

1986 John Sawyer leaves Fremont Ross



JOHN SAWYER

Hoop coach resigns

By ROB BOUKISSEN
Staff writer

John Sawyer apparently will not be back next season as the Ross High School boys basketball coach.

Sawyer reportedly told his players after a workout Thursday that he was not returning and then later that day telephoned Principal David Aschenbach and Athletic Director Dick Sherman with the same information.

"He called me last night (Thursday) and left a message on my recorder," Aschenbach said Friday. "He said he was resigning. He mentioned something about his mother being ill.

"He told me he would send a letter (of resignation) in the next couple of days. I hate to see him go. I am really surprised."

"We talked about some things this spring. I thought he had plans to do some different things. I thought he was all set to go. All of the sudden, he's resigned. I want to talk to him."

Sawyer, who was unavailable for comment Friday, will apparently stay on at Ross as a teacher, said Aschenbach.

The decision by Sawyer to step down ends a five-year reign as the Little Giants' leader. He was 47-61 during that span, with two sectional championships.

This past season Ross went 7-13. The highlight of the year came when the Giants upset fourth-ranked Admiral King.

Timing was right for Sawyer

By ROB BOUKISSEN
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Spending too much time on the basketball court and not enough with the family were the main reasons why John Sawyer decided to step down as the Ross head basketball coach last week.

Sawyer, 39, told his players Thursday that he was not coming back next season and later that day informed Principal David Aschenbach and Athletic Director Dick Sherman of the same thing.

He still intends to stay at Ross as a teacher, however, and plans to maybe help out with the junior high hoop program.

His decision to quit ends a five-year reign as the boss of the Little Giants. He was 47-61 during that span with one sectional championship.

Sawyer was unavailable for comment this past weekend but was reached Monday by telephone in Canada where he is on a fishing trip.

"I was putting in a lot of time," said Sawyer, who is married and has one child. "I've been a head coach for 15 years ... ever since college. I've been coming home late every night. I'm just getting tired of doing that."

"And my mother's been sick. She's had sugar for about 40 years, but it's getting bad. I'll have more time to see her in the winter."

Sawyer also felt the timing was right for him to quit.

His assistants — Brian Wilch and Chuck Lindsey — are not coming back next season, so he didn't want to get involved with breaking in a new staff.

And he feels that the upcoming crop of players is a good one, so he won't be leaving the new coach with the proverbial bare cupboard.

"This is a good time for a new coach to come in," said Sawyer. "We have some good kids coming up. It's time for some new blood."

Sawyer was asked if he ever felt discouraged by the heavy emphasis placed on football in Fremont as compared to the amount given basketball.

"Not at all," he said. "We had a lot of kids involved in the basketball program."

"Of course, it's tough when you're in a school with an excellent football program, but that's the way it is. When I came to Fremont, I understood the situation."

He added, "I always said to myself that when it came to the point where I felt, 'Geez, I have to go to practice this year,' then



News-Messenger/Bill Kennedy

JOHN SAWYER ponders the situation during his days as the Ross head basketball coach.

it would be time for me to quit. That's the way it is now."

Sawyer evaluated his career at Ross with mixed emotions.

"I don't think I did any worse than the people before me, or much better," he said. "You're never satisfied, but I wasn't discouraged. You throw out my first year (3-18), and I had about a .500 record (44-43)."

"I enjoyed the kids. For the most part, they were hard-working."

Sawyer was asked to point out

the highlights and lowlights of the past five years.

"The two big highlights were winning the sectional championship my second year and beating Admiral King this past year," he said.

"The lowlight was the up-and-down season we had this year, especially losing to Fostoria after we had beaten Admiral King."

Sawyer said he doesn't foresee himself getting back into high

school coaching right now, but that could change.

"Right now, I don't see myself getting back into it as a head coach," he said. "But once I'm out of it for a year or so, I might change my mind. I'll just have to wait and see."

Sawyer began his career with a six-year stint at North Bloomfield. He then went to West Farmington for two years and to Kinsman Badger for two years before coming to Ross. He is a native of Niles, Ohio.

New coach guides Ross boys

Pat McGhee will have a pair of two-year lettermen and two other lettermen to build his first edition of the Ross High School boys basketball team.

McGhee brings a five-year head coaching record of 48-61 to Ross with stints at Cardinal Stritch and most recently Springfield Local. He takes over for John Sawyer, who resigned last spring. McGhee's most successful year as a coach was 18-8 at Stritch when his team was Class AA regional runner-up.

John Cahill and John Stierwalt are Ross's two-year lettermen. Cahill, at 6-4, is one of 10 Little Giants six-feet or taller. Stierwalt is 6-0. Kevin Brooks and Nick Hall lettered last season while coming off the bench. Hall, a 6-4 junior, missed the last half of the season season because of a broken ankle.

Junior Mike Wolfe, 6-7, is the tallest of the Little Giants while senior Chris Mosser is 6-5.

"We want to go inside because we do have decent size," McGhee said.

That size will hopefully be the key to helping Ross run, the new coach agreed.

"We have the potential to have a lot of depth," he explained. "We have a lot of kids with good athletic ability. It just has to come through. That will tell how deep we will be."

Brooks and senior Manoah Jones, along with Stierwalt, are the guards that McGhee will be working with along with junior Scott Nossaman, who will split time with the varsity and junior varsity squads. The forwards, along with Cahill and Hall, are seniors Kevin McDonald and Tracy McGee and juniors Tracy Hufford and Kevin Crawford. With the exception of McGee, who is six-foot, Cahill and Hall, the other three are 6-1.

Mosser and Wolfe will operate out of the center slots.

"Defensively, I like to play a lot of different defenses but will primarily try to stick with man-to-man," McGhee explained, "and we will press some."

"This is my first year here,"

he reminded, "so putting in my system will take some time."

McGhee likes the fact that Ross will not open until Dec. 5, a week later than most schools.

"That extra week will be a benefit," he said. "It allows us to take a good look at the kids to see what they can do and it allowed us to give the football kids a week off."

McGhee said he likes the support he has gotten from the community, pointing out that several former basketball players from Ross and one from St. Joe have donated time.

Dave Fahrbach, a one-time 6-4 center (now 6-7) for Ross who went on to play center at Otterbein, and varsity assistant coach Geoff Palmer, are working with the inside people. Palmer was a member of the state champion Sandusky St. Mary's team a few years back.

Other volunteers who graduated from Ross include Dave Aschenbach Jr., who is helping out with the guards, and John Lewis, who along with Mark Boukissen, a St. Joe grad, are working with the wing people.

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St. Joe Crimson Streaks
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