

Prosser: A sigh of relief as coach says no thanks to Pitt

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"The players were wonderful, the students as well—the Wake Forest Family, if you will," Prosser said. "The outpouring over the last few days was something that wasn't solicited, but it couldn't help but make an extremely positive impression.

Again, I thank our players. I'm looking forward to getting back in the gym and start the work on next season."

With the four starters and eight lettermen returning from last year's team due to be joined by a renowned recruiting class headlined by West Forsyth High School's Chris Paul, a member of the prestigious McDonald's High School All-

American team, the future looks bright for the Demon Deacons. This brings up an added advantage to such a long-term contract: its effect on the basketball program's recruiting.

"Kids want to know who they're going to play for," Prosser said, "and I think, thanks to Mr. Wellman, thanks to the powers-that-be at Wake and especially

thanks to our players and the students and the Wake Forest family, I can feel very comfortable telling the kids (recruits) I'm going to be here for a very long time."

So it was that Demon Deacon fans suddenly had something to cheer for in the wake of the team's upset loss to Auburn in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Rising sophomore Justin Gray, for one, was feeling good about the future of Wake Forest basketball.

"It's a good feeling," Gray said. "We've got one of the best coaches in the ACC staying and he's going to be around for ten more years. I bet you that brings some nightmares to some other coaches around the conference."

Pitt moves quickly on 2nd choice

By Joe Marchilena
U-Wire

University of Pittsburgh finally found a coach willing to call Pittsburgh home.

The school decided to stay within the program, announcing the hiring of Jamie Dixon as the new men's basketball head coach April 15, filling the position 13 days after Ben Howland accepted the same job at UCLA.

"The last four years, our basketball program has reached heights some people once considered impossible," Interim Athletics Director Marc Boehm said at a press conference introducing Dixon. "In our new head coach, we have a person who helped light that championship torch [and] more importantly, we have a person who will make that torch burn brighter and also take us to new heights."

Dixon said, "I would like to thank Chancellor Mark Nordenberg and Marc Boehm for giving me the opportunity to continue the University of Pittsburgh's quest to be the best basketball program in the Big East Conference. Working together the last four years we have accomplished some exciting things. I'm equally excited about what we can achieve together in the future."

Working as the associate head coach under Howland, Dixon played a crucial role in the development of the team's playing philosophy along with serving as Howland's top recruiter.

Despite having no prior head coaching experience, Boehm felt that Dixon was an excellent fit for the position.

"All along, Jamie was right there at the top of the list," he said. "Ben Howland called me several times during the search process and he told me that (I)'d be making a big mistake if (I) didn't hire Jamie Dixon."

Even with Howland's support, it appeared that Dixon was not on the top of Pitt's list, as the school held discussions with Wake Forest Head Coach Skip Prosser about filling the vacancy.

But Prosser, who is from the Pittsburgh area, decided to stay at Wake Forest, signing a 10-year contract extension Friday after nearly taking the Pitt job earlier in the week.

Knowing that Pitt was looking in other directions, Dixon decided to put all of his efforts into landing the job.

Up for the head coaching positions at Wright State and Illinois State, Dixon informed both programs that his main focus was on becoming the head coach at Pitt.

"Once it became clear coach Howland was going to be moving to UCLA, I really concentrated all of my efforts on landing this job," Dixon said. "I knew in my mind what I wanted to do and set my goal to become the coach at the University of Pittsburgh."

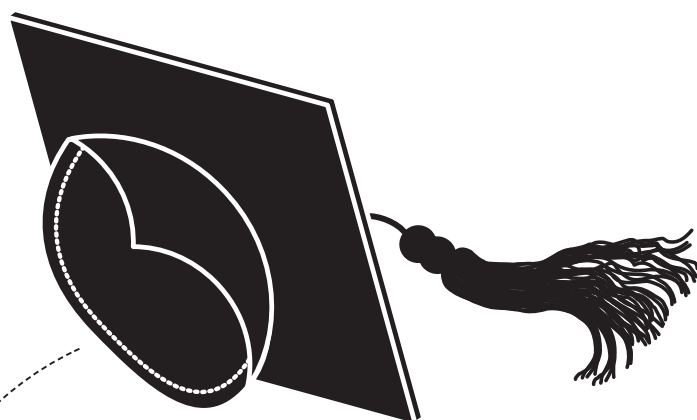
Dixon wasn't the only one hoping that he would be the one to fill Howland's shoes.

"It's great, I think they got the best guy," Levon Kendall said. "He knows the players already. A lot of the guys have respect for him."

Dixon also tried to quiet any concern there might have been about him wanting to return home to the west coast, much like Howland did in leaving for UCLA.

"I can't think of any other place I'd rather be, and my wife feels the same way," Dixon said. "We had our first son here. If I had to call a place home, this would probably be home."

Joe Marchilena writes for The Pitt News at the University of Pittsburgh



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