

New LMC softball coach hopes to build 'family atmosphere'

Red Hawks' Jewell looks to bring team together

By **AARON CRIDER**

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New Lake Michigan College softball coach John Jewell wanted to go to the next level. After coaching for the last 17 years at Grace Christian, the 60-year-old took the plunge and moved up to coach junior college softball.

"I said that if I don't do it now I might never do it," he said. "This is the next level, but I don't treat it any different. It's still softball."

And while Jewell has decided to go to the next level, he plans to elevate the Red Hawks' softball program as well.

"We've got a lot of local girls," Jewell said. "They're from Berrien Springs, Dowagiac, Michigan Lutheran, South Haven...we have a pretty good flavor of area girls. I'm trying to change the philosophy about what people think of LMC and junior college. I don't think many people

want to give LMC a shot, so I'm trying to change that."

It's been a learning curve so far. Jewell took his team to Florida last week to get a feel for his players, and the Red Hawks didn't fare as well as he'd like, going 1-3.

"We lost some games early, which is tough to compete with," he said. "But we at least won our last game there. We have a lot of talent, it's just a matter of getting it meshed together. It's hard to do it in the gym. That trip was hard."

Already standing out are Angie White — whose hitting skills have caught Jewell's attention— catcher Danielle McCoy and Marrisona Dodd and Ali Kyles in the outfield.

The Red Hawks' pitching staff is also making waves, with Anna Riggensbach and Madi Whitlow leading the way.

"We are still trying to find ourselves. Our pitching is our greatest strength, and I would put our outfield against anybody," said Jewell.

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“Angie is hitting the ball well, and swinging the bat well, but we have to improve on our hitting. We have to hit better. We’ve been working really hard on that. Going down to

Florida our bats were a bit slow, our timing was off. But I think this can be a winning program.”

Jewell hopes to create a family atmosphere, which he believes will lead to future success. Helping him is his wife, Laurie, who has coached by his side for the last 21 years.

“So far it’s worked,” he said.

“We’ve had one of our best practices recently. The girls are getting excited and they are realizing we can be competitive. That’s what we are trying to build. It’s a family for us.”

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