

Sports

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Sultans of swat

Doug Roberson of Steele's Sports Company, the No. 1 ranked slow pitch team in the country, prepares to belt another home run. Steele's brought its heavy hitters to the

Canton Softball Center last weekend and left with the Coor's-Steele's Open Classic title. Details on page 3D.

ROD REED/staff photographer

Wetzel, 29, named to Schoolcraft post

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Bob Wetzel, Schoolcraft College's new men's basketball coach, wasn't wasting any time.

He was already asking for a list of phone numbers of the area's high school coaches in order to line up potential recruits.

The 29-year-old Wetzel was named Schoolcraft's new coach on Thursday by athletic director Dr. Marvin Gans.

"He has the knowledge, he's young and he's enthusiastic," said Gans of his new coach. "We also like his philosophy as far as academics."

Wetzel, who served last season as Lansing Community College's interim coach, was interviewed by Gans along with Judy Mack, athletic coordinator at the school's Learning Assistance Center, and Mike O'Toole, an English instructor and former Schoolcraft volleyball coach.

Wetzel replaces Rocky Watkins, who was released in April after posting a 100-70 record in six seasons. Last season, Watkins' 17-13 team was plagued by academic woes. (Several of the team's top players were declared ineligible at mid-term break.)

"I HOPE to provide the right framework and get the right group of committed students, who are motivated to do well," said Wetzel. "What I want generally is a mix of players. They won't all be from the city, and they won't all be from the suburbs. I want the combination of a good student, good person and good athlete. I'm not looking for the quick fix. I'll stay within the framework and go for the long term. I want to get the best individuals I can."

Last season at Lansing, Wetzel served as interim coach, replacing Art Frank, who took a one-year leave of absence.

Wetzel's team, also plagued by academic woes and injuries, finished the season at 2-21.

"We had a lot of problems," admitted Wetzel. "I can tell you all about it some other time."

A native of East Liverpool, Ohio, Wetzel is a graduate of Kent State University. He is married to the former Sue Anderson, who is a graduate of Livonia Churchill High School.

HE SPENT TWO years as head women's coach at Wabash Valley (Ill.) Community College, posting an impressive 45-21 record. (He also spent a year as a high school assistant in Ohio.)

Wetzel arrived in Lansing three years ago in pursuit of a master of arts degree, which he just recently completed. He spent two years as an assistant under Frank before being named interim coach. (Wetzel also taught physical education part time at Lansing CC and was a Nautilus fitness instructor.)

The new Schoolcraft coach said it may take a year to adjust to his new environment, but he is somewhat familiar with his new team.

"Schoolcraft played us the first game of the year and we lost 89-88," recalls Wetzel. "We missed a layup with three seconds to go. We should have won, but I was impressed with their team. They were talented, and they played under control."

Wetzel said he will try to mix the style of play next season. "I do like the transition game, but I like to play good defense, too," he said. "I like a balance — a midpoint — where you be effective both ways."

"IT'S IMPORTANT to have continuity from one year to the next. I'd like to have three or four key players back every year, but that will be difficult next year."

As many as eight players are eligible to return next season at Schoolcraft, but it is unknown whether they all will be back.

Wetzel said he plans to get in touch with the returning players as soon as possible and start recruiting. The new coach will have 17 hours per student of scholarship money available.

"I'm sure I'll be going down to St. Cecilia," said Wetzel, referring to Detroit's hotspot for summer basketball talent.

Fusco: no to Gans's job offer

Bob Wetzel, recently hired as Schoolcraft College's new men's basketball coach said, "I have no feelings one way or the other," after learning that Mike Fusco was the school's original choice for the position.

Fusco, currently the head coach at Bishop Borgess High School in Redford, reportedly turned down an offer made last week by Schoolcraft Athletic Director Dr. Marvin Gans. Fusco, who was out of town and unavailable for comment, will be entering his fifth season at Borgess.

