

HIGH SCHOOLS

# Fran Bositis takes his final bow after 53 years as Franklin's boys' soccer coach

By **Ryan Martin** Globe Correspondent, Updated June 25, 2024, 8:33 p.m.



Fran Bositis had not intention of his 50th season, played during COVID restrictions in the fall of 2020, being his last at Franklin High. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

FRANKLIN — As a fresh-faced 23-year-old finding his way after graduating from UMass Amherst, coaching soccer was not on the mind of Fran Bositis in 1971.

But then Franklin High athletic director Jerry Leone had limited options for Bositis, the new physical education teacher at the middle school next door.

Bositis wanted to join the coaching staff of the school's well-established football team. But Leone could only offer Bositis the lead on boys' varsity soccer, which was in its second year of existence.

Fifty-three years, 532 career wins, and countless athletes impacted later, Bositis recently stepped down as coach.

"It's time to move on and start a new chapter," said the 76-year-old Bositis. "It was never a job to me, it was my hobby because I'm not a golfer and I don't fish."

Bositis, who had starred on the lacrosse field at both St. John's Shrewsbury and UMass, knew little about soccer in his first days at Franklin.

But he was determined to learn. So he spent long nights picking the brain of TJ Williams, then the coach at Dean College before his long run at Newton North as a coach and administrator. Williams helped Bositis experiment with tactics, strategies, and schemes.

“I was fortunate to even get involved, I don’t think somebody with my qualifications would be hired as today’s coach,” Bositis said. “I was just a phys ed teacher who . . . was thankful for TJ’s understanding of the game.”

With Williams’s early assistance, Bositis changed the culture of soccer at Franklin.

He directed the Panthers to an Eastern Mass Division title in 1976, a campaign that ended with a one-goal loss to Ludlow in the state final. Including that season, Franklin qualified for the MIAA tournament nearly every season under Bositis. He also earned his 500th career win in the 2021 regular-season finale.

However, if all had gone as planned, though, the milestone likely would not have been reached. His 50th season had come during the 2020 COVID campaign, the year he thought would be his last.

Bositis had retired from teaching in 2009 and had planned with his wife, Christine, to retire from coaching on the golden anniversary. But Bositis, who also coached track, boys’ lacrosse, and girls’ basketball for much of his career, refused to go out on pandemic-altered terms.

“With all the rule changes and restrictions, it was just kind of a disaster plan,” Bositis said. “So I talked to my wife and said, ‘I just can’t leave on this.’”

At the helm for three more years, Bositis returned for a fitting stretch to conclude his time at Franklin.

He capped his career with back-to-back Hockomock Kelley-Rex division titles and tournament quarterfinal appearances in 2022 and 2023.

The favorite part of his time at Franklin was the families and boys he was privileged to lead. A few players, particularly post-COVID, even shared a special bond with Bositis: their dads, too, played under the head coach many seasons prior.

Bositis estimates he's coached nearly a dozen father-and-son pairings at Franklin .

“When I started, I never thought I'd be doing that,” Bositis said. “But it was awesome to not only meet some great kids, but great families.”

In retirement, Bositis is looking forward to life in Harwich fulltime with Christine and their new golden retriever, Summer.

And although Bositis will no longer roam the Pisini Stadium sideline, a face familiar to the coach and the community will take the lead.

Nick Goldman, who assisted Bositis for nine seasons before taking the helm at Nipmuc the past two years, has been hired as the new varsity soccer coach.

The former Endicott College standout even holds Bositis's former day job, teaching physical education to students at Horace Mann Middle School.

“When he became our JV coach, his knowledge of the game was evident right from the beginning,” Bositis said of Goldman. “I'm happy that the program is going to be in good hands.”