

Franciso Blanco – Francisco “**Mr. Soccer**” Blanco came to the United States in 1955 from Mexico, attending Appalachian State University, where he was instrumental in establishing their soccer program.

He began his teaching career at Camp Lejeune High School in 1961, organizing the first high school soccer team in the county in 1965. He led Camp Lejeune to a State Soccer Championship in 1966 and a runner-up finish in 1967. The boys’ team record was 299-163-19 in 36 seasons, with 26 state playoff appearances; the girls’ team record was 76-41-7 in nine seasons, with six state playoff appearances. He then coached at Northside High School for 4 years, taking his 2006 team to State Playoffs with an 11-5-3 record. He started the “Unidas” Soccer Team with young ladies from Lejeune, Jacksonville and White Oak, representing North Carolina in the 1981 Regional Tournament in Tampa Florida.

For 20+ summers he conducted the Down East Soccer Camp for the area’s youth and was for several years a guest coach and counselor at camps at Clemson University and UNC-Chapel Hill.

Franciso Blanco was named Coach of the Year in 1973, 78, and 85 by the NC Scholastic Soccer Coaches Association. In 1987 he received the Soccer Coach Silver Award and the National High School Coaching Award. He was inducted into the NC Soccer Hall of Fame as a Pioneer of the Game in 1991.