

## Payne Named AD Of Year

Written by Mike Kelly  
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Chalk up another award for Marc Payne, who has made a living out of winning awards for his hard work and dedication to high school athletics.

Payne, who has been in coaching for nearly 40 years (he spent 14 years as Athletics Director and men's basketball coach at Watatuga High), was named Athletic Director of the Year by the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association. Payne, who is currently the Athletics Director and men's basketball coach at Ashe County High School, received the honor on Tuesday.

But this current award is only scratching the surface. Payne was named North Carolina Athletic Director of the Year by the North Carolina Association for Athletic Education in 2006; he won the Distinguished Service Award from the North Carolina Interscholastic Athletic Administration Association in 2007; he won the State's Merit Award from the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association in 2003, and he's also been named coach of the year on three different occasions. But winning awards and basically just being successful at his trade has been a routine for Payne. He showed off his moxie when he took the head-coaching reins at his alma mater, Beaver Creek High School, and built that program into a powerhouse. And Payne, who was a star player for the Beavers during his prep days, guided Beaver Creek to 231 wins in a 14-year period, which included a third-place finish in the Class 2A state tournament in 1978.

Following that successful run, he came to WHS in 1989-90, inheriting a program that had suffered through seven losing seasons during an eight-year stretch. But that didn't stop Payne. He jumped right in and led the Pioneers to 14 wins in his first year. And he capped that off by leading the Pioneers to a victory over Myers Park in the opening round of the state playoffs. The Pioneers didn't win another playoff game until Rob Sanders (who ironically, is a Payne disciple) led WHS to a post-season win against East Burke in 2007-08.

He was also named the Northwestern 4A Conference Coach of the Year after he led the Pioneers to their first conference championship 1998-99. That was WHS's first conference title in nearly 20 years (1980-81 season under then coach Bill Eller).

And Payne has continued his magical run at Ashe County High School. He turned an up-and-down program into a consistent winner. In nine years, the Huskies have won 234 games, which also includes a pair of trips to the Class 2A Western Regionals. Overall, Payne has won 549 games during his 36-year career. That also includes four regional tournament appearances, seven tournament championship teams, 11 teams ranked in the Northwest North Carolina Final Poll and five teams ranked in the North Carolina Final Top-Ten Poll.

An impressive resume; an impressive man.