

Dorrington made smooth transition at Xavier

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Some young coaches may have shied away from accepting the challenge of coaching the Xavier High School girls soccer team this season.

Bailey Dorrington embraced it.

Dorrington, 24, starred on state championship teams at Xavier in 2004, 2006 and 2007 and was named to the all-tournament team four straight years, capped by serving as captain as a senior.

She returned to Xavier last year as an assistant coach and helped the Saints nab another title, then willingly succeeded Doug Graham as head coach this season despite the "pressure" of trying to win an eighth title in a row.

"I thought I'd like it and enjoy it," she said. "And I do. I enjoy it way more than I thought I would, which I told my mom in the first few weeks."

Dorrington calmly steered the Saints to another state title Saturday with a 5-0 victory over Sioux City East in the Class 2A finals in Des Moines. That gives her five state titles with the possibility of more in the future.

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Dorrington played soccer at Drake University and worked as a club soccer coach for seven years. She took the next step this year and became a head coach at the high school level.

"I don't know ... I just knew I'd be good for the girls," she said. "The final goal is, yeah, we want to win, but they need a role model, an older female who's not Brittany Spears or whoever you want to name. You know what I'm saying? Because there aren't a lot of woman coaches."

By "older" female, Dorrington meant older like an older sister. Kayla Armstrong, the star of this year's team, considers Dorrington a good friend. "We definitely love Bailey," she said.

Armstrong will continue her soccer career at Drake. It's no coincidence that Dorrington also played for the Bulldogs.

"She had a lot of influence on my choice to go to Drake," said Armstrong. "Hearing her stories and watching how successful her life has turned out really helped me decide."

Dorrington knew her relationship with the players had to change this season when she became their head coach instead of their assistant coach. By all accounts, she handled it superbly.

"There is a fine line between being their friend and being their coach," she said. "And I had to switch that when I went from assistant to head coach. Heavily. But we're still close."

The Saints did not have to call her "Coach Dorrington" this season. "Nope. It's Bailey," she said. "But I lay down the law, don't get me wrong."

Dorrington tried to make it fun for the Saints. She gave the seniors more of a voice in team decisions and let them joke around at appropriate times at practices and games.

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She let Armstrong wear her engagement ring whenever Armstrong scored three goals in a game, which happened fairly often, and let the girls play their music at games.

Dorrington even joked about being only 24 years old.

"In fact," she said, "I'm not old enough to drive a rental car, so my mom had to drive the team and I sat in the passenger seat. Yes, I'm dead serious."

You have to be 25 years old to drive a rental car. There's always next year, when Dorrington and the Saints will be aiming for their ninth straight title.