

District 1: Eric Thornton, Norwell



Eric Thornton is the IBCA District 1 Coach of the Year after guiding Norwell to a 23-5 season that included a Class 3A state runner-up finish. Earlier, his Knights had captured championships of the Northeast 8 Conference, Maconaquah Sectional, Caston Regional and Huntington North Semi-State.

Thornton has a career record of 452-192 in 27 seasons at Norwell. His tenure with the Knights includes 12 sectionals titles (2005, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021, 2023 and 2024); three regional trophies (2014, 2021 and 2024) and the one semi-state crown (2024).

He was head coach of the 2014 Indiana All-Stars and the 2012 Junior All-Stars. His 2011-12 and 2020-21 teams played in the Hall of Fame Classic, and he mentored 2012 Miss Basketball Jessica Rupright. He previously was an IBCA District 2 Coach of the Year in 2012.

A 1987 graduate of Churubusco High School, Thornton competed in basketball and golf. He went on to Ball State, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business education in 1992. He later earned a master's degree in secondary education from Indiana University in 2009.

Thornton was a boys' basketball volunteer assistant for Al Rhodes and Doug Ogle at Warsaw in 1991-92, a State Finalist team. Thornton then was a girls' assistant for Dave Cox at Plymouth for five seasons, also picking up insight from Pilgrims' boys coach Jack Edison during that time. Thornton took over the Norwell girls program starting in the 1997-98 season.

He has served as a business teacher at Norwell for 27 years, and he currently teaches classes in personal finance, business management, management fundamentals, accounting and entrepreneurship.

Thornton and his wife, Kelley, are parents to four children – Ryne, 17; Cade, 15; Avery and Maddux, both 13.