

We were really excited to be able to name our new varsity football and boys basketball coaches over the last couple of weeks. I know there is a lot of interest in these positions and in high school sports in general.

Tim Austing is our new boys basketball coach. Tim, who's a social studies teacher at the Freshman School, has been a varsity assistant basketball coach at Elder High School for the past 10 years, and a key factor in that very successful program. He was also serving as a varsity assistant football coach at Sycamore High School. When Tim interviewed for our basketball coaching position, he told us he felt that being head coach at the varsity level is a commitment that will require his full attention and effort. Because of that, he indicated he doesn't plan to continue coaching football.

Shortly after we announced Tim's hiring, we were then able to announce that Aaron Fitzstephens, a physical education teacher at our Middle School, will be our new head football coach. Aaron served as a varsity assistant football coach for a number of years here, and then moved to Sycamore High School as an assistant football coach, even as he continued teaching here.

I know it might look like this was some sort of raid on the Sycamore coaching staff. It really shouldn't be viewed that way. As I noted, Aaron and Tim were already both teaching here, but coaching in another district. This is something that is fairly common, but you can imagine how complicated it makes daily life for those teachers and coaches who do that, as they scramble from one district to another every day during the season. Working it out so that they can teach and coach in the same district, however, is often a matter of waiting for the right coaching opportunity to come along. Over the past month, for both of them, that has happened.

Both Tim and Aaron really impressed us during their interviews with their plans and vision for the programs, their positive attitudes and energy, and their deep regard and respect for this school district.

We have recently named another coach as well. For many years Mark Wineberg has led our varsity girls soccer team. The Wineberg name is most known in Fairfield sports history for Mark's son Willie, a four-time Division 1 state wrestling champ – the first to ever achieve that. But Mark has left his own legacy to Fairfield sports, year after year coaching one of the most successful teams in our sports program. Mark has now retired from his coaching position, and we were very fortunate to secure Heather Ellis-Fischer as our new coach. She is an absolute dynamo of positive energy, and a very experienced and successful coach.

There is a lot going on in the athletic department. We still have an active search going on for the district's next athletic director. I know some fans are frustrated that it's taking a long time, but it's more important to find the right person than to meet an arbitrary deadline. We have an interim athletic director in place, and the athletic department staff

have all pitched in to see that everything gets done. I appreciate all their efforts very much.

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