When the final whistle blew on Friday night, former Independence head coach Tom Knotts achieved quite a feat by taking is fourth school to a state championship game.

Knotts and his Dutch Fork team got off to a slow start to begin the season. They were 2-3 in late September, but have since won nine-straight games and will face Gaffney on Saturday for the 4A Division-I title, his 12th overall title game appearance.

Knotts, who retired from teaching in North Carolina after the 2009 season, took over Dutch Fork, a struggling team that had posted a 9-25 record in the three years prior to his arrival. He quickly turned them into a contender and has posted three 10-win seasons in a row.

By taking the Silver Foxes to the finals, it means that he's taken every school he's ever coached to a state championship game. All of his championship game appearances have been at the highest 4A level.

His first finals appearance was in 1987 when he was at Harding, a 40-21 loss to Garner. He made two more trips in 1991 and '93 where he came up short at West Charlotte before leading the Lions to the 1995 championship.

He then led Independence to six titles from 2000 to '06 and a runner-up finish in 2007.

Knotts coaching record officially stands at 327-69 but he's actually at 343-53 on the field as two of his West Charlotte teams were forced to forfeit wins.

The Tommy Knotts file: NC [illegible] Assistant Coach 2004 [illegible] Fork HS: Head Coach 2010-Present [illegible] **29 years** [illegible] 2 games) [illegible] across the Carolinas. @CarolinaPreps1 for the latest