

# TANNER PICKS UP 200TH WIN

JERRY KEUHN  
REPORTER



JERRY KEUHN/Citizen photo

Boys basketball coach Zane Tanner, now in his 11th season at West Platte, got his 200th career win Jan. 15.

While he is just in his 11th year as head coach of the West Platte boys basketball team, Zane Tanner has already put up some impressive numbers.

Tanner picked up his 200th win Jan. 15 at Savannah, his alma mater. He was 16-10 during his first season in 1997-98 and his only losing season came the next year, when the Jays went 10-14. In his first 10 years at the helm he racked up an impressive 189-85 record, and after West Platte's win over Maranatha Academy Monday night, his record now stands at 205-89. Tanner also teaches junior high and high school physical education, weight training and health, and coaches the varsity girls softball team.

Along the way, the Jays made two final four appearances – a second place finish in 2002-03 when West Platte was 25-5 and won the KCI Conference with a 6-0 record; and in 2005-06, when West Platte finished fourth in the state with a 24-6 record and again won the conference with a perfect 6-0 record. The Jays have won the last five straight district titles, including an exciting upset over Mid-Buchanan in last year's district championship game, and at 16-4, look to be in position for another postseason run.

"I have been blessed with a lot of talented play-

ers and with the timing of those players," Tanner said. "It seems just as I would be graduating one of those rare high school athletes, there would be another one entering as a freshman. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to coach such strong athletes – a lot of coaches don't get that chance, especially so frequently."

Tanner got an unusually early start in high school coaching, as he was just 24 years old when he took over at West Platte. He played high school basketball at Savannah, where he led the Savages in steals and assists before his team lost in the quarterfinals to Nevada, who was 30-0 at the time and finished sec-

ond in the state. He played basketball and baseball at Iowa Western Community College, then transferred to Missouri Western State College in St. Joseph. After a couple of weeks, it was gut check time for Tanner.

"Within a couple of weeks of practice, I realized two things: I wasn't good enough to play at that level and I was ready to start my

coaching career," Tanner said.

After a couple of years of helping Missouri Western coach Tom Smith and earning a bachelor's degree in education while minoring in coaching and health, and some time as a student teacher at Central High School in St. Joseph, Tanner got his chance at West Platte. He was an assistant coach for one year under then-coach Steve Boeh, who then took another position and gave Tanner the opportunity he was looking for, but was not expecting so soon.

"I was very surprised and excited when (West Platte) Superintendent Harold Brown (who was Tanner's basketball coach during Tanner's junior year at Savannah) asked me if I wanted to be the boys varsity basketball coach," Tanner said. "Being a first year teacher, I wasn't expecting to get an opportunity like this, this fast."

West Platte girls basketball coach Dave Bridger, who was Tanner's assistant for several years, said Tanner earned every win he got.

See TANNER, PAGE B4

## TANNER

"Zane has always been very detail-oriented and he's a great practice coach who works hard to make his players better," Bridger said. "He also instills high morals in his players and they play the game right."

In that vein, Tanner started a Fellowship of Christian Athletes group at West Platte, expanded it to include other students and joins them every Friday morning for devotions and prayer.

"I believe most of our discipline problems in our society stem from the fact that Americans have lost faith in Christ," Tanner said. "God has really put a burden on my heart about the lost kids in our school.

"I believe the biggest change (since starting coaching) is that at one time I thought the game of basketball was only about X's and O's. I realize more now I have a responsibility to teach these athletes about com-

mitment, sacrifice, responsibility, teamwork, dealing with authority and how to handle adversity."

Current player Erick Roe complimented his coach on his work ethic.

"He pushes us hard every day in practice and we bump heads some times, but we know he's just trying to make us better," Roe said. "He's always taught us to grind it out on defense, because defense will make the offense."

Tanner and his wife, Brandy, have two sons, Tyler, 3, and Adam, eight months. Tanner said that while he was hopeful they would be athletic and that he would love to coach them, it was out of his hands.

"We will definitely take the opportunity to expose them to all kinds of sports, but their future is in the hands of a Creator who has so much more planned for their lives than my wife and I could ever imagine," he said.

**State Farm®**  
Providing Insurance and Financial Services



**Dan Demory, Agent**  
1302 Platte Falls Road, Suite C  
Platte City, MO 64079

Call for your free insurance and financial review  
816.858.2411 Office  
816.858.5702 Fax  
www.plattacityinsurance.com



Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.®