

Edwards finds a home at Jefferson

Written by Mike Koolbeck

Friday, 06 April 2012 21:53 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 April 2012 14:57



For the past three years, Jason Edwards said he has felt like a man without a home.

Edwards is a counselor at Jefferson and during the fall he has been an assistant football coach for the J-Hawks. But during the winter he has been an assistant girls basketball coach at Washington.

"I kind of felt like the Washington people hated me in the fall and the Jefferson people hated me in the winter," he said.

He won't have to leave the southwest side campus anymore. Edwards was named the J-Hawks head girls basketball coach Friday. He replaces Larry Niemeyer, who resigned last month after 34 years at the school.

"Jefferson was the right opportunity for me, not just from an athletics standpoint, but as a counselor, too," Edwards said. "Coaching football gave me the opportunity to meet some kids that I wouldn't otherwise meet as a counselor, and now as basketball coach I get a chance to meet more kids. I get to feel like I'm more a part of the community."

"I'm happy to have the opportunity to lead a program with the great tradition that Jefferson has, to be able to fill the shoes of a legendary coach like Coach Niemeyer."

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Edwards is a 1991 graduate of Cedar Rapids Washington where he played football and ran track. He received his bachelors degree from Cornell College in Mount Vernon where he majored in sociology and had a minor in ethnic studies. He also played football for the Rams. Edwards received a masters degree in secondary school counseling and vocational rehabilitation from Drake University three years ago.

Edwards has coached football for 13 years and was formerly the sophomore football coach at Washington. He has coached girls basketball at Washington for eight years after being recruited from the boys ranks at Jane Boyd Community House.

"I did that for about three years and I guess somebody told Coach (Frank) Howell about me after he had been here for a year," Edwards said. "He talked me into coaching with him.

"I have really fallen in love with girls basketball the last few years. I've been around some great girls who have been great role models for my daughter."

Edwards, who will be 39 on April 17, is married and has a 6-year-old daughter named Jaciana.

"Jason Edwards brings a lot of energy to our basketball program," Jefferson Principal Chuck O'Donnell said in a prepared statement. "He is a student of the game and has learned a lot from a very strong CRW program and Frank Howell. He knows how to get the best from student athletes and also how to make basketball a fun experience for all involved.

"Coach Edwards is the kind of coach that inspires the best from his players and will work hard to develop the love for basketball for current and future J-Hawks. He is a tireless worker that will continue a proud tradition of girl's basketball at Jefferson High School."

Edwards will have a senior-laden team at Jefferson this season. Three players, Taylor Jacobson, Rachel Broghammer and Kaitlyn Davidson, were slowed by injury last season. Maddie Koolbeck was unanimous all-Metro and all-conference and was named to the coaches association third team all-state team.

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"We have a good mix of juniors and seniors," Edwards said. "We have to develop some depth and find some kids that can give us some support."

"We want to be a competitive team every night. We want teams to think that when they come to play Jefferson, they better lace 'em up."

Edwards comes from a Washington program that emphasizes a pressing defense and a fastbreak offense.

"You have to teach what you know," he said. "I learned from Frank Howell and he's one of the best coaches in the state."

Edwards said he plans to meet with his new team next week.