

## Hurt, Spears value relationships even more than winning

**B**oth were successful coaches, but it's not the winning either one will miss next year.

"I will miss the kids," said Garrard County girls basketball coach Ken Hurt. "It was all about being part of their lives and them being part of mine. It was fun watching them improve athletically, but it was also satisfying to watch them develop their own life skills."

"I am just going to miss watching the kids grow up," said Boyle track coach Jim Spears. "The seniors this year have been with me since they were little kids. I've watched them grow into wonderful young men and women. Nothing compares with that."

Those attitudes are part of the reason why Hurt and Spears are co-winners of the Bill Vaught Memorial Area Coach of the Year. The award, sponsored by The Kentucky Advocate and Coffman's Trophy



Shop, is in memory of the former sports editor of The Advocate-Messenger and The Kentucky Advocate, who died seven years ago.

The award is based not only on the past year's accomplishments, but also on a coach's integrity, longevity, and community and school contributions.

"I remember that Bill Vaught loved track because of the friendship and spirit of the sport," Spears said.

"Everybody loves to win, but the true test of character is handling adversity and Bill Vaught always understood that," Hurt said. "You've got to see yourself as a positive role model as a coach, just like he was always a positive role model as a person."

Both coaches have enjoyed successful careers that recently ended.

Hurt, a former Garrard player, resigned as girls basketball coach after winning 443 games from 1978 through 2003. His final team was 46th District runner-up and advanced to the 12th Region Tournament.

Hurt was also head baseball coach for 16 years and an assistant football coach for 16 years. He was assistant boys basketball coach

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Ken Hurt says he'll miss being part of his players' lives now that he has retired from coaching.

STORY BY LARRY VAUGHT • PHOTOS BY CLAY JACKSON

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## AdvocateSports

## COACHES from B1

before he became the girls head coach. Hurt is currently Garrard's athletics director, a position he'll also relinquish when he turns 55 years old in November.

"He always wanted to help kids and would never tell anyone about some of the things he did," his wife, Jan, who also has spent 26 years coaching at Garrard said. "One year there was not enough money to buy practice jerseys, so he just went ahead and spent his own money because he didn't want the kids to do without them. He just always found a way to help kids."

Spears coached in South Carolina from 1974-89 before coming to Boyle. He was middle school football coach from 1989-2001 and had an 88-28 record that included five conference championships. He also became the high school track coach in 1989 and led his team to three regional boys championships and one girls regional title. He also had seven teams that finished second in the region. This season his boys finished fourth in the Class AA state meet and the girls were 14th.

"He's had such an influence on many, many youngsters and that will be there forever in the heart and character of all those young people," Boyle superintendent Pam Rogers said. "He's taught things about life that you can't learn anywhere else but in competition."

Spears became Boyle's athletics director last year, a position he will keep even though he is giving up his track duties.

"It's just time for me to stop coaching," Spears said. "I am an active coach. I can't coach without running up and down the track. I'm going to be 51 soon and it was to the point that if I stuck around, the kids would suffer. I can leave now and feel good about what I've done. If I stuck around another two or three years, the program might deteriorate because I wouldn't have the energy to put into coaching that I have had."

Spears never intended to coach track this long. When he took over, Boyle had gone through three coaches in three years. Immediately runners asked him if he was just going to be a one-year coach also.

"Right then I said to myself that I would stay longer than one year," Spears said. "Then I fell in love with the sport. These are kids that are as competitive as anybody under the Friday night lights. They have as much passion for their sport as any athlete and usually their only cheering section will be teammates and some parents."

"But a kid can walk off the track and even if he or she didn't win, can still feel good because they've done a personal best. All of that rivalry stuff and animosity some other sports have doesn't exist here, either. Some of my best friends in track are (Danville coaches) Sadie Gambrel and Chris Verhoven."

Hurt's former players are now spread throughout his life in various ways.

"I've got people everywhere. They can heal my wounds or bury me," Hurt said. "A lot of my former players and students are teachers at Garrard County now. It's the same with secretaries and maintenance people. I have former players in law



Staff Photo by Mike Shuman

Jim Spears has learned to love coaching track since becoming Boyle County's coach in 1989, but also knows now is the right time for him to stop coaching.

enforcement and banking. I've had a former student as my boss on the board of education.

