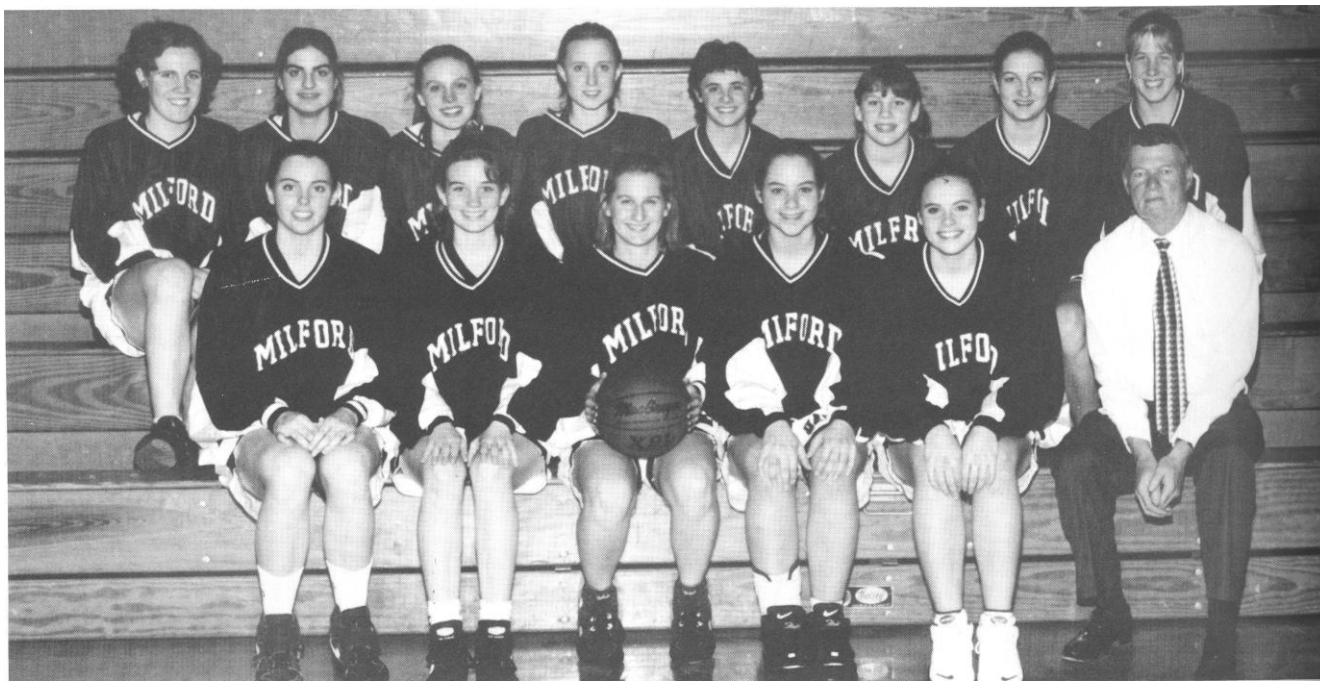




Back row — (Left to right) Lauren Murray, Nancy Barroso, Sarah Brault, Jessica Thomas, Alyssa Balboni, Jessica Haynes, Jen Kelly, Brianne Rideout, front row — (Left to Right) Melissa Alpers, Jen Brennan, Carly DiCostanza, Nicole Faessler, Dee Sauter, and Coach Tom Collins.

1996 Girls Basketball Team Central Mass Division 1 Champions

The 1996 Girls Basketball team reached heights never before achieved by previous squads. When the final whistle sounded in a Division I State Semi Final loss to Pittsfield, it was not the end of just a great season. It was the culmination of four great building years.

Coach Tom Collins, assisted by Lou Piazza, had begun his coaching tenure at Milford High School in 1992-93 with this group of girls. Four-year starters Melissa Alpers, Jen Brennan, Nicole Faessler and Dee Sauter, along with fellow senior Carly DiCostanza, laid the foundation for the best girls' basketball team in Milford High School's history.

When this quintet entered MHS, the team was coming off an 0-16 season. Their initial campaign yielded five wins, followed by eight, and then fifteen and their first trip to the district tournament in over a dozen years. The 1995-96 team, with the addition of sophomore point guard Jess Haynes, jelled into a championship squad. Juniors Alyssa Balboni, Jen Kelly, Lauren Murray Nancy Barosso and Brianne Rideout provided defense and scoring depth off the bench.

During the District tournament run, the team displayed the determination and teamwork that marked its play all season. After a quarterfinal rout of Fitchburg, Melissa Alpers scored the final four points of the game, including a game-winning three pointer with 30 seconds left, to defeat defending champion North Middlesex, 39-36. Jess Haynes sealed the victory with a rejection of the potential game-tying attempt. In the finals, led by Haynes' defense and Nikki Faessler's rebounding, the team stormed back from a seven point deficit with a little over two minutes to play to defeat Holy Name, a team that had soundly beaten them only a week before. Dee Sauter scored a game-high 25 points, including 5 three-pointers and the game-winning lay-up.