

Goodall will help Kennedy basketball team, too

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Rapids Kennedy High School has found a clever way to steer more of its volleyball players onto the girls basketball team.

The Cougars have finally persuaded volleyball coach Michelle Goodall to serve as an assistant basketball coach as well, which could lead to more multi-sport athletes at the school.

Several girls basketball coaches in the Metro area have gotten frustrated in recent years as more and more talented athletes picked volleyball over hoops. Now Kennedy has found a smooth way, perhaps, to help alleviate the trend.

Goodall said she's always encouraged her volleyball players to join the basketball team, but now her suggestions might carry a little more weight.

"I've always preached it," she said Thursday. "I've always said, 'You've got to do both,' and I used myself as an example because I did both in high school."

Goodall, 45, played volleyball and basketball at Kennedy, and she also played both sports at different times in college. She's been the successful volleyball coach at Kennedy for 13 years and coached basketball for two years in Colorado.

Tony Vis has succeeded Dennis Roloff as the girls basketball coach at Kennedy. Goodall will be an assistant coach with the varsity and will be the jayvee coach.

Aaron Stecker, Kennedy's athletic director, has wanted to get Goodall involved with the basketball program for several years, but she felt her job with USA Volleyball and a busy family life made it too hard.

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"Up until this year my answer was somewhat of a laugh, because of my schedule. I said there's no way I can do it," she remarked.

Stecker asked again and Goodall didn't laugh.

"I said, 'Let me think about it this time.' I asked my family what they thought and we decided I was going to go for it.

"Everything kind of fell into place," she said. "We're going to give it a shot and see how it works and we'll go from there. Up until this year it was absolutely no, but now it's feasible."

Stecker finally got Goodall to say yes.

"He told me why he hired me," Goodall said. "He likes the relationships I'm able to build with my volleyball athletes, and he thinks that's important for the basketball team as well."

There has been a conflict at some schools during the winter between varsity girls basketball and club volleyball. High school volleyball is played in the late summer and fall, but it's followed quickly by club volleyball programs that have forced some girls to stick with volleyball and shy away from basketball.

Goodall thinks there's time in the winter to do both.

"Yes, there is," she said emphatically. "But it takes a lot of communication, and honestly you have to be kind of careful on what club you pick. Because some clubs, they demand that that's their top priority. You've got to be at all of these events. But there are other clubs that are willing to work with you.

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"If they play their cards right, they are very capable of doing both."

Goodall has coached club volleyball teams herself, but said she has trained her assistant coaches to assume those duties this year as she steps aside.

Goodall steered Kennedy to the semifinals of the Class 4A state volleyball tournament in 2009, 2010 and 2011, losing to Iowa City West each time, including a marathon five-set match last fall. She anticipates having another good team this year, but said it might take awhile for the pieces to fall into place.

"We have a lot of nice athletes," she said.

Morgan Martin, a 6-foot-2 all-state basketball player at Quincy (Ill.) Notre Dame last season, is transferring to Kennedy this year and is thinking about joining the volleyball team as well. Goodall hopes she does.

"I'd love to have her involved," Goodall said. "When you have athletes like that walking your halls, it's hard to not encourage them."

Goodall might be able to steer a few volleyball players onto the basketball team, and she might be able to steer a few basketball players onto the volleyball squad.

"I'm looking forward to this," she said.

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