

## **Womochil resigns at Jefferson; denies ISU rumors**

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 20 January 2012 20:38 - Last Updated Friday, 20 January 2012 20:43

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Jim Womochil resigned as the head football coach at Cedar Rapids Jefferson High School Friday, but said he might return to the J-Hawks next season as an assistant coach.

"I'm going to be working in football someplace, somewhere, somehow," he said. "It could even be here. I'm not ruling that out."

Womochil, 45, compiled a 22-78 record in 11 years at Jefferson and leaves the job with a 22-game losing streak, the longest among 4A schools in the state.

He denied rumors that he'll succeed Bob Elliott as the new defensive backfield coach at Iowa State. "I can tell you that's false. That's definitely false," he remarked.

Womochil said he is actively pursuing another job in football, but was not specific.

"I'm looking at other coaching endeavors. Right now I cannot comment on where," he said. "I can't comment on what's available or where I'm going. There's nothing in hand right now."

"I'm taking a look at other options right now. In terms of anything being finalized, no."

Womochil said he has friends on the coaching staffs at Iowa, Iowa State, Northern Iowa and Coe, but gave no indication if he'll be joining any of those programs as a paid assistant coach, volunteer assistant coach or graduate assistant.

Womochil informed his players Friday that he had resigned as the head coach. Jefferson activities director Scott Kibby attended the meeting in the auditorium with about 50 players.

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"It was obviously emotional," said Womochil.

Womochil denied rumors several weeks ago that he was heading to Iowa State to coach the defensive backs. He denied the same rumors again Friday and told the players not to believe everything they hear.

"I listened. I was there," said Kibby. "He said to the kids, 'You may think you know where I'm going, but you don't know.' So he said don't worry about tweeting it or shooting it out and everything."

Womochil told the players "he has a good opportunity" without being specific, according to Kibby.

"I don't think this came as a complete shock to the students," said Kibby. "There had been some rumblings out and about."

Womochil is taking a leave of absence from his teaching position at Jefferson, but he has not resigned as a teacher. That means he could return to Jefferson at some point as a teacher and assistant football coach.

"Absolutely. I'm not a big ego guy. I care about this program," he said.

He said returning to Jefferson as an assistant coach is a "strong possibility."

"That's the honest truth," he said. "I want this thing to succeed, and it's closer than people think."

"I think it's a good time for another coach to come in. This could turn out to be a good thing, in that it might create some excitement. Only time will tell."

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Womochil said he could return to Jefferson next season as the freshman coach, sophomore coach or varsity assistant, if the new head coach wants him.

"That's his call," he said. "We'll cross that bridge when we get there. That's why it's a leave of absence and not quitting (as a teacher)."

Kibby confirmed Womochil has the right to return to the school as a teacher and assistant coach under terms of school district policy for a leave of absence.

"He would be welcomed back," said Kibby.

Kibby said he'll assemble a search committee that will include one or two active football players, a football parent, several Jefferson coaches, Jefferson principal Charles McDonnell and himself. He said they'll advertise the job and collect resumes for several weeks. He also said he'll contact potential candidates to gauge their interest.

"If we're interviewing by March 1, we'll have done pretty good," said Kibby.

Kibby said he and McDonnell will choose the new coach. He said the school district will allow Jefferson to add a full-time position to its staff for the 2012-13 school year, which means the new coach will not have to fill a vacant teaching position.

"We'll be allowed to have an extra staff person just so we can find the best possible candidates," he said. "We're thankful that the administration is allowing us to do that."

Kibby said it's important to get the right guy.

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"It's the most important extra-curricular position to hire. I told the kids that," he said. "This is the most important hire on the athletic side that I can make. There's no way to beat around the bush on that."

Kibby said he's looking for someone who has been a successful head coach, but also said he'd consider an assistant coach from a successful Class 4A program. He said "kid friendliness" is another important factor, and gave Womochil high marks in that regard.

Kibby said he considers Womochil a good person, a good teacher and a good coach. He said he's not sure why Womochil did not win more games.

"I think that's the million-dollar question," said Kibby. "He's as down about that as anybody."

"I'm a west-sider, and I don't feel good about us losing how many games we've lost in a row. And if we could sprinkle holy water on that and make that go away as fast as we could, we would."

Womochil never had a team with a winning record at Jefferson. Three of his clubs went 4-5 during the regular season and one of them made the substate playoffs.

"This is a tough place. There's no question that a lot of things need to happen for this program to be a consistent winner," he said.

Womochil cited an overall lack of football tradition at Jefferson, problems with the middle school feeder systems, socio-economic factors and a lack of team speed as factors that have contributed to the program's lack of success.

Womochil feels he's made a contribution to Jefferson High School and the football program, even if it's not reflected in his won-loss record. He mentioned bringing three homeless Jefferson football players into his own home to give them a place to live as an example.

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"I've sold my soul to the place. I've worked hard," he said. "There are things that we've done as a staff that we're proud of. We've touched a lot of kids."

Kibby said he's known since November that Womochil was looking for another job. He said Womochil told him Monday that he was resigning, without saying if he had a new job or not.

"I've known for a couple of months that this day probably was coming, but I had to let it unfold out of respect to him more than anything else," said Kibby. "I like him."