— Brad Emons

Latest 2 drug deaths don't rate martyrdom

IT COULDN'T — it wouldn't — happen to me.

I wonder how many people out there still stick to that in the wake of the drug-caused deaths of Len Bias and Don Rogers?

Parents read about the "tragic" deaths and wonder why two athletes with so much to live for decided to risk it for something as foolish as cocaine. What madness compelled them, these parents ask.

Funny. Because the answer is the same response parents give when asked about their own children. The deaths of Bias and Rogers were lamented nationwide by parents who kept telling themselves, "It's too bad that happened to them."

WAKE UP, folks.

When your kids go to a high school party and someone offers them a line of coke, they know what could happen. Heck, Rogers knew what killed Bias a week before, but he still snorted enough to kill himself.

Your kids will say, "Aw, one or two lines couldn't hurt. What happened to them couldn't — wouldn't — happen to me."

God, that kind of attitude is frustrating. Parents believe the problem exists everywhere but in their own house, and kids don't know enough about death to care. It's true. What, for instance, do you think high schoolers feel about Bias and Rogers?

ASK THEM. Here's some probable replies. First, understand both will be remembered far more for how they died than how they lived. Bias was the best college basketball player in the country last year, and Rogers was one of the top young defensive backs in the NFL. Yet, their cocaine-induced deaths will be their legacies.

Secondly, prepare for their martyrdom. Already they're being portrayed as innocent victims, casual cocaine users who didn't realize the dangers involved.

That will lead to a third — and far scarier — prospect. Hero-worship. The deaths of Bias and Rogers will be used in the war against drugs for as much as possible, then tossed aside.

Wrong, wrong, wrong. It's all so wrong. First of all, why idolize someone for dying before their time? What Bias and Rogers did was worse than suicide, really. There was no reason, no justification, for their deaths.

AT LEAST those who commit suicide normally provide an excuse, however twisted and cowardly.

If these two superb athletes are to be remembered, it should be for what they accomplished while they lived, instead of how they died.

Making them into martyrs in the war against drug abuse is of no use, either. How would you do it? Try to



C.J. Risak

scare kids with their deaths?

Let me tell you something: It won't work. Danger is a big part of the attraction. No doubt, that's what led Bias and Rogers to their demise. Athletes are paid to take risks with their bodies, remember.

NO, SCARE tactics won't keep kids from trying drugs. And portraying Bias and Rogers as anything more than what they were — stupid — won't work, either.

That's the light they should be cast in. And make it a very bright light. Play up the fact that Bias didn't give a hoot about his schooling — he was flunking every class in his last semester at Maryland.

Because, in the final analysis, they were just plain dumb. Their deaths are tragic, if only because their stupidity proved fatal.

OK. So I don't have much sympathy for either bimbo. The question still lingers.

HOW CAN WE convince anyone of the dangers, the risks of drug abuse?

I always thought the truth is the best path, whenever available.

A few hours of mindless pleasure can cost plenty, tell them. Indeed, cost may be the best weapon currently available in the battle. You can thank our South American neighbors for keeping cocaine prices so high — too high for almost all high school kids.

Also, don't make dummies like Bias and Rogers into heroes or martyrs. They risked everything for a few nosefuls of pleasure, and now they're dead.

And, perhaps most important, it's time we destroyed this image of noble death. Dead is dead. It's cold, it's empty, it's final, and it always comes too early. The only honor associated with death is how hard one fights to stay away from it.

CHALLENGING IT is silly because you can never win. Sooner or later, death triumphs. The object is to drag out the game as long as possible.

And whatever else, parents, please, please, don't think your kids are immune just because they're your kids. Talk to them. When you do, remember most people say what they think others want to hear. Kids learn that trick too early in life.

You'd be surprised how many kids in your high school use drugs. The percentages are high. And so is the potential for another Bias or Rogers, a gifted young student who surrenders his life too easily.

Athletes of year — Monday

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