

MSMS brings in 3 new coaches for the new school year

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Juniors are not the only ones getting the MSMS experience for the first time this fall.

Three new coaches joined the MSMS Athletics Department this school year: Joseph Barnard is the new boys soccer coach, Hunt Holdiness replaces Charles Yarborough as girls soccer coach and Grozie Thomas is the new cross country coach.

Thomas is originally from California, but he spent most of his childhood in Columbus. He graduated from the Mississippi University for Women with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 2020.

A first-year coach, Thomas said he plans on utilizing his many years of sports experience, ranging from high school football, basketball, baseball and track, to running cross country at MUW. He said his motivation for coaching is having the opportunity to “lead young men and women, let them learn from my mistakes as a student athlete and coach them into being better than me.”

Described by LeAnn Alexander, the MSMS director of student affairs, as “a former college player standout on the field [with] a deep understanding of the game,” Holdiness works as a personal trainer and group fitness instructor for MUW Campus Recreation. He is from Vicksburg, and his previous experience includes working with MUW athletes in strength and conditioning, and playing soccer at East Central Community College and MUW.

“My favorite part about coaching is the fact that I am able to teach others about a sport that I love,” Holdiness said.

For the other half of Blue Waves soccer, Barnard is leading the boys team. Barnard is originally from Tutwiler, and while he did not play soccer as a high school student, he did previously play in an adult league in Denver, Colorado. He teaches AP Biology and Advanced Chemistry, and will teach Microbiology next semester. Barnard also said he wants to start a golf team at MSMS.

“The discipline that you learn, the ability to work in a team or as a unit, the concept of sportsmanship: These are valuable life lessons that will help prepare you for your future and are worth encouraging,” Barnard said when asked what inspired him to coach. “The ability to promote them and be a part of [MSMS] is really something that I had to do.”

As for a goal for his inaugural year coaching at MSMS, Barnard said he wants to “build a team that functions as a cohesive unit, with players that play for each other and that work hard to accomplish a shared goal.”

Although Senior Kadie Van said she was sad to lose Yarborough as her soccer coach, having a new coach “will be a new experience” for all her teammates.

“Honestly, I’m excited,” said the left-side defender.



Illustration courtesy of LeAnn Alexander and Caleb Youngblood

Pictured is a photo illustration depicting MSMS' three new coaches. The school's cross country, girl's soccer and boy's soccer teams have new leadership this year.