

Ozier to take over Louisburg softball



John Ozier (above) was recently hired as the new Louisburg High School softball coach and will try to get the Lady Cat program back on the right track after going winless a season ago.

The last two seasons the Louisburg High School softball program has experienced the highest of highs and lowest of lows.

Two years ago, the Lady Cats had the best season in the program's history with their fourth-place finish at the state tournament. Last season was among the roughest as they finished without a win.

After the resignation of head coach Kristi Weers, the Lady Cats were left looking for a new coach to try and rebuild the program. They found one in John Ozier.

Ozier, who serves as a school psychologist for the Louisburg school district, was recently approved by the USD 416 board of education to serve as the team's new head coach. He will be joined by Brian Keegan, who will serve as an assistant coach.

Ozier, who has served as a middle school basketball coach for several years, also coached softball on the club circuit in

the summer and is ready to take on the Lady Cat program.

"I am truly excited for the opportunity to take over the LHS softball program," Ozier said. "Last summer was the first in 14 years that I did not coach softball in some capacity, and I found out just how much I missed it. I had spent the previous nine years helping coach my youngest daughter's club team. Upon her graduation, I decided to hang it up.

"When the high school position became available, I found myself thinking about the opportunity to not only get back into the game that I had enjoyed coaching so much, but it also gave me the opportunity to work with many of the girls I had coached in middle school basketball."

It will be a big job for Ozier as he takes on a program that did not win a game on the varsity or junior varsity level a season ago. He is ready for the challenge and hopes to bring back a program that once reached the highest level not so long ago.

"Going into the season, I anticipate some residual effects of coming off a winless season," Ozier said. "I'm sure some of the players will be skeptical about turning the program around in such a short amount of time. With that said, job one is change the culture. My goal for the players is to have them look more at our short range goals of improving their individual/team play through off season conditioning, and then through our daily practices once the season begins.

"If those short range goals are accomplished, the mindset should start to change directions. I will be looking for the upper classmen to provide leadership through their effort, attitude and play on the field."

The Lady Cats did have a young group a year ago that didn't have a senior on their roster. If the underclassmen from last season's squad decide to return, it could have a feel of a veteran team.

Talent aside, Ozier is looking forward to getting to know his team and creating a positive environment in the program.

“Another big challenge that every coach faces each year is building chemistry among the players,” he said. “You can have all of the talent in the world, but until the players learn to respect and trust each other, it’s to no advantage.

“I look forward to the challenge of working with this group of girls. My goal for them is to walk away from the season having enjoyed their experience. In the process, I am hoping their commitment and example will encourage younger players to look forward to playing at some point in the future.”