

Morrissey boys make playoffs a family affair

Written by Jim Ecker

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Mike Morrissey and his two brothers have forced their parents to make a tough decision Wednesday night when the Class 4A playoffs begin.

Mike, the oldest brother, is the head coach at Cedar Rapids Prairie, which opens the playoffs Wednesday against Dubuque Senior at the University of Dubuque field.

Joe Morrissey, the middle boy, is an assistant coach at Davenport Assumption, which hosts Waterloo East Wednesday.

Jim Morrissey, the youngest brother, is a junior at No. 1 seed Pleasant Valley, which hosts Burlington.

All three Morrissey brothers will be participating in the Class 4A tournament at the same time, forcing their parents to choose.

"I think I lose out on that one," Mike Morrissey said Sunday, laughing. "The other two games are in the Quad Cities (where his parents live).

"They're going to go for the first half of the Pleasant Valley game and then they'll head over to Brady Street to watch the rest of the Assumption game.

"All three of us are in the playoffs. It makes for a fun fall for our entire family."

It's no accident all three brothers got heavily involved with football. Their father, Ed Morrissey, is a Hall of Fame football coach who won 177 games and a state title at Pleasant Valley High School. He's currently an assistant coach at St. Ambrose University and active in the game.

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When Mike Morrissey has a question about football, he calls his dad.

"Every week. If not daily, it's been every week," Mike said. "He's as good a resource as I'll ever find. We're very lucky from that aspect.

"For me, to this day, I still think my dad is the best coach I've ever been around."

Beginning in about the fifth grade, Mike served as a ballboy for his father's clubs at Pleasant Valley. Later, he became the quarterback for playoff teams at PV in 1999 and 2000 before playing at Upper Iowa University.

"I was taking five-step drops in our basement back in Davenport when I was 6 or 7 years old," he related.

Ed Morrissey won a Class 3A state title at Pleasant Valley in 1985. Joe Morrissey won a Class 4A title as a player at Bettendorf in 2007. And Mike's wife, Jessica, won a state softball title as a high school player in Arizona.

So far, there have been no state titles for Mike as a player or coach.

"There's a running joke about that at Thanksgiving," he said. "I sit there and envy them more than anything. We're hoping to add one of our own sometime."

As you might expect, football is a hot topic of conversation in the Morrissey household at Thanksgiving. Mike's wife, mother and two sisters will help with dinner while the men talk football.

"We will sit and talk football pretty much all day long," he said. "It never stops."

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This is Mike Morrissey's second year as the head coach at Prairie. The Hawks finished with a 2-7 record last season, then jumped all the way to 6-3 this year and are the 10th seed for Wednesday's game at No. 7 seed Dubuque Senior.

A youthful and energetic coach, he celebrated his 30th birthday Oct. 5 when the Hawks defeated Linn-Mar, 49-27. He led Thornridge High School in Dolton, Ill., to the Illinois playoffs in 2010 in his only year as the head coach there and is looking forward to his first venture into the Iowa playoffs as a coach.

"This is what you work for all year," he said. "You work for these opportunities and you hope you put yourself in enough good positions to get here.

"For me in particular, growing up in Iowa and being around Iowa high school football, making the playoffs was always, always a dream of mine."

Now he's there as a head coach.

It's possible Morrissey could face his brothers' teams in the playoffs, but it would take a few upsets. Prairie could face Davenport Assumption in the quarterfinals Nov. 2 and Pleasant Valley in the semifinals Nov. 9, but the Hawks would have to defeat Dubuque Senior and probably Iowa City West to make it.

"We'll have to play pretty well to get there," he said.