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WKU men's basketball SWEET SIXTEEN: Lutz formally introduced as 16th head coach in program's history

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Steve Lutz (center) is introduced as head coach for the WKU men's basketball team on Monday at the Jack & Jackie Harbaugh Club in Houchens/Smith Stadium. WKU President Timothy Caboni is at left and WKU Athletic Director Todd Stewart is at right.

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Steve Lutz had no ties to Western Kentucky University prior to this weekend, but when speaking with friend – and former WKU football coach – Jeff Brohm, it became a

desired destination.

Lutz was formally introduced Monday to a standing-room crowd in the Jack and Jackie Harbaugh Club at Houchens-Smith Stadium as the 16th WKU men's basketball coach in the program's illustrious history – taking the reins from Rick Stansbury, who stepped down as head coach following this past season.

After two years as head coach Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, the former Purdue and Creighton assistant said he is eager for the next challenge at WKU.

“I fully understand what it means to be the head coach at Western Kentucky University,” Lutz said. “If it wasn't for the vision of (athletic director Todd Stewart and president Timothy Caboni), I would not be here today. They have a vision of excellence in everything that they do and I share that vision.

“... I am not shy about what we are here to do. We are here to win games. We are here to win conference championships and we are here to go to the NCAA Tournament and win games. All of the while doing that, we are here to do it the right way and do it with integrity.”

Stewart said Lutz was the right person at the right time to lead WKU basketball.

“When you hire somebody, as we've said many times and (head baseball coach) Marc Rardin was a great example, it's always nice if you could hire somebody as your head

coach who has head coach experience,” Stewart said. “It’s even better if you can hire somebody that has winning head coaching experience. That is exactly what we have here right now. What Steve Lutz did at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi was remarkable.”

Lutz agreed to a four-year deal with an annual base salary of \$650,000. The contract has an automatic option so he will always be working under a four-year deal and includes several incentives. Lutz will receive a \$100,000 bonus for a C-USA regular-season title and an NCAA Tournament appearance, a \$50,000 bonus if named C-USA coach of year and a bonus of up to \$100,000 a year in academic goals.

The contract includes a \$2 million buyout prior to April 30, 2024, with a \$750,000 buyout between May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 and a \$500,000 buyout any date after that.

Stewart said WKU identified Lutz as a potential candidate early in the process after Stansbury stepped down on March 11.

“He was on our list, certainly from the get-go,” Stewart said. “I knew of him. I did not know him, but what was really unique about this was as the search unfolded – and we got to know each other better – as I talked to more and more people and we did our research, there was never a ‘Yeah, but.’ Every conversation, every piece of information made it better and better. It just continued to be positive. It got to a point where he clearly to me was the No. 1 person for this job.”

Lutz said he spoke to Brohm throughout the process to get a feel for the school and the community.

“I would be shocked if Jeff Brohm’s recommendation of me did not have a lasting impact on this search process,” Lutz said. “I’m intrigued by football. The leadership of football really intrigues me. I’d go over to football quite a bit and pick his brain and watch practice and sit in on meetings and stuff like that – more than probably a normal person.



“... I’ve enjoyed our relationship with (the Brohms) and he can’t speak highly enough about the community of Bowling Green. He had a hard time leaving here. He told me that.”

Lutz added he is excited about the challenge at WKU – inheriting a team that went 139-89 in Stansbury’s seven seasons, but has not been to the NCAA Tournament since 2013.

“The first thing that jumps off the page is the history of this program,” Lutz said. “We are talking about Sweet 16s and Final 4s. At (Texas A&M Corpus Christi), you had been to the NCAA Tournament once since 2007 until we did it again. It’s apples to oranges in terms of history and tradition.

“The challenge is still yet to be determined. When I walked into that situation we only had three players return from the previous staff and it is yet to be determined how many of these guys are going to return. It’s just the nature of where we are today in college athletics with the transfer portal.”

Lutz said fans can expect an aggressive style of play on both sides of the ball.

“We are going to be unselfish,” Lutz said. “We are going to share the basketball and when we leave the gym at the end of the night I sure hope each and every one of you will say, ‘Hey, the Hilltoppers were the hardest playing team on the floor.’ ”

According to Lutz, he met with most of the team Sunday and planned on more player meetings Monday with individual workouts on Tuesday.

“I don’t come in here with preconceived notions about what they can and can’t do,” Lutz said. “I’m going to play differently than the previous staff, so it is my job to figure out with the talent that we have what’s going to be the best way to play and adjust accordingly.”

As far as recruiting, Lutz said his Purdue ties also makes him familiar with recruiting in the region.

“I have obviously been down here and recruited a decent amount,” Lutz said. “I look for character, No. 1. I look for competitiveness. I look for skill and then I look for guys who just have passion to play basketball.

“... I know there are several good players left in the state of Kentucky in this class and certainly the class of 24 is brimming with talent. I’ve always believed in the same thing. If you can draw a 200-300 mile radius around your university and you can recruit what you need from there, why would you go any further?”

Lutz will also look to fill his coaching staff, saying the search will include both the current staff at WKU as well as his staff at TAMUCC.

“Coaching is almost like a little transfer portal as well,” Lutz said. “Obviously I am someone who never forgets where he came from and guys that have been there with him along the ride. You’ve got some people here that I will speak with that are currently on staff and see if their values align with my values. I’ve been doing this for a long time. I’ve got a long list of people interested in coming to Western Kentucky, including my previous staff.”{&end}

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