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Hennessy named new athletic director at Miramonte

By Jon Kingdon



The Hennessy family - Shannon, Aimee, Allison, Sean, Tyler and Kacie Photo provided

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When James Lathrop, the longtime teacher, coach and Miramonte's athletic director since 2018, opted to move on to become an assistant water polo coach at Stanford, Principal Ben Campopiano did not have to look far for a suitable replacement. Sean Hennessy, who has been teaching at Miramonte for six years, the physical education department chair and most recently the school's baseball coach, seemed like a natural fit for the athletic director's position.

"Ben and I go back quite a ways because of baseball," Hennessy said. "Once he heard that James was leaving, we had a conversation as to whether I would be interested in the position and if I had the bandwidth to do it. My passion is in coaching and as an athletic director, being able to connect with the school community as a coach and athletic director is important to me. It's where I feel comfortable and where I can make the biggest difference. Because of circumstances and how my career has panned out, I am ready for the position."

With the summer break, Hennessy is already preparing for the upcoming fall season: "I've been lucky that James has given me a good library of information I'm going through that has been allowing me to get up to speed. I'm also taking time to recharge as I want to do a good job in this new position so it's a good balance between the two."

Hennessy grew up in Vallejo, graduating from Hogan High School (closed in 2012) where he played baseball. He would go on to play baseball at Napa Junior College and Cal State Hayward (now Cal State East Bay), getting his teaching credential and then his master's degree at Concordia University (Irvine).

Hennessy's teaching career began in Vallejo, moving on to Las Lomas for a number of years before coming to Miramonte six years ago. He and his wife Allison, a Miramonte graduate herself, have four children, Shannon, an Arizona State graduate, Kacie, who just graduated from Cal Poly SLO, Aimee, a freshman at Diablo Valley College and Tyler who will be a sophomore at Miramonte this year.

Ironically, Hennessy feels that his role as a baseball coach better prepared him for the athletic director's position. "The Department Chair for Physical Education is more curriculum based and the athletic director's position is much more relationship based. As the athletic director, it's making sure that procedures are in place, paying strong attention to detail, so coaches get cleared and that is where coaching baseball has prepared me for that role."

Hennessy will continue to teach, though his load has been reduced, and also plans to continue coaching baseball. "As a spring sport, it's a little bit easier to be a coach because at that point in the year, I'll have the time to do both, having already being able to get dialed in about what's needed along with the ebb and flow of how the school year is working," Hennessy said. "I'm excited in that I can add some value to the athletic department and the school as a whole."

Much of that excitement came from the baseball team's final game of the season as the lowest seed in the NCS baseball tournament losing to top seeded Cardinal Newman by a score of 2-1. "We played our best game of the year and Nolan O'Brien pitched the game of his life," Hennessy said. "Cardinal Newman scored 10 runs against each of the next two opponents and won the championship game 8-2. I was just proud of how our players played really hard."

Hennessy's goal is very simple - to have the student-athletes to find enjoyment and success in their individual pursuits. "At Miramonte there are so many kids that are involved in so many different activities, you want it to be a positive experience for all of them," Hennessy said. "You do that by having coaches that share the same values about competition, the experience and communication. You do want to win and make the playoffs. Those are opportunities to shine as a school and as an athletic department. You want to put your teams in the best possible position to compete at the highest level possible. All the teams are not going to be able to do that, so you want to make sure the coaches are staying positive and trying to develop talent and see that it's a good fit for everyone involved."

For Hennessy, the balance between academics and athletics is understood: "For any high school student,

time management is super important for them to succeed and there has to be a balance between the academics and whatever they're passionate about. We have a very driven student body and there are grade requirements they have to maintain. Miramonte takes its academics very seriously as well as its athletic teams. The balance happens naturally."

Hennessy appreciates the quality of the other athletic directors in the area. "I know Ray Meadows (Campolindo), Randy Takahashi (Acalanes) and Ray Krueger (Las Lomas) because I've worked here for so long," Hennessy said. "They all do a great job with their athletic programs. Being new, if I have a question, I'm going to reach out to these people whose schools are similar in academic and athletic expectations. I would be doing myself a disservice if I did not communicate with those athletic directors."

As the baseball coach, Hennessy welcomed the input from his players and will try and continue that policy as the athletic director. "I want students in my class and the players that I coach to be able to talk to me," Hennessy said. "There are many groups that have a stake in our athletic program - the players, the coaches, the parents, the community, and administrators. If there is a way to improve things or an issue that needs to be addressed within the athletic department, I would hope that the players would communicate with their coaches and if there is something that they want to bring forward, I will certainly talk with them. We have really good coaches and there will be continued growth of students that want to participate and students that see a good program which they want to be associated with."

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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