

Petersen leaving KCC for Jackrabbits

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Bryan Petersen, one of the top young basketball coaches in the country, apparently has decided to leave Kirkwood Community College to become an assistant coach at South Dakota State.

No official announcements have been made by South Dakota State or Kirkwood, but the Metro Sports Report has confirmed from numerous sources that the move will happen.

Petersen has declined comment.

Kirkwood athletic director Doug Wagemester has confirmed that Petersen probably will be leaving and that the Kirkwood players have been informed about the impending move.

Petersen, 31, led the Eagles to the NJCAA Division II national title this season with a 31-4 record. He also led Kirkwood to the national title in 2016, giving him two championships in four years. He was named the NJCAA Division II National Coach of the Year both times.

Doug Wilson, the national Player of the Year at Kirkwood this season, has signed to continue his career at South Dakota State, so Wilson and Petersen will be united again.

The Jackrabbits are an NCAA Division I program that competes in the Summit Conference. Petersen and Eric Henderson, the new head coach at South Dakota State, know each other from their days at Iowa State.

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Henderson worked for the ISU program when Petersen played for the Cyclones as a junior and senior from 2007-2009.

Henderson became the head coach at South Dakota State when T.J. Otzelberger, a former Iowa State assistant, left the Jackrabbits last month to become the head coach at UNLV. Henderson, one of Otzelberger's assistants, was promoted by South Dakota State a short time later.

Petersen was an All-American guard at Kirkwood, where he impressed Wagemester with his basketball IQ and work habits when Wagemester was head coach. Petersen started 64 straight games at Iowa State and spent three years as an assistant in their program for former ISU coaches Greg McDermott and Fred Hoiberg.

Petersen returned to Kirkwood as one of Wagemester's assistants for one season, then succeeded Wagemester as head coach when Wagemester stepped aside to serve as Kirkwood's full-time athletic director.

Petersen compiled a 157-38 record in six seasons as head coach. Kirkwood owns three national titles in school history, with Petersen leading the Eagles to two of them.

Petersen was only 25 years old when Wagemester named him the interim head coach, and the "interim" tag was removed after one season. Wagemester said he was impressed with Petersen from the very start, all the way back when he recruited him in high school.

"Once you get to know him, you learn real quick he's got a high IQ for the game, that he's a tireless worker," said Wagemester. "And he's competitive. He had a spirit about him. I don't know, you just call it the 'It' factor."

Wagemester said Petersen cared deeply about Kirkwood as a player, assistant coach and head coach. Wagemester was confident Petersen would do a good job as his successor as head coach because he cared so much about the school and the program.

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"It was important to him. Really important," said Wagemester. "And he could see himself here for awhile. It seemed like it could be a seamless transition, and it was all that and more."

Wagemester thinks Petersen's accomplishments at Kirkwood speak volumes for his ability.

"I think it's very impressive," he said. "It's a product of the way he approached the job. He's steady, he's smart, he's committed. He's willing to make adjustments year to year, to find ways to maybe do it a little bit better."

Petersen married his wife, Renae, during his years as Kirkwood's head coach.