

Chapman takes over Louisburg softball program



After spending a year as an assistant, Nick Chapman has been hired to be the new Louisburg High School head softball coach. Chapman takes over for John Ozier, who spent the last four years guiding the Lady Cats.

Before the end of the 2019 season, Louisburg head softball coach John Ozier informed his team that this year would be the end of his tenure with the Lady Cats.

Ozier, who spent four seasons as the Lady Cats' coach, certainly got a nice send-off from his team as they won a regional championship for the first time since 2014 and earned a trip to the state tournament.

"My goal was to get these kids to maximize their talents for them to believe in themselves," Ozier said. "I really didn't want it to come down to my last season and final three games of regionals for that to happen, but I will take it. That was a run I will never forget. I have been around sports my entire life and this is one memorable part that will always stick with me. I told the girls that whenever they go back to high school, to make sure they go find their regional plaque.

It is not for bragging rights, it is to represent what we have put into this season and walk away with the pride of what we did.

“For some, reaching state may not be that big of a deal, but when you are a program that is scratching and clawing to make every opportunity count, it just meant so much to me. I had great support from people at the school and I wouldn’t have traded it for anything.”

Now that the Lady Cats have some momentum going into the 2020 season, they needed to find a new leader and they didn’t have to look far.

Nick Chapman, who served as the Louisburg assistant and junior varsity coach last season, will take over Ozier’s post as he was officially hired as head coach following the USD 416 school board meeting earlier this month.

“I am extremely grateful and excited to be the next head coach of Lady Cat softball program,” Chapman said. “Going into last spring, I was originally going to be volunteering on the baseball team. (LHS AD Scott) Hinkle and Ozier came to me to a couple weeks before the season started about coaching softball and I decided to go that route. It’s a decision I would make every time, if I had to go back and do it again.

“John did a great job getting this

program started in the right direction. The pieces just fell in place for me to take the reins. I have had two really awesome mentors this last year in Shawn Lowry (girls basketball) and John in terms of what it takes to coach at a high level. It's summertime and I am already looking forward to spring."



John Ozier stepped down as the Louisburg softball head coach after four years with the program.

Chapman, a Louisburg High School graduate, played baseball for the Wildcats and continued his passion for the game in college when he played for MidAmerica Nazarene University.

Coaching softball hadn't even entered Chapman's mind until last spring, but he enjoyed getting to know the game more and is looking forward to leading the Lady Cats in the future.

“Playing baseball all of my life at a high level, it was a little bit of an adjustment at first, but to me it’s all the same,” Chapman said. “I have the baseball/softball mindset so it was a pretty easy transition for me into softball. There are some small strategic differences and softball is a little bit faster game. Softball pitching is something that I will have to learn as we go, but I am lucky enough to have an amazing pitching coach on staff (Megan Balke) who also played in college and I trust her to prepare our pitchers. At the end of the day, it’s the team who scores the most runs wins and that’s the same for both sports.”

Although wins and losses are important to any high school team, Chapman wants his players to be able to come away with invaluable experiences as the Lady Cats hope to take that next step forward in their development.

“My main goal, first and foremost, is to create a program where the female athletes who leave the program, leave with valuable life skills that they will use in the next phase of their life,” Chapman said. “Sports is such an amazing platform to instill life-long lessons that athletes carry with them for the rest of their lives. I don’t think I would be where I am at today without the guidance of my coaches.

“Softball-wise it’s time for this program to take the next step.

We are coming off a regional championship and state appearance. We got there because we put the team first and expected to win. From the first day, it’s all going to be about what’s best for the team and putting in the

work to compete in a tough Frontier League. I have already talked to some of the girls about the kind of legacy they want to leave on this program. There's a lot of new things happening in this program right now and we can really start to build something special where we expect to be in the state tourney year after year. We are going to be well prepared physically and mentally when we step on the field for the first time next season and expect to win when we step between the white lines."

Chapman will begin his head coaching duties in July when he hosts his first high school camp in an effort to create excitement around the program and to have girls interested in playing softball.

"I am excited for this whole journey to start," Chapman said. "We have a great group of girls coming back next year and I am ready to get after it. It just stinks that we have to wait until February/March to do it."