

Mike Jones returns as MC head men's basketball coach

Special to The Clinton Courier

Late last month, Mississippi College President Dr. Blake Thompson announced that Mississippi College athletic director Mike Jones will return to the bench for his seventeenth season as the head coach of the men's basketball program.

"I am excited that Mike Jones has agreed to return to his calling of coaching," said Dr. Thompson. "I have come to know him as a leader on our campus, and his love for our student-athletes is exemplary."

Jones, a 2018 inductee into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame, steps back onto the sidelines of the court that bears his name following fifteen years of service solely as the athletic director for his alma mater.

This will be his third stint as the leader of the Choctaw basketball program, coaching a total of sixteen years (1988-2002 and 2006-08) and compiling a school record of 332 wins.

"I'm looking forward to the opportunity to get back on the bench and coach again," Jones said. "As Dr. Thompson and I reviewed the program, he approached me about returning to the sidelines. I spent a lot of time in prayer and felt the Lord steering me back to lead this team."

"Mike is an excellent basketball coach and athletic administrator," Thompson went on. "He will continue to serve as our Athletic Director, and I look forward to cheering on the Choctaw men's basketball program as they return to national prominence under the leadership of Coach Jones. I am also thankful for Coach Don Lofton's long-time service, and he shares our excitement for the upcoming season."

Lofton will remain on staff as an assistant coach after spending fifteen years as the head coach and compiling a career record of 227-191. Alex Ainsworth will also remain on the staff as an assistant coach.

Over his thirty years as a basketball coach, Jones has worked with and faced some of the greats in college basketball, including current Ole Miss head basketball coach Kermit Davis, who took the Rebels to the NCAA Tournament in his first season at the helm.

"Mike Jones is one of the very best coaches at any level of college basketball," Davis said. "He is a relentless recruiter and a people person. His 'X's and O's' are on par with any coach at any level, and he will be able to get MC back to recognition at a national level. This is a great move for MC."



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During his first stint in the Gulf South Conference, Jones made five straight trips to the GSC Tournament, including winning the championship in the 1994-95 season with an 86-84 win over rival Delta State. The Choctaws advanced to the Regional semi-finals of the Division II Tournament that season.

His record of 152-68 (.691) gives him the fourth-best career winning percentage in Gulf South Conference history, including winning more than twenty games in four of eight seasons in the league. Jones also earned GSC Coach of the Year honors following the 1993-94 campaign.

Over the eight seasons in the GSC, fifteen student-athletes earned All-Gulf South Conference honors. Corey Speech being named GSC West Division Player of the Year in 1994-95. Tom Matthews (1988-89), Speech (1993-94) and Todd Sorrell (1994-95) all were named GSC Rookie of the Year, while Tracy Mabry (1990-91), Greg Eiland (1991-92) and Francisco Wilson (1994-95) were GSC Freshman of the Year honorees.

Overall, Jones led MC to fourteen consecutive winning seasons overall, including five straight NCAA Tournament appearances at his alma mater. Jones led MC to four American Southwest Conference championships in 1998, 1999, 2002, and 2007. In the 2007 season, the Choctaws reached as high as a number three national ranking.

After a four-year hiatus, Coach Jones returned to the bench for two seasons from 2006-08, where his Choctaws compiled a 46-9 record overall and a 35-5 conference mark. In the '06-'07 season, Jones led MC to a third consecutive ASC Championship and a trip to the "Sweet Sixteen" of the NCAA Division III Tournament.

Coach Jones earned three ASC Coach of the Year honors in 1998, 1999 and 2007, and his players consistently appeared on the All-Conference and All-Academic teams at the end of the season. Emphasizing defense, the Choctaws led the ASC in scoring and field goal percentage defense in 2007.

"Being the head men's basketball coach at Mississippi College is one of the highlights of my life," Jones went on, "and I'm excited for the chance to help this program, my alma mater, compete for Gulf South Conference championships."

Jones started his twenty-year head coaching career at Copiah-Lincoln Community College, where he went 112-20 (.848) and led the Wolves to two Region 23 titles and a state championship in 1988. He was named Region 23 Coach of the Year in 1986 and 1988 and was inducted into the school's Sports Hall of Fame in 1996.

Prior to his time at Co-Lin, Jones spent eight seasons as an assistant coach at the University of Southern Mississippi under the direction of legendary head coach M.K. Turk, who is still the all-time winningest coach in Golden Eagle history.

Jones began his coaching career at Mississippi College, where he was a graduate assistant and was responsible for all scouting and recruiting. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Education at MC in 1975 and later received his Master of Education in School Administration in 1977.

Jones is a native of New Hebron, Mississippi, and is married to the former Jane Cooper of New Hebron. They two have two children, Michael and Mandy, and six grandchildren, Zach, Ansley, Will, Charlotte, Rhett and Ward.

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