

Schmalz retires without any regrets

Few people have the good fortune of enjoying their work as much when they retire as when they began their career, so retiring University of Evansville coach Fred Schmalz considers himself lucky that he leaves without any regrets.

"I enjoyed the game as much when I stopped coaching as when I started," he says. "That's good. It wasn't like I didn't enjoy it anymore. I loved it, still do."

Schmalz, 60, was one of three active NCAA Division I men's coaches in

2002 whose head-coaching career spanned five decades. Greg Myers coaches Navy. Frank Schnur recently retired at Fordham.

Schmalz began college coaching in 1969 at the University of Wyoming, which no longer has a men's program. He spent seven seasons (1972-78) at NAIA school Davis & Elkins, then a national power, and moved to Evansville in 1979.

Schmalz's arrival coincided with the rise of college soccer. Schmalz, the Region II coach for many years, used his connections to build the Aces into a national power.

"We put a couple teams in the final four, here at Evansville," says Schmalz, who retired with a 403-196-56 record, 302-165-49 at UE. "We were in the NAA final four six times at Davis & Elkins. I had a couple teams beaten in the national finals. I had a couple Olympic Festival teams win gold medals. All those are nice."

Opponents feared the arrival of the gritty Aces in their purple uniforms. Schmalz's 1990 team reached the semifinals and set records for lowest goals-against average (0.24) and most shutouts (20) that still stand.

Evansville's misfortune was living in the shadow of Indiana University. It was true in basketball — Evansville was a small-college basketball power — and later in soccer.

"How could you help it?" Schmalz says of Indiana's shadow. "It's like 90 miles away. That's like saying, 'Does Cal State Fullerton live in UCLA's

shadow?' That doesn't mean we didn't come out from the shadow a few times."

Schmalz's greatest player, Scotsman David Weir, was the first American college product to represent a European team in the World Cup.

Schmalz's retirement will give him time to see the Everton captain.

"I plan on going over there next month and watching him and Brian McBride play," says Schmalz. "Brian played for me in the Olympic Festival a couple times, he's a Region II guy."

— Bryan Alvarez



UNIVERSITY OF EVANSVILLE

Fred Schmalz's arrival at the University of Evansville coincided with the rise of college soccer in the 1980s.