WOMEN’S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wilson hired as Cabrillo’s coach

Longtime fixture at Soquel High looks to revitalize Seahawks program

By Andrew Matheson
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APTO» John Wilson, who stepped down as head coach of the Soquel High girls varsity basketball team in 2013 after nearly two decades roaming the sidelines, will take over the women's basketball program at Cabrillo College, athletic director Dale Murray confirmed Thursday.

A longtime fixture among local basketball circles whose success at the high school level is practically unmatched within Santa Cruz County, Wilson takes over a women's program at Cabrillo that last season was suspended due to a lack of players.

Wilson will try and revitalize the program in what will be his first collegiate coaching position. “I'm very excited,” said Wilson, who celebrated his 51st birthday on Thursday.

“We're ready to get rolling,” he added.

A Santa Cruz High graduate who played under legendary Cardinals coach Pete Newell Jr., Wilson spent a quarter of a century

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BILL LOVEJOY - SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL FILE

Longtime Soquel High girls basketball coach John Wilson, right, will take over the women's program at Cabrillo College.

SEAHAWKS SEASONS PAST

CABRILLO WOMEN’S BASKETBALL RECORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Conf.</th>
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<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>7-17</td>
<td>5-7</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>7-18</td>
<td>1-11</td>
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“He's a former Seahawk. He’s local. He knows all the coaches. He knows the players.”

— Dale Murray, Cabrillo College athletic director, on John Wilson

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coaching high school girls teams at both Santa Cruz and Soquel — the latter of which he coached at for 18 years. An athletic director at Soquel for 10 of those years, Wilson remains a physical education teacher at the high school. He will be an adjunct coach at Cabrillo.

Murray said there were a “number of applicants” for the vacant coaching position.

“And John was on top,” Murray added. “He’s a former Seahawk. He’s local. He knows all the coaches. He knows the players. He knows the players’ parents, and he was very successful coaching locally.

“He is an ideal candidate to get us started again.”

Cabrillo had just six players on its roster last year when the decision to curb the 2014-15 campaign was made on Sept. 15 — two days after a midnight deadline for students to enroll for the fall semester. Kristy Netto, who coached the Seahawks for seven seasons, resigned from her seasonal adjunct position as a result shortly thereafter.

Murray said it was always the school’s intention to bring the program back. “And we did,” he added.

Low numbers had been problem at Cabrillo the previous three seasons, though, usually a result of injuries and both work and school commitments. Two years ago, the team finished with eight players on its roster and compiled a 7-17 overall mark, 5-7 in the Coast Conference.

Wilson said his first goal at Cabrillo is to generate interest, by contacting players locally and reaching out to players regionally who might want to come to Cabrillo. He said he knows it has been hard in the past, and he knows the reasons why girls might not continue playing basketball after high school are many.

But he’s hopeful of change.

“We’re just trying to do everything we can, to let people know that we’re starting up again,” Wilson said. “We’re really excited about it as a coaching staff and we’re trying to generate that excitement to the players we’re talking to and anyone who might come out for the team.”

Wilson hopes to add Mark Marengo, Courtney Good and Cristina Locatelli to his coaching staff. Marengo helped coach the defense for Wilson while at Soquel, while Good is a former player of his who graduated in 2004 and coached at the collegiate level in New Mexico. Locatelli is another former player of Wilson’s who previously played at Cabrillo.

“I’m trying to surround myself — and I have surrounded myself — with great people and great coaches,” Wilson said.

A six-time Coach of the Year recipient in the Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League, Wilson boasts a lengthy list of accomplishments of his own from his time at both Santa Cruz and Soquel, where he helped turn the Knights into one of the more storied girls hoops programs in Santa Cruz County.

Wilson has compiled 10 SCCAL titles, 20 Central Coast Section appearances and four NorCal regional playoff appearances. In 2012, his penultimate season at Soquel, he led the Knights to their first CCS championship in program history and a 25-5 overall record.