

Athletics Hall of Fame to Induct Two on Friday

First female AD at CCHS, Starnes still holds state record in track

STAFF REPORT

It's been an amazing year of accolades for longtime coach and athletic director Angela Starnes.

From grand marshal of the Marion Christmas parade to her selection to Kentucky High School Athletics Association Hall of Fame, Starnes' last year as an educator and coach has been quite remarkable.

Still, she counts among her greatest prizes the honor to be bestowed upon her Friday night at Rocket Arena. Starnes will be inducted into the Marion-Crittenden County Athletics Hall of Fame. She will be retiring as a coach and educator at the end of this school year after having spent nearly her entire professional career in Marion.

"This is a surprise and an honor. Even though we (including her husband Al Starnes, who is also a member of the local hall of fame) are not from here originally, to be given this honor is something I will never forget and something I am very proud of," she said. "That this community has accepted my family as its own means so much to me."

The former Angela Payne, Starnes is a multiple state champion in track and field. As a high school athlete at Todd Central in the late 1970s and early 1980s, she was well known as an incredibly fast sprinter. She won sprint state championships in the 100, 200 and 400 meters, and four relay state championships. To this day, she still holds the Class A girls' 100 meter record at the state meet. She

ran the race in 12.2 in 1980.

Starnes earned a track scholarship to Murray State and that is where she met her future husband, Al Starnes, who was a lineman on the MSU football team.

Starnes was hired as track and field coach at Crittenden County in 1991 when she arrived at CCHS. Her first season was the spring of 1992 and she was also the cross country coach, having revived the sport this fall after several years of dormancy. The cross country team qualified for the state meet this year.

Her track and field teams have finished runnerup in the First Region twice – in 1997 and 2014. Under her tenure, the school has become a contender in track and field year after year.

"We've had athletes qualify for the state meet almost every year," Starnes says with a smile blushed with pride. "There were times that our teams were so competitive that they started getting a name and people noticed us wherever we went."

She recalls that success came slowly.

"I remember the first time we won a meet it was at an invitational in Providence. We went off and forgot the trophy. We weren't used to getting a trophy after a race," she said with a chuckle.

Starnes has been a trend setter at Crittenden County. She became the school's first female athletic director and has served in that capacity the last 15 years. The coaches laud her support of their



Angela Starnes has spent her educational career as an elementary school physical education teacher.

programs and her attention to detail in a highly-regulated, closely-watched segment of public education has been impeccable.

Bob Yehling, who once coached track and field at Union and Crittenden counties and is now a cross country coach at one of the top high schools in California, says Starnes is the reason he's a coach.

"I owe her everything. Coaching is such a big part of my life and I cannot imagine not having it," he said. "And she's the whole reason it was made possible for me."

Yehling, who has run 10 national marathons, including five Boston Marathons, joined CCHS's track program in 2006 under Starnes.

"She is a national-level coach who happens to be at a small

school. I would say that you could put her with any high school program in the country and she would make it better. This is not hyperbole, it is fact because I have been around enough to know," he said.

Yehling calls her a great communicator and administrator and says her ability to "mix it up" alongside student-athletes is part of the reason she garners so much respect. Starnes is a distance runner now, having completed a marathon at age 50. You can find her running with her team through the park or around town during training.

Starnes has spent 27 years as an educator, coach and administrator at Crittenden County and she says relationships she's developed with students and others in the com-



As a high school student at Todd County, she won several state championships in track.

munity are the most memorable aspects of her career. She's coached two generations of athletes in some families and has devoted more than a regular work day to the school system. She is also a bus driver and many times in the past has volunteered to drive other sports teams to away games.

Her selection to the KHSAA Hall of Fame will be complete with an induction ceremony in March. She is the first person with such close ties to Crittenden County to be selected for the statewide hall of fame.

"I am certainly very proud of being selected for the KHSAA Hall of Fame, but I cannot say that is more significant than being selected to the local hall of fame," Starnes said. "For the people here to have bestowed on me this honor, it is quite humbling."

Mathieu's varsity career spans six seasons, produced 1,065 points

STAFF REPORT

A fierce competitor and a prolific scorer, Jessica Mathieu earned her way into the Marion-Crittenden County Athletics Hall of Fame through dogged determination as a player.

Today, she applies that same determination while serving God as a missionary to Haiti.

