

Fischer Named T’Birds Varsity Coach

Will Call Shots For Chautauqua Lake/Westfield Team This Fall; Greco Will Be Assistant

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Scott Kindberg, Sports Editor

MAYVILLE — Chautauqua Lake and Westfield merged their high school varsity football programs late last year.

That’s not the only news heading into the 2018 high school gridiron season, however.

Curt Fischer, who posted 221 career victories at Maple Grove Junior-Senior High School and two state titles from 1992-2017 before resigning three months ago, was approved as the Thunderbirds’ new head coach at the Chautauqua Lake Central School Board Education meeting Tuesday night.

Fischer, 54, replaces Rich Morton, who will remain on the staff as the program’s modified coach and varsity assistant. In his lone varsity season with the Thunderbirds, Morton posted a 4-6 record, taking over the program just days before fall practices started last year.

Joining Fischer among the varsity assistants on the staff will be Dan Greco, another familiar name in area

football circles. Fischer’s longtime defensive coordinator on Dutch Hollow Road, Greco was part of the Maple Grove staff during both state championship seasons (1998 and 2008) and in 2016 and 2017 when the Red Dragons lost in the state title game each year. Ironically, Greco returns to CLCS where he served as its varsity head coach from 2009 to 2012.

“We are excited to have two of the best coaches in Western New York as part of our Chautauqua Lake/Westfield football program,” said Josh Liddell, CLCS supervisor of athletics. “The success of Coach Fischer and Coach Greco on the football field is well documented, as they have won numerous league and sectional championships together and two state championships. If you add up how many



Curt Fischer, left, and Dan Greco will be coaching high school football together this fall for Chautauqua Lake/Westfield. P-J file photo



Curt Fischer

years they have coached football — Dan (46) and Curt (33) — it totals 79 years.”

Fischer’s coaching accomplishments are impressive. After taking over the Maple Grove football program in 1992, he posted a 221-45 record, good for fourth on the Section VI career coaching wins list; won nine sectional titles, including two as the merged Maple Grove/Chautauqua Lake team in 2014 and 2015; claimed state championships in 1998 and 2008 when he finished 13-0 both years; and had just one losing season — 4-5 — in 2003.

Greco, meanwhile, began his coaching career as an 18-year-old in 1971 in the Jamestown Midget Football League. After that, he made his mark as a coach at Lincoln Junior High School in Jamestown, and then served as defensive coordinator at Maple Grove, which bookended his time as head coach at Chautauqua Lake.

“We anticipate that their significant football coaching knowledge will make an immediate positive impact on our athletes from Ripley, Westfield and Chautauqua Lake,” Liddell said. “Coach Fischer and Coach Greco have both been part of the Chautauqua Lake athletic department and football program in the past, and they have done a great job with our student-athletes and always met or exceeded expectations. It should be a great

year for our football players as we are confident that they will be well coached and properly prepared for the upcoming season.”

Fischer is excited about the new opportunity.

“I know a lot of the kids and I’ve been fortunate to meet more of them during basketball season. These are great kids. They want to win and they’re going to give everything they’ve got.”

Greco echoed those sentiments.

“The prospect of playing in the (Section VI) Class C (South) really has my blood flowing,” he said. “Randolph/Frewsburg is in it, Southwestern is in it, Franklinville/Ellicottville has moved up. It just looks like it’s something that will be extremely challenging. That’s what my motivation is, going back to Chautauqua Lake and seeing if we can compete in that league.”

Tuesday’s announcement caps a busy offseason for the merged football program.

After considering many options and hearing from both coaches and parents, Westfield Superintendent David Davison recommended in December that the district separate its football program from that of Brocton/Fredonia, and combine with Chautauqua Lake as the host school for the 2018-19 school year.



Dan Greco

In an article published in The Post-Journal in December, Westfield athletic director Jake Hitchcock had told board members that there were several problems with the alliance with Fredonia and Brocton. Many Westfield parents had raised concerns about the 7th- and 8th-grade players in the heavyweight division of the community-based Goldenhawks football program who no longer could play in that league.

The partnership with Chautauqua Lake will allow the 7th- and 8th-graders to play uninterrupted. Board member Brenda Backus noted that “a partnership with Chautauqua Lake will give our kids the opportunities we’re looking for.”

Added Fischer: “Being back with Coach Greco (is great), I know that we’re bringing Dave DuBois as a volunteer coach and we’re really working hard on Jordan Saxton now. Hopefully we can get him board approved soon. We’ll have our whole staff. It’s so nice. ... I’m looking forward to meeting (Rich Morton). I know he did a great job (last year) and I know we’ll have a great relationship, for sure.”