



A Henry County girls soccer camper dribbles down the field during a scrimmage at Thursday's camp session.

SOCER CAMP ACTION

ABBY HOOVEN

The Henry County High School boys and girls soccer teams held their annual youth camps on June 18-20.

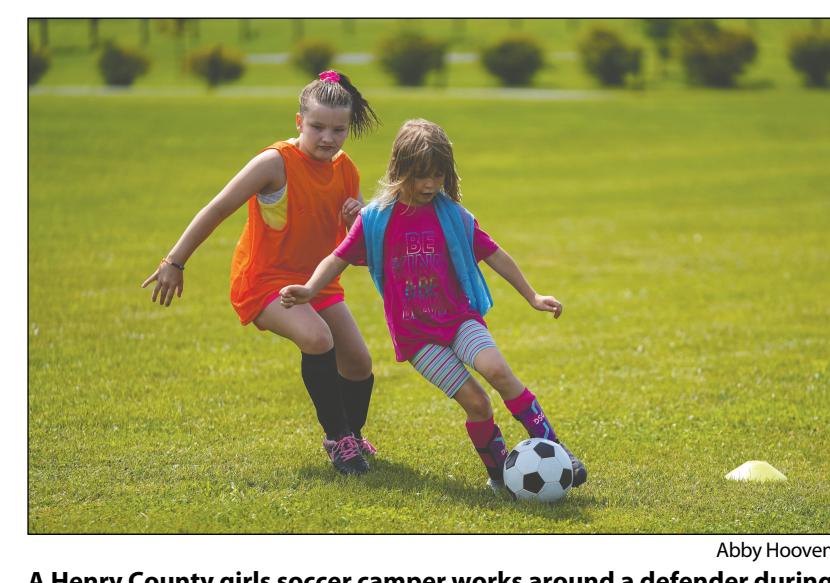
Campers from first to eighth grade learned a variety of soccer skills during the three-day camp, and put their training to the test with scrimmages and competitions.



A Henry County boys soccer camper sends a shot toward the goal during Thursday's camp session.



A Henry County boys soccer camper shoots near the goal on Thursday, June 19.



A Henry County girls soccer camper works around a defender during a scrimmage on Thursday, June 19.

Dedicated coaching duo transforms Eminence baseball

ABBY HOOVEN

Six years ago, a neighborhood walk changed the lives of Jamie Tingle and T.J. Kelley, and the trajectory of the Eminence baseball program.

Before the 2020 season, Eminence's middle school team was searching for its next head coach when Tingle was referred to the job by another parent on his son's Little League team.

"I was hesitant at first but then learned that they didn't have a baseball coach that was willing to take the middle school job, and I knew my son was going into that age," said Tingle.

Tingle filled the program's need by accepting the position but needed an assistant coach for his staff.

One day, Tingle strolled into Kelley's neighborhood, stopping in his yard to ask if he'd be interested in helping coach the Warriors.

Kelley, who was coaching a 10U baseball team at the time to fill a need for volunteers in the Little League program, agreed to serve as an assistant coach.

Neither coach could have predicted the impact that conversation would have on each other and the Eminence baseball program, though.

"He warned me about what we were walking into, and it would take a lot of work, but we both have the same vision, and we were both on board with it," Kelley said. "Jamie and I knew that this wasn't going to be an easy task. Although we knew there was talent on the team, they needed to know that people believed in them."

When both coaches joined the program, Eminence's baseball team was struggling to generate wins. At the varsity level, the Warriors had several consecutive losing seasons, including a winless record in 2017.

"Honestly, T.J. and I both noticed that there was a mentality of, 'We are Eminence baseball, we don't expect to win,'" Tingle said.

In their first year coaching, the duo set out to reshape that mindset. However, the opportunity was short-lived, as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the season.

"Our middle school team that COVID took out was going to be a lot of fun to watch. That team had it, so much so that Jamie made a bet with them that if they went undefeated, he would get the logo tattooed on his arm," said Kelley.

"And to their defense, they didn't lose a game, so I believe he still owes them that tattoo."

