

Fox Completes Hiring of Men's Hoops Staff

Written by Ryan Bower
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Appalachian State University men's basketball staff is complete with the hiring of three assistant coaches, head coach Jim Fox announced on Thursday.

Jason Allison, Bryan Lentz and Mantoris Robinson join Fox on the Appalachian State bench. The trio boasts a combined 27 years of collegiate coaching experience.

"I'm extremely excited about the coaching staff we've assembled," said Fox. "Not only will they be a wonderful addition to the Appalachian State and Boone communities, they will contribute the energy, work ethic and knowledge to help us reach our goal of excellence in every regard."

Allison joins the Appalachian State staff after spending nine seasons (2005-14) at Virginia Military Institute. During his tenure at VMI, Allison served as an associate coach/recruiting coordinator and helped lead the Keydets to three appearances in the Big South Tournament title game and to the semifinals of the 2014 CollegenInsider.com Tournament.

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"I am thrilled to welcome Jason to the App State family. He has established himself as one of the premier assistant coaches in the southeast with his work at VMI," said Fox. "Jason is a tireless worker on the recruiting trail, on the court and in the community. He helped turn around the program at VMI and I fully expect he'll do the same for us here. He is a perfect fit at Appalachian State."

In his nine seasons with the Keydets, Allison helped coach 23 all-Big South honorees, including the league's Player of the Year (Stan Okoye – 2013), two Defensive Players of the Year (Travis Holmes – 2007, D.J. Covington – 2013, 2014) and Freshman of the Year (D.J. Covington – 2011). The Keydets eclipsed the 20-win plateau twice in his nine seasons with the program (24 wins in 2008-09 and 22 in 2013-14), a feat that VMI achieved just three times in the 97 years prior to his arrival.

Lentz spent the last four seasons (2010-14) as a special assistant on head coach Rick Barnes' staff at the University of Texas. He assisted in all internal operations for a Longhorn team that went to three NCAA Tournaments and posted an overall record of 87-48.

"It is a huge addition to bring Bryan back to the state of North Carolina. Bryan played and coached under his father, John, at Lenoir-Rhyne before heading to the University of Texas to learn under Rick Barnes," said Fox. "He is a jack of all trades and will be asked to wear many hats in this program. Bryan has always had success follow him and I am looking forward to working alongside him."

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Prior to his time at UT, Lentz was an assistant coach at Lenoir-Rhyne for nine seasons (2001-08), where he helped lead the Bears to five South Atlantic Conference regular-season titles, one SAC tournament title and five NCAA Division II Tournament appearances. He was promoted to the position of associate head coach for his final two seasons.

Lentz is the son of legendary Lenoir-Rhyne coach John Lentz, who has coached the Bears to eight SAC regular-season championships, four SAC Tournament titles and five NCAA Division II Tournament appearances in 28 years at the helm.

Robinson comes to Appalachian after a two-year stint at Fairmont State (2012-14). During his time with the Falcons, Robinson helped lead the team to back-to-back 20-win seasons, including a 23-9 record and an NCAA Division II Tournament appearance in 2012-13. In his two seasons at Fairmont State, Robinson coached five all-conference selections.

"Mantoris was highly recommended from people in all circles of the collegiate coaching ranks," Fox said. "As a player, he was a part of championship teams at Winthrop and knows what it takes to win. He has already begun sharing that knowledge with our players and relates to them very well. Manny is an asset both on and off the court and I am extremely happy to have him on our staff."

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A standout at Winthrop University from 2006-10, Robinson was a two-time Big South Defensive Player of the Year and helped the Eagles to NCAA Tournament appearances in each of his four seasons.

Photo Courtesy: Jim Fox, App State Athletics