Mathieu's mother, Jeanie Shire, said she never

thought her daughter would amount to much on the basketball court.

"She was so little. I didn't even think she needed to play basketball," her mother says with a chuckle. "But she turned out to be pretty good."

Learning to shoot by playing against her older brothers, Mathieu developed a touch that gave her great range – particularly behind

the three-point arc – but she was also great off the bounce

said Lady Rocket coach Shannon Hodge, who coached Mathieu for six years as a varsity player.

"She learned how to shoot the three because she would always play in the back yard with her brother who was so much taller," says mom. "She had to shoot outside and over him to ever score."

Mathieu scored more than 20 points in a game 11 times and her single-game high was 27. She averaged 13 points a game as a junior and senior, 10 as a sophomore, eight as a freshman and 2.5 as an eighth grader.

When her career ended in 2006, Mathieu had scored 1,065 points and she currently ranks No. 8 on the Lady Rockets' all-time scoring list.

"She took the ball to the basket extremely hard," said coach Hodge. "And she drew a lot of fouls."

At the stripe, Mathieu was automatic and her defensive skills were just as astute. She led her team in three-point shooting and free-throw percentage as a senior.

Although Mathieu played on some very competitive teams from 2001-2006 and with some very good teammates, she never had the opportunity to play in a regional tournament. Her teams were 50-77 over her career with the best record when she was in 12th grade as the Lady Rockets finished 16-10.

"She was a very tough defender. She always drew the assignment of guarding the other team's best perimeter player," Hodge recalls.

Her intensity is what most remember about Mathieu. Her former coach described it this way: "She was an unbelievable competitor. If you asked her to run through a wall to win the game, she'd put her head down and barrel right through it."

From her six years in a Lady Rocket uniform, Mathieu points to her first time to wear the varsity blue and white as one of her most memorable moments.

"It was the first time I got called up to play varsity. I was in seventh grade and we were all still playing in the old gym. Middle school had a game before the varsity (against Christian County) and I was playing with the eighth graders. At the end of the middle school game I got a five-second call while guarding a girl. Coach Hodge was there and as soon as the game ended, she told me to 'suit up' for the high school



Mathieu



Jessie Mathieu says she loved offense, and played defense because she had to.

game," recalls Mathieu.

Although she played only a few seconds that night, Mathieu's budding career was bolstered by the confidence the coach showed in her.

She also remembers finally beating Caldwell County, a team that dominated the Fifth District for more than a decade before leaving after the 2004-05 season.

"I think they had won 13 or 14 straight district titles and had moved out of the Fifth District before we beat them my senior year. We got our butts handed to us every time we played them, but our senior year we beat them twice. Beating them was more satisfying than beating Livingston and that says a lot," she said.

Mathieu loved offensive, she said, and played defensive only because she had to. She recalls one game when coach Hodge called a time out and said, "Jessie, pretend you like defense" on the next play.

"Basketball was my life

growing up and everyone always says you take a lot of life lessons from playing sports and I agree with that 100 percent," Mathieu said. "I learned discipline, teamwork, leadership, doing things you don't like doing – like playing defense – because it benefits the team."

Other personal assets such as resiliency and handling winning and losing are also traits she learned on the court, yet uses them in her daily life.

"I spent many years losing, having 5 or 6 wins a season. I always felt like we were letting coach down," she said. "It was nice my junior and senior years getting double digit wins. Basketball was and is a sisterhood – or at least it was for me – and I still love everyone I ever got to play with."

Mathieu credits Coach Hodge as being the most influential person during her school days.

"She taught me how to be a leader because that's the job of a point guard. She told

me repeatedly that people were watching and following my lead and I have a responsibility to lead well... both vocally and through my actions," Mathieu said. "The vocal part was always the hardest but she encouraged it continually. Coach Hodge went above and beyond not just for me, but for every player she coached and I played with. I knew her love for me and so many others went beyond the hardwood and that means the most to me still to this day."

Mathieu says it's an honor to be selected for the hall of fame.

"I don't feel worthy to be in the company of such Crittenden County greats. I'm thankful and humbled to say the least. And I'm still proud to be and to have been a Lady Rocket. I owe a lot to my coaches in all the sports I played because they helped me get to this point. God has been so gracious to me," she said.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

Two women will be enshrined in the Farmers Bank Marion-Crittenden County Athletics Hall of Fame during a ceremony at halftime of the boys' basketball game Friday night at Rocket Arena. There will be a memory room for the new inductees of the Hall of Fame and their families, friends and former coaches, students and teammates. There will be a come-and-go reception in the Rocket Arena meeting room. It will be open from 6 p.m., until the end of the final game. There will be other activities as part of Friday night's ballgames, including a performance by the little dribblers.

ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Player, Year Inducted, Sport

- Andrews, Josh - 2005 - Football
- Belt, Bruce - 2001 - Basketball
- Beverly, David - 2007 - Football
- Brasher, Don "Sucky" - 2002 - Basketball
- Bridwell, Lynn "Lefty" - 2009 - Baseball
- Brown, Nicky - 2009 - Basketball
- Champion, Jamie - 2006 - Football
- Conyer, Roy - 2001 - Football
- Cozart, Spencer - 2004 - Basketball
- Croft, Jimmy - 2013 - Basketball
- Daniels, Markeata Brown - 2009 - Basketball
- Davidson, Glen "Ace" - 2003 - Basketball
- Dooms, Morgan - 2015 - Basketball
- Easley, Clinton - 2005 - Football
- Elder, Houston "Hound" - 2001 - Football
- Faith, Leonard - 2008 - Basketball
- Franklin, W.A. - 2006 - Basketball
- Gates, Pat - 2002 - Football
- Grady, Orville "Soupy" - 1998 - Football
- Gray, Vanessa - 2011 - Basketball
- Green, Don - 2001 - Basketball
- Hart, Brad - 2017 - Football, Basketball
- Hart, George - 1998 - Basketball
- Head, Frank - 1998 - Football
- Hicklin, Robert "Hickie" - 2002 - Football
- Higfill, Hugh - 2002 - Basketball
- Hill, Tim - 2016 - Basketball, Track
- Hinchee, Jeanee - 2007 - Basketball
- Hodge, Denis - 2006 - Football
- Hodge, Shannon Collins - 2008 - Basketball
- Hopper, Jimmy - 2005 - Football
- Hughes, Charles "Turkey" - 1999 - Football
- Johnson, Tom - 2001 - Football
- Knoth, Curtis "Gig" - 1998 - Football
- Litchfield, Louis - 2007 - Basketball
- Little, Dwight - 1998 - Football
- Little, Erceel - 2003 - Basketball
- Martin, Turner - 2012 - Basketball
- Mathieu, Jessica - 2018 - Basketball
- McChesney, James "Burlap" - 2003 - Football
- Mills, Jim Fred - 1999 - Football
- Moss, Ronnie - 2003 - Football
- Moss, Ronnie - 2005 - Basketball
- Mott, Chad - 2006 - Football



- Mott, Dennis - 2010 - Football
- Myers, Kyle - 2017 - Basketball, Football
- Orday, Bruce - 2008 - Basketball
- Perryman, Chad - 2011 - Baseball
- Phillips, James - 2000 - Basketball
- Rich, Joey - 2014 - Football
- Rushing, Woodson "Chuck" - 1999 - Football
- Shadown, Lige - 2003 - Basketball
- Shewcraft, Jeff - 2004 - Basketball
- Simmons, Ellis - 2005 - Basketball
- Smith, Bennett - 1999 - Basketball
- Starnes, Al - 2004 - Football Coach
- Starnes, Angela - 2018 - Track Coach
- Stewart, Wompie - 2007 - Football
- Summers, Von - 2014 - Football
- Swisher, Bob - 2000 - Football
- Tabor, Charles "Bill" - 2003 - Football
- Tabor, Gerald "Hoopy" - 2000 - Basketball
- Tabor, Melissa Jones - 2009 - Golf
- Terry, William "Gander" - 1999 - Football
- Thurman, Greg - 2002 - Basketball
- Tomery, Carlisle - 1998 - Basketball
- Turley, Curtis - 1999 - Basketball
- Van Hooser, Carroll - 1998 - Football
- Wheeler, Floyd "Rip" - 2010 - Baseball
- Willoughby, James - 2012 - Track
- Woodall, Deller E. - 1998 - Football
- Woodall, Jerry - 2004 - Football
- Wring, Tommy - 2002 - Basketball
- 1945 Marion High Football Team - 2008
- 1963 CC High Football Team - 2008
- 1985 CC High Football Team - 2000
- 1942 Marion High Football Team - 2015