

The Palm Beach Post

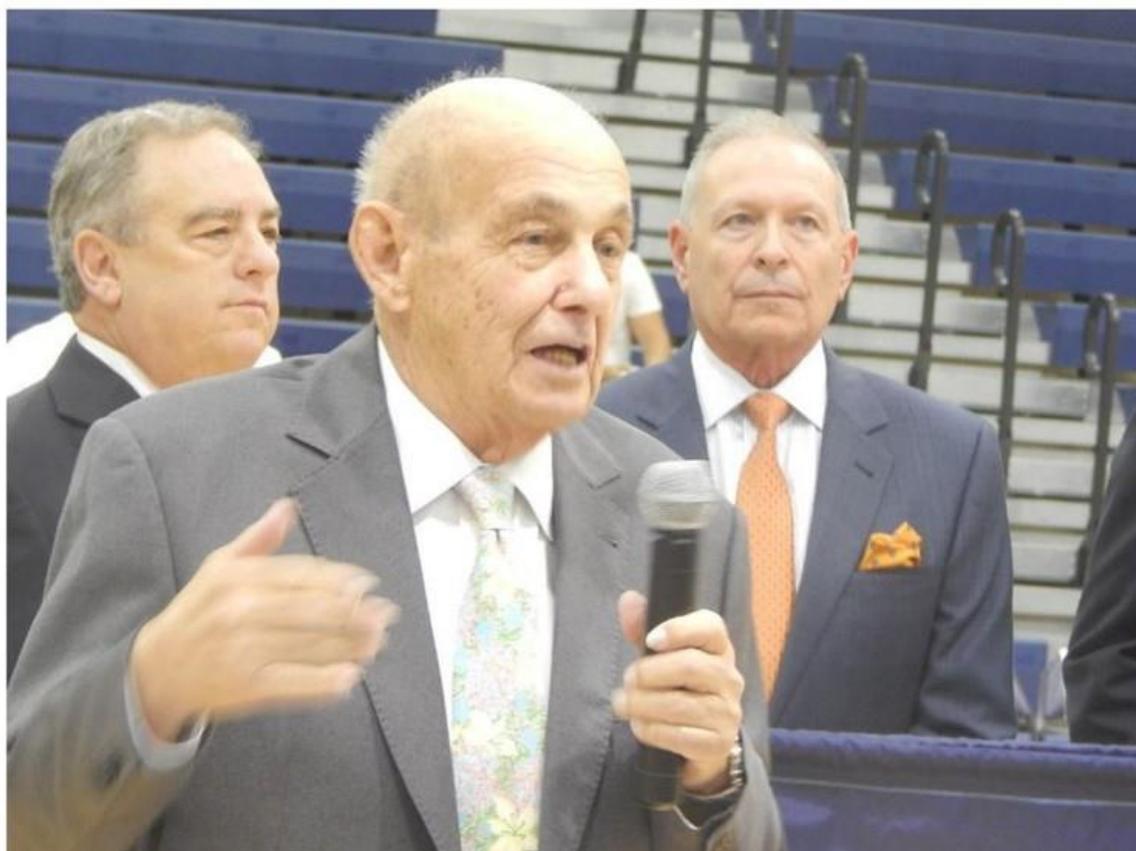
Rollie Massimino honored for 800 victories

Jake Elman

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SPORTS



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Keiser basketball coach Rollie Massimino speaks during a ceremony Saturday honoring Massimino who recently earned his 800th career victory. (Photo by Jake Elman)

WEST PALM BEACH

In a time of season-long retirement tours and grandiose farewell ceremonies, Keiser Seahawks coach Rollie Massimino opted for something a bit smaller.

But to anyone who's ever had contact with the coaching legend, they'd know even a ceremony honoring his 800th victory falls second to his main focus: his players.

In an emotional ceremony prior to Keiser's Saturday afternoon game against Thomas University, Massimino was celebrated by a packed crowd — many of whom arrived during the women's game against St. Thomas — and some familiar faces.

"When you get to be my age, you love games, because if you lose, then you can't be involved anymore — it's over," Massimino, who turned 82 in November, told fans and family during the ceremony. "I've had a wonderful group of players here, at UNLV, at Villanova, and at Cleveland State."

Massimino, who started his head coaching career at SUNY Stony Brook in 1969, took over the Seahawks job in 2006 — their first season in the Sun Conference. In that time, the Seahawks have won at least 30 games four times.

Massimino came to national attention as head coach of the Villanova Wildcats from 1980 to 1992. Massimino is most famous for leading the Wildcats to their unforgettable upset of NBA Hall of Famer Patrick Ewing and the top-seeded Georgetown Hoyas in the 1985 title game.

After his time with the Wildcats, Massimino also coached at UNLV and Cleveland State.

"I'll be able to pass these experiences down to my kids one day and hopefully it will help them to achieve success," point guard Brice Jenkins said of his time under Massimino. "Coach Mass still has that crazy fire inside that keeps him going — and us, too."

Massimino has the Seahawks off to a 15-2 start this season and entered Saturday's game with a 12-game winning streak.

As part of the ceremony, Massimino was honored with a banner that will be hung on the school's "Wall of Champions" with his name and the 800-win distinction.

During the ceremony, Massimino's players wore T-shirts that read: "Congrats, Coach Mass! Coach Rollie Massimino ... 800 wins and counting!" The shirts were handed out to fans who attended the game.

Massimino, who dedicated the ceremony to his wife, Mary Jane, asked Keiser officials to hold the ceremony before the game because at halftime, as always, he would be with his players.

Massimino expects more milestone victories down the road.

"I think I could coach another 10 years," Massimino joked during his speech.