

Pryor resigns as WHS volleyball coach

Written by Mike Kelly
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Kim Pryor is moving on.

In a shocking move Tuesday afternoon, Kim Pryor stepped down as head volleyball coach at Watauga High. During her ten -year stay with the program, the Pioneers, with the exception of one losing season (in 2002) marched their way to 184 wins, five conference titles and eight playoff appearances. But Pryor, who loves a challenge, is ready to take her talents to the next level.

She has been named an assistant coach at Mars Hill College, a Division II school in the South Atlantic Conference. She will be working for head coach Tony Fontanelle, and she also joins one of her former players, Madison Bakken, who will be a freshman with the Lions this fall. Pryor rejected an opportunity to coach volleyball and women's basketball at North Wilkes before this opportunity came along.

"It's an opportunity to move up, what more can I say," said Pryor, who was 184-73 with the Pioneers. "It's sad and it was definitely a difficult decision, but one I had to make. Getting the chance to coach at the next level is a tremendous opportunity for my career."

Pryor, who began her career at WHS as a jay-vee coach and a varsity assistant under Lori Anderson in 2000, continued Watauga's winning tradition. And she had to fill some big shoes to do it.

Anderson was 163-56 during her stay with the Pioneers (1994-2000). She also led the Pioneers to a pair of second-place finishes at the state tournament in 1995 and 1998 and a Final Four appearance in 2000.

"I am so thankful for the chance to coach (at Watauga)," said Pryor, who was also 23-2 during her one-year stint as a head coach down in Florida in 1996. "I enjoyed everything about it. The parents, the players, my assistant coaches, they were great. It was a lot of fun. I can't believe it's over, but I just can't pass this up."

Pryor was named Coach of the Year twice (in 2006 and 2007), and she led WHS to the state quarterfinals on two occasions (2003 and 2006). She also produced 13 college signees during her tenure. And despite her departure, the Pioneers who were eliminated in the third round of the Class 4A state playoffs by Hopewell last fall, return a lot of talent in 2010.

"It's going to be a great team, no doubt," Pryor said. "And the scary thing is, we're still very young. There's only two seniors on the team (setter Bailey Hagaman and Autumn Ward). The rest of team has a strong core of juniors. Whoever inherits this team can go very far this season."

Hagaman is a three-year starter at setter. She had a school record 58 assists in one match last season and she tied Bakken for the team lead with 108 aces. Skylar Hicks, Hannah Stewart, Colby Combs and Anna Church highlight a very strong core of juniors that should make WHS a very strong team this fall.

"We have a lot of hitters up front," Pryor said. "We're going to create a lot of problems for people

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this season. This team will be very strong around the net, and very strong on the floor." But the question now is finding a new head coach. And fall practice begin Monday, August 2. "We're working to find a new head coach," said WHS Athletics Director Tom Wright. "But Kim will be missed. She did an excellent job with our volleyball program. Her record speaks for itself, and we wish her nothing but the best in her future endeavors."