

Hickory, St. Stephens Name New Coaches

Written by Staff Reports
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There will be two new faces joining the head-coaching fraternity in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference in the fall of 2013. Hickory High has named Andy Poplin its new boy's basketball coach,

and St. Stephens has named Wayne Hicks its new football coach. Both men were hired Monday night based on the approval of the Hickory Public Schools Board of Education and the Catawba County Board of Education.

Poplin replaces Lavell Hall, who retired after one season as interim coach at HHS. Hall replaced former head coach Shawn Johnson was indicted by a Catawba Country grand jury last August with five counts of indecent liberties with a student.

Poplin was an assistant coach at West Caldwell in 1992-93; he was also the head varsity coach at Mount Pleasant High (1994-2003) and at Concord (2003-07) before he resigned.

He led Concord to a second-place finish at the state tournament in 2006 before he won the state championship a year later. His 2007 squad, which defeated Kinston in the state finals, was 27-4. He resigned later that year after he acknowledged two North Carolina High School Athletic Association rules governing working with players out of season were violated.

Poplin, who graduated from Lenoir -Rhyne University, is currently an elementary physical education teacher in Cabarrus County. He is pursuing a master's degree in health education at Charlotte.

He inherits a program at Hickory that has posted nine straight winning seasons and won at least 22 games in each of the last six years.

Hicks comes to St. Stephens after he spent the last five years as an assistant coach at Hickory. He replaces Chris Bunting, who left to take a coaching position in South Carolina after one season with the Indians.

St. Stephens, which hasn't had a winning season since 2008. The Indians have only made the state playoffs once in the last four years.

Hicks has been HHS' defensive coordinator the last five years. He was also the head football coach at Lenoir-Rhyne University. He was 15-36 at L-R from 2002-06 before he was fired.