

Awards piling up for Danbury High School coaches

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Danbury wrestling coach Ricky Shook during the FCIAC wrestling championships at New Canaan High School, Conn., Saturday, Feb. 13, 2016.

The awards sure are piling up for the coaches at Danbury High School these days.

Jackie DiNardo was named the Girls Basketball Coach of the Year by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association at its annual banquet on May 11 at the Aqua Turf

Club in Southington.

And at the FCIAC's annual awards dinner, set for June 15 at the Norwalk Inn, boys track and field and cross country coach Rob Murray will be inducted into the FCIAC Hall of Fame, while Murray, girls track coach Nick Fraticelli and wrestling coach Ricky Shook will be recognized as the Coach of the Year Award recipients in their respective sports.

In short, the Danbury High Athletic Department has a whole lot to be proud of these days.

"Of course, you have your athletes, but you also have the coaches behind the scenes who are willing to work within the climate and the culture and do those kids of things that are necessary to compete at a high level," Danbury High School athletic director Chip Salvestrini said. "We're fortunate because we have those people who can do that."

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Part of what has made these coaches so successful is their strong ties to Danbury High School. DiNardo, a former University of Texas star, has coached the Hatter girls for 30 years and won more than 400 games. Shook wrestled for Danbury High, graduated in 1983 and came back to stay as an assistant coach in 1987. Similarly, Murray ran for Danbury High, graduated in 1988 and came back as an assistant coach in 1998. And Fraticelli sharpened his coaching skills for a number of years as an assistant on Murray's staff.

There's no substitute for continuity in a high school sports program, and these coaches' roots run deep in Hatter tradition.

"Each of those four is very capable of coaching at the next level, and that's something you don't say a lot about coaches in a high school athletic program," Salvestrini said. "We're very fortunate."

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Tickets to the FCIAC awards dinner are \$35; contact Salvestrini at salvec@danbury.k12.ct.us.

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