

Quick courtship puts Henry in charge at Wash

Written by Jim Ecker

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Brent Henry went home Monday night as one of the assistant coaches for the Cedar Rapids Washington baseball team.

When he returned the next day, he was the new head coach.

Henry, 31, has succeeded [Byron Schlotterback](#) as Washington's interim head coach, but he'll have the job all season and perhaps beyond.

Schlotterback has taken a leave of absence from Cedar Rapids Community Schools for unexplained reasons after three years as Washington's head coach. He also has been the director of vocal music at Jefferson High School.

Washington reacted quickly and promoted Henry, a Cornell College grad who has been an assistant coach at the collegiate and high school levels for five years apiece. Washington High School principal Ralph Plagman, activities director Paul James, assistant principal Mike Johnson and assistant principal Rick Williams met earlier this week and decided Henry was the right man for the job.

"Paul James and Dr. Plagman approached me on Tuesday and asked me," Henry said after practice Thursday. "They said Byron is taking a personal leave of absence, we've got an opening for an interim coach, is that something you'd be interested in?"

"They asked and I said, 'Absolutely.' It was instantaneous. I didn't have to think about that one bit."

Henry was one of Schlotterback's assistant coaches for two years at Anamosa High School and three years at Washington. Practice began Monday, and on Tuesday he was the new man

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in charge.

"So I learned on the second day of practice that things were going to change a little bit," he said with a smile. "But the guys handled it really well. We talked on Tuesday. The goals don't change. Our expectations are still to compete every day, to compete for a league championship. From their standpoint, it's no different."

This has been an eventful school year for Henry. Last October he married Leah Tweedy, a teacher at Cedar Rapids Prairie, and on Tuesday he said "yes" when Dr. Plagman and James popped the question.

Henry played baseball at Cornell (an outfielder/DH) and received a twin degree in economics and sports management. He served as an assistant coach with the Rams from 2003-2005 and again this past season. He also was an assistant for one year at Wartburg College while pursuing his teaching degree at the University of Northern Iowa.

Henry wanted to become a head coach some day, but naturally did not think it would happen like this. He feels prepared after serving as an assistant coach at Washington from 2008-10.

"Certainly there are more responsibilities, but those are responsibilities I'm looking forward to having," he said. "This is a position that I want."

Henry does not plan major changes in Washington baseball, but will tweak a few things.

"I'm sure I'll have my own touches," he said. "I think the guys are finding out that practices are running a little differently right now."

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"Some things will be different, some things won't change at all," he said. "I want to be aggressive. That will be the same thing.

"We'll look to hit early in the count, we'll look to take the extra base and we'll put a lot of pressure on the base paths. So those things will absolutely stay the same."

Henry praised the players for the way they've handled the coaching change so far.

"We can either respond negatively or we can respond positively," he said. "So right now I'm just looking to make sure that everybody responds positively to the situation."

Henry, originally from Aurora, Colo., is a business teacher at Linn-Mar High School.

Phil Richmond and Saxon Dolan, two recent Washington baseball players, are two of Henry's assistant coaches. Richmond is currently playing at Kirkwood. Dolan, a 2010 Washington grad, attends Grand View College and was a member of the football team there last fall.

Henry hopes to add Kaleb Heffner to the coaching staff. Heffner, from North Liberty, attends the University of Mobile (Ala.) and has been a pitcher for the baseball team there.