Although her playing career and early coaching stints took place in Southern California, Jennifer Wright brought her coaching skills to Auburn in 2006, where she felt right at home, leading her Placer High School girls volleyball teams to dominance.

For her successful 15-year coaching career that brought nine Pioneer Valley League championships from 2006 to 2017, Wright will be inducted into the PHS Athletic Hall of Fame on April 27 in a ceremony in the school's iconic Earl Crabbe Gym.

Wright began playing volleyball in the seventh grade and later was a a four-year starter on the volleyball team at Marina High School in Huntington Beach. She was twice named to the all-league team, and also played basketball and participated in track.

Her skills on the volleyball court got her a full ride scholarship to UCLA from 1988-91. In her four years there, the Bruins made the NCAA Final Four Tournament each year and claimed the national championship in her junior and senior years.

"Winning the NCAA championship twice was incredible," she said, and referred to the relationships she made with her teammates. "I had the opportunity to play with amazing athletes who are still close friends."

She called her coaches, Head Coach Andy Banachowski and assistants Jeanne Reeves and Greg "Goo" Giovanazzi amazing.

Following college, Wright played pro volleyball with the Santa Monica Sharks and the Sacramento Stars, but she rued that women's pro volleyball didn't really take off until later.

Her coaching career began while still at UCLA, coaching at the club level, then as a graduate assistant at UOP, and then as a Junior Varsity Coach at St. Francis under Lynne Wright, no relation.

Her high school coaching career really took off with five years at Etiwanda High School in Rancho Cucamonga. Her team won the league championship in her first year, and several other titles while she was there.

And then came her successful career at Placer. "I am so grateful for my years as coach at Placer." She said. "It felt like I had always been a Hillman, that I was supposed to be here."

She pointed to the school's culture and history, its athletic heritage for feeling this way. "I just felt the great support of the community and the school."

During her 15 years, her teams won nine PVL championships and made the playoffs each year. She was also named the league's Coach of the Year twice. Asked to pick a favorite team, she couldn't, saying "I had a lot of amazing teams,"

Career highlights included winning the league title in her first year at Placer, beating Colfax, which was a perennial power in the area.

She is proud that many of her athletes went on to play in college, and she called coaching her daughter Emily, who graduated in 2019, as a special moment.

Her coaching philosophy was based on providing a strong environment for her athletes. "It's important for girls to have fun, work hard, and build relationships," she said, mentioning how important it was for her athletes to bond. "My bonded teams went on to battle for each other. The teams with the strongest bonds trusted each other."

As a coach, she believed in positive feedback and stressed the significance of supporting the development of girls to become women. "As a coach, it's an opportunity to watch kids mature — seeing them go through their youthful shenanigans, grow up, and become women."

She also admitted to the twin effects of coaching. “Coaching is life-changing. It’s had a great impact on my athletes’ lives, and a huge impact on me, as well.”

Wright stays busy outside of high school coaching. In 2011 she started the local youth volleyball club, Auburn Aces, and also coached there, but not at present. Off the court, she has been a Speech Language Pathologist for 26 years, and currently works for Placer County SELPA, as a program specialist.

Wright and her husband Dan have two daughters, Emily, 23, and Alison, 21.

The Athletic Hall of Fame ceremony will be held in the Earl Crabbe Gym on April 27. A reception will begin at 6 pm followed by the induction ceremony at 7 pm.

Tickets for the reception cost $25 until April 15, and $35 after, and are available online at placerathletichalloffame.org.

The 7 pm ceremony is free of charge to the public.