

COBURN,

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title game appearance while the basketball team reached the semifinals in 1991.

“They were all super kids and the city of Mount Angel just takes you in,” Coburn said.

But with being a high school teacher and coach for two varsity sports — all while living in the Salem area — Coburn wasn’t getting enough time with his family.

“I was missing my kids activities by being a high school head coach for two programs. I was busy from August until March. So me and my wife talked about it and decided that I needed to help raise my kids and not just everyone else’s kids,” Coburn said.

So when Whiteaker Middle School offered him the PE job in 1993, he was more than happy to take it.

However, it wasn’t long before Coburn started coaching again as he took over the Whiteaker volleyball program in his first year at the school.

Even though he started out his education career as a basketball guy, it’s safe to say that he is a volleyball guy now.

Coburn has amassed more than 400 wins in his volleyball coaching career and has had more than a dozen undefeated seasons at Whiteaker.

“I really do love it. The girls at this age, you can develop them. And having been a varsity coach, you know what needs to happen and where kids need to get to, so I have always tried to do that,” Coburn said. “It’s been a wonderful ride and the kids play so hard. It’s been fun.”

Coburn also takes pride in making sure that his girls are prepared for high school volleyball, so he fostered relationships with each volleyball coach McNary has had over the last 27 years to make sure he relays the high school program’s language and philosophy to his players.

McNary’s current volleyball coach, Crystal DeMello, was one of Coburn’s former players at Whiteaker.

“He’s always been such a great coach and worked on fundamentals. We had a great team

at Whiteaker when I played. He perfectly balanced fun with hard work at practice. Coburn made competition fun,” DeMello said. “We’ve been fortunate at McNary to have such an experienced and dedicated coach at the middle school level. Coburn has invested in his program throughout the years and it shows. Collaborating with him at summer camps makes the transition to high school seamless. He will be missed.”

But Coburn has done more than coach volleyball in Keizer. He was an assistant boys basketball coach at McNary from 1995 to 2009 — the Celtics won six league titles during that time frame.

In 2004, he also took over the track & field program at Whiteaker — who won the All-City crown on both the boys and girls teams last season.

Coburn says that it can be tricky to maintain balance in his life at times, but that arriving at school at 6:30 a.m. during the week helps him stay organized and accomplish what he needs to.

“I try to leave everything here. That’s why I come early and stay late. The balancing is difficult, it takes a lot of time. Some people don’t want to give the extra time or take on the extra things. But me, I love doing things. I love organizing,” Coburn said.

Over the course of his career, Coburn has won numerous awards for coaching excellence.

His first award came back in 1981 when he was named the Tri-River Coach of the Year. He has also been recognized as the Oregon Middle School Coach of the Year twice (2006, 2012).

In 2009, Coburn was inducted into the McMinnville High School Sports Hall of Fame along with the 1979 boys bas-

ketball team. During that same year, he was named the Valley League Assistant Coach of the Year.

In 2016, Coburn was recognized by NBC Sports Northwest — formally known as Comcast Sports Net — as the network’s All-Star Coach Award winner, which included a \$5,000 cash prize to go towards the Whiteaker athletic programs.

Despite the accolades, Coburn is humble to the core.

“I get great kids and we do well. Yes, I have won some awards, but it was mainly because of how good the kids are,” Coburn said.

Coburn says he’s going to coach one more year of eighth grade volleyball, but he conceded that the team needs some new blood after this season.

“It’s time for someone else to start running the program,” Coburn said.

In retirement, Coburn is looking forward to spending more time with Laurie and his five grandkids, as well as traveling and working on some home improvement projects. But he will greatly miss the people of Whiteaker Middle School.

“Whiteaker is a big school with a small-school feeling. The community is extremely supportive. People want to give. When I came here, I was the young guy on staff, and the old folks that have been here since ‘65 just took me in and it was like a home. Everybody just took care of everybody,” Coburn said. “Even though the staff has changed, we still take care of each other. It’s just fun to be here. I love coming to work every day. The place will carry on, but I hope that I have done some things that people will feel good about.”



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