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Tenth-ranked Barnstable girls volleyball team goes after 15th Massachusetts crown

Massachusetts' winningest coach Tom Turco has another juggernaut.



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By Tom Mauldin | [MaxPreps.com](#)

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Courtesy photo

The Barnstable Red Raiders go after their 15th state title in 21 years and are currently No. 10 in the MaxPreps Xcellent 25 national rankings.

Barnstable, Mass., has had its share of notable residents, including the Kennedys, Hall of Fame baseball player Joe Cronin, singer Judy Garland, NBA hall of famer John Havlicek, Aerosmith's Tom Hamilton, Google co-founder Larry Page and author Kurt Vonnegut to mention a few.

And let's not forget Tom Turco, the winningest high school girls volleyball coach in Massachusetts history.

Turco was among a dozen coaches named by the National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA) as National High School Coaches of the Year for 2012.

He was inducted into the Massachusetts Girls Volleyball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2004. Since then, his teams have won more than 160 games and lost only nine. His 25-year career mark is 528-52.



Courtesy photo
Tom Turco, Barnstable coach

That seems only fitting as volleyball was born in Massachusetts and a look at Turco's career stats would make you think it was invented in [Barnstable \(Hyannis, Mass.\)](#).

No, that honor goes to Holyoke, when in 1895 businessmen playing basketball on their lunch break asked the Holyoke YMCA's athletic director for something that wouldn't send them back to work so sweaty. He came up with volleyball. In Massachusetts, with 6,600 girls in 255 schools, it's the seventh most popular sport.

At Barnstable, thanks to Turco, volleyball is No. 1. Not only have the Red Raiders collected 14 state titles in the last 20 years, but 10 of those teams have gone unbeaten. Turco has had two memorable stretches - teams that won a state title and didn't lose a match in 1995-1997 and from 2003-2007. One stretch was 110-straight match victories.

The Red Raiders are going after their third-straight state title.

Dating back to last season, his team has won 31 in a row and is 8-0 this season. They are ranked [No. 10 by MaxPreps](#). They will be among the favored teams at this weekend's Hall of Fame Tournament of Champions in Springfield.

Turco, however, shrugs at the accolades. He simply says he's been the product of those around him. And he gives quick credit to legendary NBA coach Pat Riley, whom Turco frequently quotes.

Such as: "There's always the motivation of wanting to win. Everybody has that. But a champion needs, in his attitude, a motivation above and beyond winning."

Riley's quote is from his book "The Winner Within: A Life Plan for Team Players. Chapter One of Riley's book. "In order to grow," he says, "you need to trust each other."

The second chapter is "The Disease of Me," which focuses on how players can be selfish. "It's something you'll find very difficult to bring up in the team meeting. But if it's part of the course of study," Turco said, "you can weave it to the team in a non-threatening way. It becomes about them, and not the coaches."

Noting the growing importance of classroom time in coaching, Turco has used "The Winner Within" since 1995.

"We read a chapter per week, Turco said. "The students run the meeting, not the coaches. It opens up a lot of talk about things that happen during the season and how they are going to deal with it. It's their issues, their ideas."

Prior to his arrival, Barnstable had won 57 of 100 volleyball matches and no state titles.

A graduate of Bridgewater State University, Turco began his career at Massasoit Community College teaching blind children. For the last 25 years he has worked as an adapted physical education teacher at Barnstable.

Turco has coached three All-Americans, seven Massachusetts Gatorade Players of the Year and dozens of academic scholarships winners.

His impact off the court is almost as documented as his on-court record. Just ask Barnstable Schools superintendent Dr. Mary Czajkowski.

"He's a special individual, a terrific coach, a rare teacher and mentor," said Czajkowski. "He is so well respected and creates so much pride by what he does.

"As a former coach I can see the impact he's made as a coach and it goes far beyond the court or the sport.

"We're seeing a pay it forward here in Barnstable with coach Turco. He has such a positive and life-long impact with so many of his former players that they become coaches. Everyone follows his team."

How's this year's team, his latest unbeaten squad, looking?

"This team is young ... very young," said Turco. "We lost 95 percent of our offense last year, but we return all-state setter [Kayla Crook](#), who passed over 1,000 assists last year and has more than 1,500 for her career."

Through just eight matches this season, Crook leads the team thus far with 216 assists. She has plenty of firepower with a pair of 6-footers in Colleen Koen (70 kills) and Meghan Mamlock (20 kills). The team's top hitter is 5-11 senior Regan Bristol (84) kills, followed by Koen, Hannah Andres (55) and Colleen Kennedy (51).

Stephanie Martin leads the team in digs with 104 followed by Andres with 69.

Turco says his "juniors are pretty good. We carry five or six seniors every year, so last year's juniors have their chance this year."

They are making the most of that chance. In Barnstable's first eight matches, they have outscored their opponents by a two-to-one point margin.

"The key is getting them introduced to volleyball at a young age," Turco said. "We host a camp for incoming second graders through incoming eighth graders and every year have more than 200 players."

Turco is the key to that introduction.

"People begin at a very young age wanting to play for coach Turco," Czajkowski said. "You hear it throughout the community. They can't wait to get to high school to play for him."

Interestingly, Turco's first year of coaching in 1988, yielded just five wins in 16 matches.

His secret?

"Through incredible work ethic it is possible to win with different players," he explained. "You're only as successful as the will of your players. You have to practice and take time to develop the will of your players."



Courtesy photo

The Barnstable captains (L-R) Anna Strock, Meghan Mamlock, Regan Bristol, Colleen Koen and Kayla Crook.

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