

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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WNHS veteran assistant named Thunder football head coach

Woodstock native and longtime Thunder assistant coach Matthew Polnow has been chosen to lead the Woodstock North High School Football program starting with the 2022 season.

Polnow, 39, has been an assistant coach on both offense and defense for the Thunder for 12 years under former coach Jeff Schroeder who stepped down in November after 13 seasons. Most recently, Polnow assisted the staff as the varsity offensive coordinator.

“Coach Polnow has been an instrumental piece to the football coaching staff since 2010,” said David Rose, athletic director for WNHS. “He has a vast understanding of the game of football, and the ability to bring the best out of all the athletes. We look forward to seeing what he can accomplish as the new head football coach.”

Polnow said he’s thrilled with the opportunity to take over for Schroeder whom he admires, and he is looking forward to camp getting underway this summer.

“I couldn’t be more excited to walk into this situation. He built one heck of a program,” Polnow said.

The 2000 Woodstock High School grad was a three-sport athlete who played on some good Blue Streaks football teams in the late 1990s as a receiver, safety and quarterback. Polnow said he was fortunate to have had many great high school coaches who inspired him to become a coach himself.

Polnow earned his bachelor’s degree from Western Illinois University in physical and health education and is now working on a master’s degree in educational leadership. Polnow has been teaching elementary physical education in Vernon Hills since 2005.

He counts the playoff experiences, a Fox Valley Conference Fox Division title in 2011 and the program’s first playoff win in 2012 among his Thunder highlights. “But building relationships with the kids and the other coaches is always fun regardless of what the team did,” Polnow said.

“I feel like my best attribute is my ability to relate to the kids,” he said. “Our goal is to be resilient. There are always going to be ups and downs.”

“The mission of our program is to empower ourselves to reach educational and personal potential. I want kids to ask themselves if they’ve reached their potential on a daily basis,” Polnow said.

Polnow said he’s proud of the greater Woodstock community and is excited to be taking on a role like his many mentors from his days growing up playing before ultimately coaching in Woodstock.