

Payne Looks To Bounce Back

Written by Mike Kelly

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Ashe County High Athletics Director and men's basketball coach Marc Payne suffered a heart attack Wednesday afternoon. But the long time coach is resting and in good spirits. He also hopes to make a full recovery. Payne, who was taken by ambulance to Baptist Hospital, had two stents placed in his heart. He will be released from the hospital on Thursday before he goes back Friday for further tests.

"I haven't felt real good the last couple of weeks," he said from his room at Baptist Hospital. "So, I decided it was time to go see the doctor. After he conducted a few tests, I was taken to Baptist. And the doctors here have determined. I suffered a heart attack. I'm resting and I feel fine. We'll see what more tests reveal on Friday."

Payne, who has won more than 500 games in his 37-year career, led the Huskies to a 25-4 record last season. The Huskies were regular-season champions in the Mountain Valley 1A/2A Conference, but they lost the conference tournament to Wilkes Central. Ashe County lost to Shelby in the second round of the Class 2A state playoffs.

And the Huskies, who were hit hard by graduation, are scheduled to start summer workouts on June 7. But for Payne, at least for the moment, is in a wait-and-see situation.

"We'll see what the doctors say on Friday, and just how much damage, if any, was done to my heart," he said. "Things are on hold right now. We'll see how things go."

Payne spent 14 years as men's basketball coach and athletics director at Watauga High. He is second all-time in career wins at the school with 182. And ironically, he picked up his 400th career win with the Pioneers against Ashe County in West Jefferson in 2001. He took over as head men's basketball coach and athletic director at Ashe County the following season. Payne, who has been at Ashe County the last ten years, is the winningest coach in Beaver Creek High and Ashe County history. He has won numerous awards over the years as a basketball coach and athletic director.