2008 Div IV State Champ Coach Relies on Noah

Dan Hegemier, Boy's Coach, St. Mary's Memorial High School

It's a homecoming of sorts for St. Mary's Memorial High School boys coach Dan Hegemier. It was 33 years ago that he married a young lady from the Ohio town and the two have lived in St. Mary's ever since.
So when the school's head coaching position became available before the summer, Hegemier decided it might be fun to lead his hometown team.

"I wasn't really looking to go anywhere," Hegemier said. "But this was a good opportunity."

The move might be a good one for Hegemier. But one thing can't be disputed—the Roughriders got themselves a championship coach.

Just prior to accepting the St. Mary's job, Hegemier led New Knoxville High School (Ohio) to three consecutive 20-0 regular season records. At one point, the Rangers extended their regular season win streak to 63 games in a row.

The 2008 graduating class consisted of 29 seniors that included 15 boys. Five of them played for Hegemier, and those five last lost a high school game when they were freshmen on Feb. 10, 2006.

Hegemier and New Knoxville capped off their incredible run with a 2008 Division IV Ohio State Championship.

"We had some success over the past few years," Hegemier modestly said.

Hegemier has won state titles before. He led Fort Loramie (Ohio) boys' team to the 1987 Class A State Championship and the 1993 Division IV State Championship—all while living in St. Mary's.

"I'm very familiar with the St. Mary's program, and obviously, they've had a rough go the past few years," Hegemier said.

St. Mary's posted an impressive 21-4 record that included an 8-1 mark in the Western Buckeye League (WBL) in 2004-05. It was the first time the Roughriders won the WBL since 1981. That team also captured the district and sectional championships.

But since that magical season, St. Mary's has posted records of 10-12, 3-19 and last year the Roughriders were just 1-20. In the past

two seasons, St. Mary's is a combined 1-17 in the WBL.

And to make matters worse, the JV and Freshmen teams didn't fare much better. The two combined for a 9-29 record.

How will Hegemier adjust to the new school?

"I'm not going to change a lot of what we do," Hegemier said. "I feel comfortable with what we do on offense and defense. But I'm willing to use anything to help us improve."

That anything came as an e-mail from Rick Turk, a Noah Basketball representative.

"I looked through the e-mail and was interested in Noah," Hegemier said. "But I thought at the time we couldn't afford the price. I then forgot about it."

But in June, Turk called Hegemier and offered a free shooting clinic and demonstration. Hegemier thought "why not?" and the two settled on a date.

When the day came, it took only 10 to 15 minutes for Hegemier to make a decision after watching Turk give the demonstration.

"I told him, 'I'm going to buy one,'" Hegemier said. "Rick does a great job of presenting it in a way that coaches can see the potential. I could see how it would help our young men to shoot better."

The finance program helped Hegemier and the school purchase the Noah System and when they hooked it up and the kids gave it a try, "everyone just loved it."

There's no doubt that Hegemier is a great coach. But there's one thing he can't teach, and it's his belief that not many, if any, coaches can teach this skill—shooting.

"You can go through the fundamentals and show them how to keep it straight," Hegemier said. "But I'm a firm believer you can't teach them arc and distance control. That's a scientific process."

And correct shooting is also about muscle memory that is acquired through repetition, and not through too much thinking. Hegemier should know about what goes through a high school kid's mind, he was a guidance counselor for 25 years.

"You can try to coach them everything in basketball," Hegemier said. "But when that ball goes up, and the clock ticks, they are on their own. I believe Noah gives them the confidence to rely on their shot."

Hegemier hasn't kept Noah a secret from his opponents. In his words, he's been telling everybody, and one school even had Turk come do a demonstration and then bought the system.