

Take it to bank, Frank

'Colorful' Sloan named Distinguished Tomcat

BY ROCKY STANLEY
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TODAY'S AIT FIRST ROUND

- Warren Central (4-1) vs. Lewis Co. (3-6), 2:30
- Lawrence Co. (6-4) vs. Ashland (9-0), 7
- Christian Co. (3-5) vs. Butler (5-3), 4
- Scott Co. (4-4) vs. Boyd Co. (5-4), 8:30

Frank Sloan called it perfect timing. The talented New Jersey high schooler went on to play soccer at Morehead State University. In 1973, he was pursuing a masters degree with plans to become a coach and teacher.

Sloan got a call from Rex Miller because Ashland had an

opening for a German teacher at the high school.

"I had a minor in German," Sloan said. "They called to see if I might be interested."

The next week, Sloan said, he was teaching in Ashland. The

rest — as they say — is history.

Sloan guided Ashland to high school region championships in three different sports during a coaching career that carried to

SEE FRANK | B2

FRANK:

From Page B1

2005.

Now, he's about to be saluted with the 19th annual Distinguished Tomcat Award as the Ashland Invitational Tournament opens today at Anderson Gym.

"It's a tremendous honor," said Sloan, 68. "I spent my whole career at Ashland. I loved all of it ... the coaching I did, I became an assistant principal, I met my wife (Cheri) in Ashland and was able to coach our sons Brandon, Jordan and Christian growing up. I really did hit the jackpot. You can put that in capital letters. I really couldn't have asked for a better situation than here."

The feeling is mutual according to Mark Swift, who played baseball for Sloan in the 1970s and returned to the school in 1998 as athletic director to work with him.

"Frank's truly a distinguished Tomcat in every sense of the word," Swift said. "He did a nice job of making the Tomcat name mean a little bit more. He's a wonderful person to be around, an outstanding coach and a colorful personality."

Sloan coached Ash-

land to 267 boys soccer wins — currently ninth in state history. The Tomcats won 12 district crowns, three region titles and made it to the state semifinals in 2004.

Even for a school of Ashland's rich athletic tradition, it might be difficult to find a more competitive Tomcat.

"Frank was always a very passionate coach, clearly driven to be successful and obviously he was like that in everything he coached," Swift said. "I think that carried over to his teams."

Under Sloan's direction, the Tomcats won back-to-back baseball region crowns in 1978-79. Before building the soccer program, he led the Kittens basketball team to the 1983 state tournament.

"I truly feel it to be one of the best things I did, for me and hopefully for the girls," he said.

Sloan said he coached girls athletes like he did the boys.

"I ran them, made them dive on the floor. It was the same exact thing I did for the boys," Sloan said. "We pressed full-court, played man-to-man, and they loved it."

Sloan often coached more than one sport per school year. He credits former Ashland football coach Herb Conley —

the 2016 Distinguished Tomcat recipient — for being an excellent mentor as a coach and administrator.

"I coached at Putnam Junior High under him from 1974-76 and was assistant varsity coach for two years," Sloan said. "Just learning from him was probably the best thing that happened to me. He was fair, tough and knowledgeable — and hopefully that's what I was. When Verity opened, he was the first principal and asked if I could be assistant principal."

The Distinguished Tomcat accolade for Sloan comes on the heels of his induction into Ashland baseball's CP-1 Hall of Fame this summer.

"It's unbelievable," Sloan said. "I thank all my players, their parents, my wife for being understanding. There's quite a few people involved. The bottom line, if you don't have quality athletes with character, you're not going to go very far. I've been fortunate to coach so many great kids at Ashland."

This year, the Sloans started a \$500 annual Ashland boys soccer scholarship in honor of their son Brandon — a former Tomcat standout — who died in 2018.