

New Redbirds Boys Coach Dylan Dudley Was Assistant Coach On Two Division-II National Champions, Looks Forward To Competing In SWC

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON - Dylan Dudley, an assistant coach for two NCAA Division-II national championship teams and who led Nolan Catholic of Fort Worth, Texas, to an area championship, was introduced on Wednesday as the new head boys basketball coach at Alton High School.



Dudley, a native of Sullivan, Ill., played for Sullivan High and for Illinois College in Jacksonville. He earned his bachelor's degree from Illinois College and his master's degree from Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and has vast experience

in both high school and college coaching. He's served as an assistant at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., Drury University in Springfield, Mo., Tennessee-Martin, Central Missouri State University in Warrenton, Mo., Henderson State, and Midwestern State in Wichita Falls, Tex. Last season, Dudley led the Vikings to a 23-win season and coached at Nolan for three years. He'll succeed Eric McCrary, who stepped down after one season at the helm.

"It's been an emotional day, a lot of excitement," Dudley said in a phone interview, "but it's also been tough in leaving the kids and families at Nolan Catholic. If it wasn't for our kids and families at Nolan Catholic, I wouldn't be in this position I am today."

Dudley is looking forward to getting started with the Redbirds and credited the Alton administration for their help in his interview.

"I'm very excited," Dudley said. "I'm looking forward to the challenge and one of the things that excites me is the alignment that I felt with Mr. (Mike) Bellm (the Alton High principal), (athletic director) Chris Kusnerick and coach (Eric) Roberson (the assistant athletic director)." He also thanked a member of the school's human resources staff for her help as well.

Dudley will bring much experience to the table for the Redbirds and also has high expectations for his players as well.

"First and foremost, we're going to learn how to work and we're going to have a lot of fun doing it," Dudley said. "I think the thing that will help is that I've been fortunate to work for head coaches who have won over 1,600 games, 37 conference championships, two national championships and coached 28 pros. And they've taught me the values of hard work, toughness and love."

Dudley is also looking forward to competing in the Southwestern Conference, a league that's considered one of the best overall conferences in the state of Illinois.

"The Southwestern Conference and the Chicago Public League are the two best conferences in the state, in my opinion," Dudley said. "I wouldn't be coming here if we didn't have the opportunity to compete against the best night in and night out."

Dudley compared the SWC with the league, the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, he coached in at Nolan, who competed in Division-I in Class 6A.

"The league I just left, we had 11 Division-I guys in our league the last two years," Dudley said. "So we were fortunate to win 25 games and an area championship this year. I'm hoping the way we do things within our program will lead to sustained success in the Southwestern Conference."

The summer season will be a very important time for both Dudley and his players, as he works to establish his system and give both his players a chance to get to know him, and vice versa.

"The summer is really going to be important to us," Dudley said. "It will be not only a time for myself learning about our players and for our players to learn about how our program will operate on a daily basis. Our core values will include effort, commitment, love, accountability and honesty."

Dudley is looking ahead to getting started with the Redbirds and does have very high hopes for the players and the program as well.

"We will work to be the same dude every day," Dudley said. "I'm just extremely humbled and my family cannot wait to be a small part of future Redbird championships on and off the court."