

Roloff retiring as teacher, not sure if he'll coach

Written by Jim Ecker

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Dennis Roloff has decided to retire as a teacher at Kennedy High School and said Monday he "more than likely" will retire as the girls basketball and boys track coach as well.

Roloff, 57, applied Monday for the early-retirement package being offered by Cedar Rapids Community Schools and said he's leaning "60-40" toward retiring as a coach.

"I'll sit down with my activities director (Aaron Stecker) and talk to him about it," Roloff said Monday after basketball practice. "I've already kind of told him no."

Roloff said he's not comfortable with the idea of being a coach without also being a teacher at Kennedy, but made it clear he has not resigned from coaching at this point.

"I feel like you miss out on a lot when you're not at the school and seeing the girls every day," he said. "I felt all along that if I retired from teaching, I will probably be retiring from coaching also. But I'm having a good time with the coaching part yet."

Roloff has wrestled with his decision to retire from teaching -- and maybe coaching -- for several weeks. Monday was the deadline for applying for early retirement at the school district office, and he beat the deadline by about two hours Monday afternoon.

"I ran it down during sixth period and hand-delivered it," he said.

Roloff has won 292 games in 21 years as Kennedy's girls basketball coach. The Cougars reached the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament last season and finished 21-3, but they graduated all five starters and are 3-7 this year.

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Roloff has taken Kennedy to the state tournament five times, with two trips to the semifinals. The Cougars lost to the eventual state champion all five times.

Roloff will be coaching the Kennedy boys track team for the 14th year this spring. He was a track star himself at Jefferson, winning a state title and setting a school record in the 440 yard dash. He also held the school record in the 440 at the University of Northern Iowa until Joey Woody broke it.

The Cedar Rapids Community School district is offering early retirement this year for budget reasons. Roloff said his package would include 104 paid sick days, access to 10 years of health insurance and a \$25,000 bonus.

"They made the incentives very attractive," he said. Roloff will get those incentives whether he retires as a coach or not.

He struggled with his decision all weekend.

"Yeah, I did," he said. "I feel like I'm too young to retire, and right now I don't know what I want to do with the rest of my life.

"Teaching is a pretty good job," he said. "It's different every day and you get to be around a lot of neat young people, and I'm going to miss that."

Roloff is an industrial tech instructor at Kennedy, teaching wood shop, construction tech and wood tech. He also teaches physical education.

Roloff graduated from UNI in 1975. He coached for two years at HLV, 12 years at Jefferson and 21 years at Kennedy.

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He said the highlight of his career was not a particular victory or achievement. Rather, it was "the opportunity to coach. I think that's been a highlight of mine."