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Coach Ivankovich Takes Acalanes' Football Helm

By Robin Schoettler Fox



Coach Mike Ivankovich, Acalanes' new head football coach Photo Lee Berg

Coach Mike Ivankovich, the Ygnacio Valley High School (YV) 5-season head coach veteran who led the Warriors to become 2005 NCS-2A Champions then stepped down from the program in favor of family time, is at the helm again, this time leading the Acalanes Dons' football program, effective immediately.

After leaving YV's program, Ivankovich didn't stray far from the football field for long. He just took a less demanding role. An Acalanes PE and World History teacher, Ivankovich has been the Dons' freshman coach for the last two seasons.

As the Dons' new head coach, he replaces Athletic Director Randy Takahashi who stepped down from the football program in January, citing plans to apply for school administrative positions and wanting to avoid a mid-season football leadership change. In Takahashi's three seasons as head football coach, the Dons posted a 13 -19 record.

"We are very excited (about Coach Ivankovich), as he is a proven coach with much success as head coach at Ygnacio Valley High School," says Takahashi, who remains Acalanes' Athletic Director.

Transition, according to Takahashi, isn't a big issue because Ivankovich was an inside pick who's already coached many of the Acalanes players, although not the rising seniors. "I have no doubt that Coach Ivankovich will lead this program in a direction that will make the Acalanes community proud," says Takahashi.

What direction is that? Old school football discipline. A program built on fundamentals and focused on core values, says Ivankovich: "Loyalty. Teamwork.

Commitment. Sacrifice."

And not just for the varsity.

"We will run a 3-level program with consistent increases in the amount of work required," says Ivankovich.

Officially head coach for just a few days now, Ivankovich has already recruited help. While he says he's retained some existing Acalanes' coaches, astute football fans will recognize former YV talent new to the mix; people that previously played for or coached with Ivankovich, and some who did both.

Top of the list is Josh Davis, a former YV player turned coach who took over the reigns as Warriors head coach after Ivankovich stepped down. Davis decided recently to leave YV after three seasons as head coach, saying he needed change, adding he'd only played and coached at the one school. According to Ivankovich, Davis will coach varsity running backs and linebackers, and will be Defensive Coordinator.

As for offensive strategy, Ivankovich says he's still a proponent of a running game, but whether fans will see the Dons executing his signature, old-style, "double-wing" offensive set that proved so successful for YV remains to be seen.

"It really doesn't matter what you run," says Ivankovich. Success, he says, comes when everyone is committed to whatever strategy is employed.

As for improving Acalanes football stats, don't expect Ivankovich to promise win-record results. Not yet, anyway. "Winning is not a goal, it's an outcome," says Ivankovich.

An outcome, he says, that comes from a program where everyone involved successfully focuses on those core values, with "all of us moving forward together, being positive." That work, he says, is only now beginning.

Ivankovich held "informational" meetings for players last Thursday, just before the long holiday weekend. Earlier that day he said he'd be explaining this core value philosophy, outlining expectations.

Then it's on to physical training. That starts this week with players expected to begin "sacrificing time to the weight room."

After all, the clock is ticking. There's only so much time between now and the start of football season 2009.

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