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Former SASA director named new UIS soccer coach

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University of Illinois Springfield Prairie Stars men's soccer coach Chad Jones is new to the head coaching ranks and UIS, but not to the Springfield area.

Jones, who takes over for Joe Eck, served as executive director of the Springfield Area Soccer Association from 2007-2008.

"Chad's passion and enthusiasm for the game of soccer will be a welcome addition while his knowledge of the local soccer community will provide immediate benefits for our program," UIS director of athletics Rodger Jehlicka said.

The 39-year-old married father of two was an assistant coach for both the men's and women's teams at his alma mater, Millikin, last fall. Jones spent eight seasons as an assistant at Eastern Illinois, Illinois Wesleyan and Millikin. This is his first head coaching position.

"I've learned a lot from being an assistant for so long," he said.

Jones was the boys and girls varsity soccer coach at Decatur MacArthur High School for five years. He coached the boys squad to a fourth-place finish at the Class A state tournament in 1999. He was also the director of the Midstate Soccer Club and Academy in Decatur for seven years.

"I have a lot of contacts with a lot of the club coaches in the St. Louis and Chicago area," Jones said. "I'm an Olympic Development (Program) coach. I've been around and coached some of the better players in Illinois."

Jones, who was a defender during his playing days, has the chance to put his stamp on a program he's incredibly familiar with.

He attended soccer camps as a youth at UIS when it was still Sangamon State. He has relationships with the program's only other coaches: Eck and Aydin Gonulsen.

Jones inherits a team that compiled a 2-14-1 record last season.

"The three areas I want us to concentrate on right away are being better organized, committed and fit," he said.

Marcia Martinez can be reached at 788-1547.

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Congrats to Chad-he will do a fine job!

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