when to say goodbye to his longest tenured position. In the end, he went with his gut.

“You never really know, but this feels like the best time for me,” Boos said. “The schools are splitting, there’s a new vision here. This is a new opportunity for someone else to do something special here. I was fortunate enough to do something special here with what I believed to be the correct formula. Now, there may be a new idea or new formula that transpires here. It doesn’t matter what coach stands in front of these kids, I just care that basketball is always provided to them.”

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Boos built Sun Prairie's program from the bottom up. The Cardinals were consistent Big Eight conference doormats when he took the position in 1994, and that trend continued for a bit. He would have just two winning seasons in his first 15 years at the helm. For Boos, it taught some valuable lessons.

"Nothing is ever given to you," Boos said. "That's life. We hung in there and kept moving the dial a bit more every year, continuing to get buy in from the kids. It was never just me. The assistants, the youth program, the families. Everyone kept moving forward and stayed the course."

Something finally clicked. Soon, Sun Prairie became a force to be reckoned with not only in the Big Eight, but in the state of Wisconsin. In his time as head coach, Boos would win six conference championships and won conference Coach of the Year four times. This success translated to postseason wins as his teams would play in 17 regional championships, 12 sectionals, and three sectional championships.

Boos' career reached a 2-year crescendo starting in 2017. This was the first of back-to-back trips to the state tournament, the first such appearances in school history. In 2018-19, his Cardinals would advance all the way to the championship game, taking home the Silver Ball. Boos was named the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) and USA Today Coach of the Year following that 2018-19 season.

For his career, Boos compiled an overall record of 452-389, including a 224-218 record in conference play. He was a 2020 inductee into the WBCA Hall of Fame for his efforts. A career as decorated as his comes down to constant dedication and direction.

“I worked with passion,” Boos said. “We committed ourselves to working every day with determination. You don’t want to define yourself as a basketball coach, you have to define yourself as a person. I think I’m a man of integrity that does what’s right. Growing young men is part of that process and I’ve been fortunate to have unbelievable kids through many communities come through my gym. I’m very thankful for that.”

Monday, July 11 marked Boos’ official announcement that he was stepping down. Boos gathered his players together, whom he was still training and working with as part of the school’s summer program. Even though he’s stepping down, Boos continues to work with his former players. That’s just the kind of coach he is.

“These guys are only going to play basketball for a short period of time,” Boos said. “But they’ll be men for the rest of their lives. I didn’t feel it would be right or set the right example for them to simply walk away without finishing what I promised them.”

As he steps away, Boos was vocally thankful for the people who have been with him along the way. His family came up most frequently in his reflection, citing that he never could have done any of this without their constant support. Outside of them, Boos has run across plenty of other major influences in his time coaching basketball, from assistants to mentors and everything in between.

“The beauty of this profession is that you get to meet so many unbelievable people,” Boos said. “That’s just been really, really awesome. I’ve been able to learn from them, not only about X’s and O’s, but how to be a leader. It’s made my time in Sun Prairie enjoyable as I continued to learn, build the program, and relate to the kids. I was fortunate. Not every coach gets that.”

Boos' impact on the basketball world was evident with the outpouring of support and well-wishes following the news breaking on Monday. He saw it all, and was thankful for it all.

"Those relationships I've built have been special," Boos said. "When you get back together and reflect on the past, you don't talk about the games you played or what the final scores were. It's about the locker room, it's about the bus trips.

Remembering the good times. Those experiences are so valuable. I'm really thankful for the gestures and outreach from everyone on social media or in person. It's an honor. Humility becomes an important part of anything you do. We've been humbled here too, that's part of growth."

Basketball has dominated Boos' life for 40 years. As he steps away from Sun Prairie, the most persistent memory isn't the roar of a big crowd or the pressure of a state championship game. It's the work he did when no one was looking.

"I'll miss being in the gym," Boos said. "Development has always been the backbone of what we try to do. We want to develop our players as not only basketball players, but as young men. That's a piece I really enjoy. I will also miss molding a team together and watching things click as the season progresses and we accomplish a common goal as one entity."

Now blessed with some free time for the first time in a long time, Boos scoffed off the idea of working on his golf game. He doesn't know what the future holds quite yet. For now, he's happy to process the work he's done and enjoy a little down time. Hoops has given Boos a lot of good memories, and he even wouldn't rule out making a few more.

"I'll never say never to this profession," Boos said. "Whether it's at the youth level or some other kind of involvement, it's just something I'll eventually have to figure out and move on from there. Time will tell."

# Ryan Gregory

Sports Editor