"Thirty-three years in education have just sprinted by. You go all day one day and then turn around and do it again. Then it is time to retire. It has gone by that fast."

One memory that hasn't faded is the death of former player Marsha Hill, who was killed in an automobile accident in February of her senior season in 1983. The team wore armbands in her memory. Hurt kept one on the desk in his basketball office and another one on his dresser at home.

"I'll never forget her," Hurt said.

Former athletes probably would say the same about Hurt and Spears. Both are active in their churches. Hurt is on the Kentucky High School Athletic Association Board of Control. Spears is on the board of directors of the Kentucky High School Athletic Directors Association.

"Everything about education is getting tougher," Rogers said. "Teaching is very demanding, even if you are not also coaching. To have two men stay in coaching as long as they have and make the contributions they have is becoming more and more unusual. That's why everyone should really appreciate all they've done."

## Ball Coach At GCHS Board Meeting

Also hired on Thursday as assistant Principal at Garrard County High School was Kenny Hurt who is the school's Activities Director and a history teacher.

Hurt will work with discipline and dropout prevention and will oversee athletic, music, and extracurricular academic programs. The board set his salary at \$34,000.

Kenny Hurt, who is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hurt, is married to Jan Hurt who is a teacher at the Garrard Middle School and girls basketball coach at the new school. They are the

parents of two children.

Other certified personnel hired was Dennis Custard of Madisonville, who will be Drop Out Prevention and Career Orientation teacher at GCHS. He will also be the boys' first assistant basketball coach, first assistant football coach and assistant track coach.

Custard, a graduate of Cumberland College and Murray State University, has been a teacher and coach since 1981. While at Cumberland College he was a member of the

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# No-Hitter By Garrard's Kenny Hurt Beats Admirals By 5 To 0

The Admirals lost another baseball game yesterday but this time they yielded to a no-hitter pitched by Kenny Hurt who was in top form and pitched his Garrard County mates to a 5 to 0 victory.

The Admiral pitcher, Ronnie Raines, showed good form and gave up only three hits, struck out eight and walked two, but three errors in the fourth, which started with a scoreless tie, gave Garrard County three runs and that was enough. Garrard added two more insurance runs in the sixth.

Hurt was wild in spots and walked nine men, but the Admirals were unable to capitalize on his wildness. He struck out 13 batters.

The Admirals, who were slated to entertain Somerset here this afternoon, now have a 2-3 record. Garrard has indicated

that it will be the team to beat in this area this season. On Monday afternoon they beat Harrodsburg and Pitcher Purvis, 2 to 1.

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# Advocate SPORTS

Thursday  
April 3, 2003

## Hurt resigns after 25 years with Garrard girls

By MIKE MARSEE  
Staff Writer

LANCASTER — For the first time in nearly 25 years, there's an opening for a girls basketball coach at Garrard County.

Ken Hurt, who has the longest tenure of any coach in any sport at an area school, resigned Wednesday as Garrard's girls coach.

Hurt has been at the helm of the Lady Lions since the middle of the 1978-79 season, and he has been



Hurt

coaching various sports at Garrard for 33 years.

"I've seen a lot of games, so there's a lot of wear and tear on this body," he said. "Two of the kids on this team, Chelsea Denny and Tiffany Mesdora, their mothers were on the first team I coached. That's a good way to end it."

Hurt, 54, will become a grandfather in October, and his expectant daughter lives in California. He said the time he wants to spend with her this summer and fall would detract from the team if he were still coaching.

"To me, the most important part of the season's the summer," Hurt said. "It was going to cut into how effective I can be as a coach, and I said when I can't be effective as a coach, I was going to step aside and let somebody else take over."

Hurt is one of only 16 girls coaches

in Kentucky to win more than 400 games. His career record of 443-270 leaves him in 12th place on the all-time wins list.

He said he will stay on as Garrard's assistant principal and athletic director, at least for the time being.

And he said it won't take the school long to have a successor in place.

"I don't want to lose any momentum in the program," he said. "My goal is to have a press conference on April 17th."

That's the date of Garrard's basketball banquet, and it's also one day

after the two-week period required for coaching job postings expires.

"I already have a person in mind I want to recommend," Hurt said.

