

Luehrsmann named Xavier basketball coach

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ryan Luehrsmann thought seriously about becoming a basketball coach when he finished playing for the Iowa Hawkeyes 12 years ago, but the right opportunity did not come along.

Now it has.

Luehrsmann, 34, was named the boys basketball coach at Xavier High School on Friday after spending two years as the freshman coach with the Saints.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "It's all very exciting."

Luehrsmann was an all-state guard at Cedar Rapids Washington in 1995 and 1996 before joining the Hawkeyes. He played his first three years at Iowa for Tom Davis and finished his UI career with Steve Alford.

He wanted to become a coach himself at the time.

"I thought about it a lot when I was in college," he said. "I went to work summer camps at Duke and at Kansas and gave it some real hard thought at the time, but there wasn't really a graduate assistant position available around the area."

Instead of coaching, Luehrsmann entered the business world and spent about 10 years in pharmaceutical sales and medical device sales. He kept coaching in the back of his mind, but

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didn't have the time to pursue it.

"I kind of knew in my heart I would want to get back and get involved (in coaching) if things ever changed," he said.

Things changed when he became an insurance agent at Bouslog Insurance in Marion. That gave him the flexibility to begin coaching at Xavier at the freshman level, and he applied for the head coaching job this spring when Matt Jenkins stepped aside after three years.

Luehrsmann will remain with Bouslog Insurance while coaching at Xavier.

Luehrsmann played two different styles in college, first under Davis and then Alford, and said he plans to incorporate both of their systems at Xavier.

"I'm near and dear to allowing kids to get up and down," he said, preferring a fast pace. "I'm sure you'll see elements of both their philosophies, and I've got some of my own ideas that I've picked up from watching other programs close by and across the country."

Luehrsmann has never coached above the freshman level in high school. Now he'll be tangling with some of the top coaches in the state next season in the Mississippi Valley Conference.

"It won't be easy," he said. "I'm sure those guys will teach me a few lessons during the process."

Luehrsmann was the two-time MVC Player of the Year in 1995 and 1996 at Washington. He won the Chris Street Award at Iowa in 2000 and played on two NCAA tournament teams with the Hawkeyes, reaching the Sweet 16 in 1999 in Davis' final year at Iowa.