

Three finalists in running for L-C hoops job

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By Matt Baney of the Tribune
Warriors looking at Pfeifer, Burton, Phay for vacant post



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Lewis-Clark State has narrowed its search for a men's basketball coach to three candidates - one from within Idaho, one from within the NAIA and one from within the Warrior family.

The finalists are Jared Phay, coach at North Idaho College; Kevin Burton, coach at Lambuth; and George Pfeifer, who had the L-C job from 1989-2005. L-C athletic director Gary Picone confirmed the list of finalists Thursday.

"I like the pool of guys; I think we've got a quality pool of finalists," Picone said. "We're going to hire a really good head basketball coach here."

Two of the three have already been on campus for interviews. The third will be interviewed today, Picone said.

"My expectation is that not long after that, we'll have a decision," he said.

Phay has been the boss at NIC, a Coeur d'Alene junior college, for seven years. His Cardinals have racked up 77 wins over the past three seasons.

Phay is a Post Falls native who graduated from both NIC and the University of Idaho.

Burton is also coming off his seventh season at Lambuth, an NAIA school located in Jackson, Tenn. His overall record is 138-74 and the Eagles have gone to the national tournament three times.

Burton probably has extra motivation to find a new job, since it appears Lambuth will be closing. On Thursday, the school's board of trustees voted to cease academic operations June 30 and to open discussions with other colleges and universities about taking over the school's Jackson campus and continuing its academic mission, The Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tenn., reported on its website.

The board blamed Lambuth's closure on its long-running financial circumstances and its loss of accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Memphis newspaper reported.

By far the most familiar candidate is Pfeifer, who is the L-C program's all-time leader in victories with a record of 296-206. He left the Lewiston school following the 2004-05 season to become an assistant at Idaho, then served as the Vandals' head coach for two years, going 12-48 before being fired in March of 2008.

Pfeifer then went 33-34 in three seasons at Montana State-Billings before being fired last month.

Pfeifer's greatest success at L-C came during his last two seasons, when the Warriors went 56-15 and made back-to-back trips to Nationals.

L-C has been without a men's basketball coach since March 10, when Tim Walker resigned after six years in charge.
