

LTCC hires winning coaches for soccer teams

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College's soccer teams won't play their first games until next fall, but already enrollment is up because of the program.

Many of the players who have played for Ben Wade at Lassen Community College in Susanville are transferring to the South Lake Tahoe school. They want to be with a winning coach. Lassen won its conference this year, and the men's and women's teams have been ranked in the top 10 nationally under Wade's leadership.

The board of education this week approved the hiring of Wade as the men's coach and Chris DeLeon as women's coach. DeLeon has most recently been the coach of the girls' and boys' South Tahoe High School soccer teams.



Lake Tahoe Community College will have men's and women's soccer teams in fall 2014.

Photo/Provided

Impacts on the college

"We are excited about this program. We think it's a perfect

match for Tahoe,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I think it will bring students to Tahoe as well as serve our local students well.”

Soccer is the only sports program LTCC has.

Thirteen students from Lassen have already signed up with LTCC. To be on the team it requires being a full-time student and having the grades. Many of the students transferring from Lassen are not U.S. residents. This has meant the college has had to make some changes.

“When you have one or two (international students) it’s no big deal. When you go from two to 20 or more it requires developing an international student program,” Tom Greene, vice president of academic affairs and student services, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It means working with the students to find housing, ensuring they have the legal documents to be in the country, and that LTCC student ambassadors are at the ready to help. All foreign students must have a certain amount of English proficiency, and have the means to pay for college and their living expenses.

College officials will also make sure these students are integrated into the college and community to better ensure their academic success, which could be hampered if they felt isolated.

England, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Brazil, Germany and Australia are some of the countries where these young men hail from.

It’s possible they won’t all play soccer.

“They do need to be enrolled this spring to be enrolled in the fall competition. We’ll have some students join us winter term, some spring term, and some will take online classes in

the winter and then join us in the spring,” Greene said in regards to the Lassen athletes.

Greene cited studies from 2004 and 2011 that show college students who play sports are more likely to do well academically.

Students interested in playing on LTCC’s soccer teams will find more info online.

LTCC’s men’s coach

Wade has been a head coach for the past 17 years – mostly in Northern California. And he has a penchant of developing programs.

“In some ways it is a benefit because you can put your blueprint on a program and set expectations as high as possible,” Wade said of starting the program at LTCC from scratch. “I want a team that will be top 10 nationally ranked and I expect this this year.”

His success as a coach translates to universities recruiting his players. His student-athletes are being sought after by hundreds of four-year universities – like Boston University and the University of Miami.

Wade first saw the LTCC campus and soccer field in 2010 when he was here for a tournament. He knew then he would apply for the coaching job at LTCC if there were ever such a position.

“The focus will be on local talent. It has to be,” Wade told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Yes, players from Lassen are following him, but everyone will be trying out. He anticipates having between 25 and 28 players on the team. He tried recruiting Tahoe players to Lassen but they either wanted to stay in Tahoe or went to a bigger school and stopped playing soccer. He’s excited to give them an option to play collegiate soccer in Tahoe.

"I'm a very passionate coach, but I really like discipline," Wade said. He won't take "bad apples".

He expects be looking at athletes next month.

"I'm deliciously excited about that," Wade said of the fact that Lassen is in the same Golden Valley Conference at LTCC.

Wade is also a competitor. He's been on "Survivor" three times – 2008 he was fifth, 2010 he was ninth and he made the finals in 2012. He said he expects to be asked back for the "Legends Season" but isn't sure he'll accept.

"It's hard on your body," Wade said. He was the one called "Coach".

But this tough guy has a softer side. Music is a passion of his. So much so that he will not give up conducting the Susanville Symphony after he moves to Tahoe.

He played trumpet for the New York Metropolitan Opera.

"It got too easy," he said of the work. Sight-reading music provided the only challenge.

Wade started Susanville's symphony 11 years from the ground level and would entertain doing the same in South Lake Tahoe. For starters he will be teaching a music class in the spring at LTCC.

"My specialty is brass. I like to create ensembles," Wade said.

LTCC's women's coach

"It's always been a dream of mine," DeLeon said of coaching a college team.

He's been working with Tim Johnson, LTCC's acting athletic director, for a number of years to get a soccer program. He said this administration is the first one to listen.

DeLeon knows there will be speed bumps along the way as well as a learning curve. But he also knows he will tap Wade for info about the league and how things are done at this level.

DeLeon has been part of state championship teams at South Tahoe High. He credits coaches Joe Winters and Ed McClain for helping him evolve into the coach he is today.

“I’ve taken a little bit from each coach and molded different things into a winning program,” DeLeon told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He estimates he’ll have a team of 18 to 22 players. And he hopes some will be STHS grads. Recruiting will be the first thing he starts doing after the first of the year.

“You want players that already have established fundamental skills. At high school you (don’t have that). That will be one thing where can move into more tactical stuff (right away),” DeLeon said.

During the day DeLeon is a counselor for a juvenile detention center in Douglas County. His boss understands what it takes to be a coach and is flexible with hours.

“I would love to move up to a four-year school, but Lake Tahoe has a way of keeping you here,” DeLeon said.