

# Girls Coach of the Year - Class 1A

## *Michael Hand - Benet Academy High School*

Long-time Benet Academy boss Mike Hand's team had a memorable fall of 2016, as the Redwings won the inaugural Class 1A state championship. Benet did so with only one seeded entry at the state meet, truly earning their championship with upset after upset, beginning at the sectional level. Here is a brief summary:

- Benet qualified two singles players and one doubles team for the state meet, and their team won the Benet Sectional.
- One of Benet's singles players was unseeded at the sectional and needed to defeat the #2 seed on the way to qualifying.
- *Both* Benet singles players were unseeded at the state meet and were the only two players to defeat top 16 seeds in the main draw. One of those players followed that up with an upset of a top-8 seed in the next round.
- Benet's doubles team (Katie Telford and Pauline Neubert) finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at state.

All of these results allowed Benet Academy to win the state title by a single point over Joliet Catholic. Coach Hand's influence over these girls during their state run was noticeable and significant.

Benet Academy's athletic director, Gary Goforth, had the following comments:

"I have known Mike Hand for over 30 years. Throughout these years, his enthusiasm has been endless. He lives and breathes tennis. He is constantly looking for the best competition for his athletes. He is a good friend, a dedicated coach, and incredibly happy and proud when his kids do well. It has been a privilege to work with him throughout my 26 years as athletic director."

Mike summarized his team's season:

"Each season, I tell the team to aim for two plaques: conference and sectionals. The girls this season accomplished those goals and then some. I am honored to have seen this team hoist the trophy at the state tournament, and it was such a fitting end to a thrilling fall season of tennis."

Congratulations, Mike, on your IHSTCA Coach of the Year award!