

Nate Blank, Terre Haute North boys' assistant



Energy, toughness, passion and selflessness all are terms that have been used to describe Nate Blank throughout his career in basketball as a player and coach.

The 2007 Indiana All-Star from Terre Haute North needed all of those traits to conquer medical challenges he has faced over the past two seasons while serving as a boys' basketball assistant coach at his alma mater. Thus, he has been named a winner of the 2024 IBCA/PGC Transformational Coach Award.

"Nate's toughness was tested in November 2022 right as the basketball season was beginning," Terre Haute North head coach Todd Woelfle said in nominating Blank. "He had a medical emergency while at work one day that required an immediate surgery. The surgery was surrounded with uncertainty, anxiety and a long recovery was in store."

Blank ended up spending 10 days in the hospital, couldn't eat solid food for a month and experienced another month of home therapy before he could return to relatively normal activities.

"This was a very difficult time for Coach Blank, his family and our basketball program," Woelfle recalled. "Still, even though he wasn't physically with us on a daily basis, he continued to watch video, send messages of encouragement and support our guys and basketball program from a distance. He was even made to turn off a game that he was streaming from the hospital because it wasn't good for his health and recovery."

Unfortunately, in late October 2023, Blank's condition required a second surgery due to complications from the first surgery. He again missed significant time away from the team but was able to return to the bench and practice full time in January 2024. Woelfle noted Blank's contribution to the program.

"Coach Blank is a role model for all our players and helped guide the team to the first conference title for our school in 50 years," Woelfle said of a 22-4 season that included a 4-1 mark in Conference Indiana. "It undoubtedly was one of the most successful seasons in recent memory."

"He has a passion for the Terre Haute North basketball program that can be matched by few who have played or coached here. He takes pride in everything we do, is reliable when it comes to any practice, team event, scouting trip, off-season summer game or individual workout with players. He clearly has developed trust and rapport with each of them. He checks his ego at the door and wants the best for all our student-athletes both as basketball players and young adults."

Beyond his role on the court, Blank has a vital role off the court within the Vigo County School Corporation. He serves as a behavior interventionist coach for the Covered Bridge Special Education District as well as the supervisor for the alternative education program at Terre Haute Boys & Girls Club. In those roles, he works daily with at-risk children, forming relationships with students and their families, while giving them the knowledge and skills to be better people, students and members of their school community.

"I've seen countless times how Coach Blank has changed the attitude, focus and effort of so many young people in our community by giving them a sense of hope and purpose," Woelfle said. "He has a unique way of connecting with all students regardless of age, gender or background."

A 2007 graduate of Terre Haute North, Blank averaged 19.0 points, 5.9 rebounds and 2.3 assists as a senior en route to a total of 1,216 points in his high school career.

He matriculated to Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, N.C., averaging 10.1 points, 2.4 rebounds and 2.0 assists over two seasons and earning 2008 Atlantic Sun Conference Freshman of the Year accolades. He then transferred to the University of Indianapolis, averaging 10.8 points and 4.8 rebounds and the team's mental attitude award as a junior before his senior season ended after nine games because of a knee injury. Nevertheless, he earned Great Lakes Valley Conference all-academic honors that season and completed his bachelor's degree in 2011.

Blank then returned to his hometown and began coaching at Terre Haute North in 2011-12, working with the Patriots' program in 11 of the past 13 seasons. He has worked in the Covered Bridge program for 12 years, serving in a leadership role the past nine years.

Blank and his wife, Leslie, have one daughter – Eleanor, 7.