That could be Jenny Teater, who played for Hurt on the only Garrard team to win a 12th Region championship and is currently an assistant coach at Campbellsville. Sources close to the program indicate that Teater is likely to be named to succeed her former coach.

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THE ADVOCATE-MESSENGER, THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2003

## AdvocateSports

## HURT, from B1

Hurt had already been involved in coaching boys basketball, baseball and football at Garrard when he was asked to take over the girls basketball team in January 1979.

He said he never imagined that he would be in coaching for 33 years, but he also never imagined doing anything else.

"When I got started, I knew it was something that I wanted to do, and I never even thought about a time frame," he said. "My love for basketball ran so deep, I never thought it would end."

Hurt coached the Garrard girls for the last 17 games of the 1978-79 season, going 13-4. That began a string of 10 straight winning seasons for Hurt, and he concluded his run with only four losing seasons in 25 years.

He led Garrard to the Girls Sweet Sixteen in 1994, where they Lady Lions won a first-round game before losing in the quarterfinals. And his teams won the 12th Region All "A" Classic in 1993 and 1994.

"They have to be the high points because there was so much enthusiasm and it was so good for our community," Hurt said. "But all my teams have been very special to me."

"You can't help but get real close to them, because you become a family. You worry and nurture and watch them grow and go through the program."

Garrard made the 12th Region Tournament in 22 of Hurt's 25 years, and the Lady Lions were regional runners-up in 1984 and 1993.

They won 16 district championships under Hurt, three in the 45th District and 13 in the 46th. Seven of his players earned all-state honors, and three played for the Kentucky all-stars.



## Hurt's record

Ken Hurt's record as Garrard County's girls basketball coach:

Year	W	L	Pct.
1978-79-d	13	4	.765
1979-80-d	24	5	.828
1980-81-d	15	13	.536
1981-82	17	7	.708
1982-83-d	18	10	.643
1983-84-d	24	8	.750
1984-85-d	21	7	.750
1985-86-d	22	7	.759
1986-87	320	12	.825
1987-88-d	21	11	.656
1988-89	8	17	.320
1989-90	13	12	.520
1990-91	16	12	.571
1991-92-d	23	7	.767
1992-93-ad	28	5	.848
1993-94-ad	28	8	.778
1994-95	17	10	.630
1995-96-d	14	12	.538
1996-97-d	16	13	.552
1997-98-d	15	12	.556
1998-99-d	14	17	.452
1999-2000-d	16	15	.516
2000-01	19	11	.633
2001-02	10	19	.345
2002-03	11	16	.407
Totals	443	270	.621

a-12th Region All "A" Classic champion

d-45th or 46th District champion

r-12th Region champion

Ken Hurt is one of only 16 girls coaches in Kentucky who have won at least 400 games.

Staff Photo by Mike Merano

Garrard went 11-16 in the season just completed, losing to Mercer County in the 46th District Tournament final and to Casey County in the first round of the 12th Region Tournament.

"At that point, I knew that potentially was my last basketball game," Hurt said. "And I think the girls potentially knew that."

"It's been a drain on me mentally and physically trying to think about it, because it's been such a vital part of my life."

Basketball has been a family affair for the Hurts. His daughter played for him - she was also on the 1994 regional champions - his son played for the Garrard boys and his wife, Jan, has coached at the high school

or middle school level for the past 26 years. Jan Hurt, who was an assistant on her husband's staff this season, has also resigned.

Hurt and his brother, Larry, who coached for 21 seasons at Boyle County and Pulaski County, have a combined total of 815 wins.

Hurt leaves behind a young team that graduates only two seniors this season, and he said that helps set the table for the next coach.

"That was one of the things I wanted," he said. "You've seen coaches, and I have too, who'll stay and when the talent runs out they'll jump ship, and I didn't want to do that. Garrard County means too much to me."

He said he'll still be watching

with great interest when the team takes the floor in December.

"I told the girls, 'You'll be representing Garrard County, and I'm part of Garrard County,'" he said. "Any time a spectator comes into the gym, that's their team, and I'm going to be a spectator."

"I'm going to enjoy watching. You can't put a foundation under a house and not see it built."

But Hurt said he knows it's time to turn the tools over to someone else.

"Even when you say you're going to do it, you're still not sure it's something that you want to do," he said. "But it's something that you've got to do."