

Coach Adkins brings renewed excitement to Jersey football team

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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JERSEYVILLE - When someone steps foot on the **Jersey Community High School** practice field and watches head coach **Jon Adkins**, there is no question he brings with him enthusiasm with a capital E.

Adkins, 29, is a young coach and comes from Peoria Heights, replacing Dave Jacobs, who resigned in May. Jersey was 1-8 last year in a rebuilding year with the Panthers.

Adkins' lives with a whistle around his neck and in his mouth while he is on the practice field. There is no doubt on this practice field who is directing the show; it is the young head coach. He wants his Panthers to work hard and constantly looks for the best in them during drills and play work.

"I am unbelievably excited for this opportunity in Jersey," Adkins said. "We return the majority of the team from last year. These kids are young and hungry and I think will come out fired up for the season."

Peoria Heights team was 5-4 last year and made the Class 3A state playoffs for the first time in many years. When he started, Peoria Heights had 17 players on the roster, but because of enthusiastic and winning ways, the team had 60 on the roster when he left and nearly every starter on offense and defense returning.

"In six years, we turned the Peoria Heights program around," he said. "I left with the cupboard full. They have nine of 11 returning starters on offense and 10 of 11 on defense. I handed off to the defensive coordinator in Peoria Heights. I think they will be nothing but successful this year and I wish them well."

Adkins said the Jersey football program is one he always kept his eyes on because of their rich history.

"I always thought I would love to coach there," he said. "Jersey has a fantastic tradition. Jersey was one place I didn't get to play when I was in high school."

Adkins is fortunate to have junior quarterback Drew Sauerwein returning. He also has a full receiving crew to catch his passes. Adkins was only 23 when he took over as head coach at Peoria Heights. He grew up in Charleston, Ill., and attended Eastern Illinois University.

The new Jersey coach said he is extremely excited to have two more years with Sauerwein at the helm of his offense.

"We have some great kids in the program and they are buying into a new system, new philosophy and belief," he said.

Jersey opens at 7 p.m. on Friday at home against Granite City.