Initially, Tingle expected to coach for one year before searching for someone else to take over, but one year turned into three as the middle school head coach.

"That first full year we had was rough. I think we won one game or maybe two. The second full year, we had an 84 winning season," Tingle said.

During his third middle school season, the varsity head coaching role opened, and Tingle was approached for the job.

"No one else seemed interested in the job and I cared for those guys and didn't want to see the program suffer. T.J. agreed and we decided



Jamie Tingle celebrates an Eminence run with Craft Johnson during Eminence's district tournament win over Trimble County in May.



Jamie Tingle and T.J. Kelley observe from the dugout during Eminence's district semifinal game against Henry County in May.

"My whole life, my dream was to be a high school coach. My only regret in life is not getting started sooner. It was a lot harder on me to step away than I thought it would. The last game of the year, while having our team meeting and all those kids looking at me, really crushed me because I knew and they knew it would be the last time," said Kelley.

The departure was even tougher on Kelley knowing he coached a couple current Eminence players on his first Little League team, which is where his baseball coaching journey began years ago.

"The team, the young men that have been such a strong part of my life over the past few years, that's the hardest part, knowing that they hold the same love for me as I do them," said Kelley. "It's said a lot that coaches care about their team as if they are their own. It's true, and that's why it is hard to leave."

The Warriors followed with seven wins in 2024 before ending the 2025 season with a 12-12 record.

"There have been tough roads along the way but this team we have now want to take it to the next level. They have had the taste of successful seasons, where they see crowds at the games that want to see them win. Their friends come to the games to watch them play, and when fans, (the) school, and the community believe in them, they feed off that energy," said Kelley.

Former and current coaches have noticed the team's climb to success as well, texting Kelley or sharing encouragement after games about the coaching staff's work to elevate the program.

"I'm humbled by other coaches from our district noticing that Eminence is now a competitive and tough team to play," said Kelley.

Six years after embarking on their coaching journey together, both Tingle and Kelley stepped down from their positions at the conclusion of the 2025 season.

"It was a tough decision, but my plate is very full, and I didn't feel like I could contribute enough to the team anymore. I am a pastor, have a full-time job where I would usually have to drive for hours after a game to get to another state for work. I have been a board member for 5 years and that's a lot too," said Tingle.

Kelley said the decision was difficult to make, but noted it was time for someone else to take the team to the next level.

Beyond the duo and their coaching

staff, the support from players, parents, administrators and the community made the improvement possible.

"I just hope they all know how much we appreciate their support," said Tingle.

What started as a yard conversation not only led to the turnaround of a baseball program, but also kick-started an unbreakable bond between Kelley and Tingle.

"T.J. is like a brother to me," said Tingle. "I knew T.J. was interested in baseball and was a player back in the day and something just kept telling me to ask him to help me years ago. I thank God every day that I did because I gained one of the best friends I could have."

The brotherly connection was cemented on the field but will certainly extend beyond their coaching days.

"One of our assistant coaches looked at us this year and told us, 'Your all's relationship is the greatest.'

You can cut each other deep with a joke, and in the same breath tell each other you love each other," said Kelley. "We weren't close then but the bond over the past few years has been unbreakable. Cookouts, playing cards, family gatherings, anything that is going on you will see our families together."

The pair's wives were also integral parts of Eminence's transformation, keeping the households in order during the season and working the concession stand together each home game.

"From the being the 'Golden Girls' in the concession stand, to holding the house down and keeping it in order during the season, listening to us complain and just supporting us anyway possible, Jennifer and Amy do it all and usually have a smile on their faces when people need something," said Kelley.

Despite leaving their roles, Kelley and Tingle will still be around Eminence athletics. Tingle will continue to serve as Eminence's football and basketball announcer, while sharing his singing talents for the pregame National Anthem on occasion.

Kelley will also stay around the basketball and baseball programs going forward.

"My hope for the future is that Eminence baseball will continue the path we have taken it," said Kelley. "We just want this team to accomplish all their goals, and we will be there cheering them on the whole way."