

John Groce, University of Akron



John Groce has a long track record of building championship-caliber teams and all-around successful young men. The program's mission "to be impactful" and to the vision "OneAkron" resonates with everyone involved in the program.

That has been evident in his eight seasons with the Zips, who have gone 168-88 during his time with the program with two Mid-American Conference regular-season championships, three MAC Tournament titles and three NCAA Tournament appearances. This past season was one of Akron's best, going 28-7 overall, winning MAC regular-season and tournament crowns and earning a third NCAA berth in the past four years. He has been named MAC Coach of the Year in 2020 and 2025.

Groce has a 350-220 overall record in 17 seasons as a college head coach. That includes four seasons at Ohio University, where he went 85-56 from 2008-12 with two NCAA Tournament berths (2010 and an NCAA Sweet 16 in 2012) plus one College Invitational Tournament (2011), and five seasons at Illinois, where he was 97-76 from 2012-17 with one NCAA Tournament appearance (2013) plus two NIT berths (2014, 2015).

A 1990 graduate of Danville High School, Groce was a prep star as he totaled 1,084 career points and was a three-time all-West Central Conference and three-time all-Hendricks County selection. He went on to Taylor University, where he played basketball from 1990-93 and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1994.

An injury prompted Groce to serve as a Taylor student assistant coach for Paul Patterson in 1993-94, helping guide the Trojans to a 29-5 record and NAIA No. 1 ranking. Groce then assisted at Taylor and Jay County High School from 1994-96 before moving to Division I basketball as an assistant coach at North Carolina State in 1996. He worked there for four years before joining Thad Matta at Butler in 2000, then moved with Matta to Xavier from 2001-04 and with Matta again to Ohio State from 2004-08. At Ohio State, Groce helped the Buckeyes to an NCAA national runner-up finish in 2007 and an NIT championship in 2008.

Groce then landed his first head coaching position at Ohio University starting in 2008-09.

He and his wife, Allison, have three children – Conner, Camden and Cate. Groce also is the older brother of Travis Steele, head coach at Miami University in Ohio and another speaker for the 2025 IBCA Clinic.