

Wellborn Leaves West Wilkes

Written by Mike Kelly
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Ben Wellborn has stepped down as baseball coach at West Wilkes High School in Millers Creek, NC.

One year after he led the Blackhawks to the Class 1A state baseball championship, the Watauga County native has turned in his resignation. Wellborn, who led the Blackhawks for five seasons (2007-2011), is trading in his baseball spikes for a Doctrine in Physical Education at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Wellborn, who earned his Masters Degree in PE from Emporia State in Kansas, will now take his educational skills a step further.

"It's something that's crossed my mind for a while now," said Wellborn, who earned his Masters in 2 1/2 years on line. "It's tough saying good-bye to coaching. I loved it, and I'm thankful for the opportunities I've had.

"But one of my goals is to be professor at the university level. But I wouldn't object working at a smaller school, like at the Division II or Division III level, where I can teach and still coach." Wellborn begins his three-year journey this fall. And he admits, he began toying with the idea of earning his Doctrine last fall.

"I really started thinking about it seriously while working on my Masters," he said. "I just felt it was a challenge I had to take. I just felt I needed to put my name out there and explore my options."

Wellborn graduated from Watauga High in 1998, and played college baseball at Appalachian State University. He red-shirted his freshman year, and played three seasons for the Mountaineers. He sat out his senior year following back surgery. He graduated from ASU in 2003.

Wellborn then took his talents to the next level as an assistant coach, working for WHS coach Pete Hardee (2004-06) before he embarked on his first head-coaching job at West Wilkes in 2007. And Wellborn was justly rewarded last spring when the Blackhawks captured the state title.

"It's something that will stay with me forever," Wellborn said. "That was a special group, and we had a special season."

But the best is yet to come.