

## LMC Names Hardin New Men's Basketball Coach

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Steve Hardin has been named the new head men's basketball coach at Lees-McRae College after serving as an assistant on the Bobcat bench for the last two years, announced Director of Athletics Craig McPhail Thursday.

"I am proud to have someone like Steve to step in and continue the great progress Coach Polsgrove created for our men's basketball program at Lees-McRae," praised McPhail. "Steve's relationship with the players, recruiting

connections and strong commitment to the area were key reasons why we felt confident in giving him this great opportunity. We are excited about having him as part of our Bobcat family and look forward to seeing him lead our men's basketball team to even greater heights."

Hardin takes the helm after serving as Polsgrove's top assistant during the last two seasons, helping guide the Bobcats to the program's best league record since joining Conference Carolinas with an 8-8 mark.

Under Hardin's guidance, the Bobcats put together perhaps the best start to the conference season in school history in 2011-2012, posting a 3-1 mark through the first four games of the league slate last season. Hardin has mentored a pair of all-conference performers during his tenure at Lees-McRae, including 2011-2012 third team selection Jeremiah Henry.

"I want to first thank Dr. Buxton and Craig McPhail for entrusting me with this opportunity," said Hardin. "I also would like to thank Scott Polsgrove for being a great role model in my life and building such a solid foundation with this basketball program. I am truly a coach's son and would like to thank my father for teaching me the game of basketball, my wife Tanika who is my rock and my little girl Lyla."

Hardin joined the Bobcats during the 2010-2011 season following a successful stint at Bluefield College in Bluefield, Va. as the head women's basketball coach. During his three-year tenure at Bluefield, Hardin earned Appalachian Athletic Conference Coach of the Year honors while leading the Rams to their highest finish in the AAC standings.

Under Hardin's leadership, the Rams were ranked in the NAIA for the first time in school history and also earned the program's first AAC Champions of Character award in 2010, while holding a No. 3 ranking in the NCCAA throughout the season and earning the school's first-ever berth in the NCCAA Tournament.

During the 2009-2010 season, the Rams also posted the best record in program history with a 23-10 overall mark. All of these accomplishments occurred in just two years as Hardin took over the program which had posted two wins the previous season, compiling a 38-26 record while at the helm.

Hardin played an integral role as the associate head coach with the men's basketball program at Bluefield, helping the Rams to three straight NAIA Tournament appearances with a squad that posted a combined 92-41 record over that span.

Bluefield claimed three straight AAC championships during Hardin's tenure while ranking eighth in the NAIA national poll, marking the first appearance in the top 10 in school history. The Rams led the nation in a multitude of statistical categories while Hardin was on the sidelines, topping the NAIA ranks in both scoring offense (91.4) and total blocks (171) in 2008-2009 while leading the nation in rejections per game (6.9) in 2005-2006.

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While at Bluefield, Hardin recruited and coached 18 all-Appalachian Athletic Conference players, three AAC Defensive Players of the Year, four AAC Offensive Players of the Year, 14 NCCAA All-Americans, five NAIA All-Americans, seven NAIA Academic All-Americans, and two AAC Players of the Year.

Prior to his appointment as the head women's coach at Bluefield, Hardin served as the associate head men's basketball coach, junior varsity basketball coach, and head men's golf coach at the Bluefield, Va. school from 2005-2008.

Hardin entered the coaching ranks as a student assistant with the Golden Eagles of Tennessee Tech. While at Tennessee Tech, Hardin was part of back-to-back Ohio Valley Conference championship squads and a quarterfinal finish in the NIT. The Golden Eagles posted a 47-16 overall record and a 28-4 mark in the OVC.

The Elizabethton, Tenn. native has coached 13 players that have played and/or still playing professional basketball with one playing in the National Basketball Association's D-League. Hardin is following in the footsteps of his father, Tony Hardin, who has been a high school coach in Tennessee for over 30 years. Prior to Tennessee Tech, Hardin served as an assistant coach with his father, who owns a career record of 520-290.

"Lees McRae is a special place, and I am truly blessed and excited for the opportunity to become the head basketball coach here," expressed Hardin. "This has been my dream since I was 10 years old, and I look forward to working with a great group of young men and moving forward with this program. I encourage Bobcat Nation and the sounding community to come out this season to watch a fun aggressive style of basketball in Williams Gymnasium."

**Photo Courtesy: Steve Hardin, LMC Athletics**