

A Blue Pony moves to Northern's bench

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Friday, July 15th, 2011

When it comes to the basketball coaching profession, changing jobs is nothing new. After all, they don't call it the coaching carousel for nothing.

And change is bringing a former Havre Blue Pony to the bench at Montana State University-Northern.

MSU-N men's head basketball coach Shawn Huse recently announced that former Havre High standout and Chinook basketball coach Chris Daniel is joining the Lights' staff for the 2011-12 season.

While at Northern, Daniel will finish his degree in elementary education, something he said was a big factor in leaving his current job as the Chinook boys basketball coach.

"It was mostly a career move for me, a chance to finish my education, and that's been a personal goal of mine," Daniel said. "And that's how coach Huse presented it to me. I really enjoyed my time in Chinook and didn't want to leave. But this a great opportunity for me, and it will be an exciting challenge.

"First and foremost, Chris is a good man, not just a good coach," Huse said. "And you can never have too much help from good people. He is a great guy, with a great work ethic and he did a great job at Chinook.

"It's a win-win situation," Huse added. "He will be going to school and earning his degree while coaching, and we will benefit from having him on the staff. So I'm really glad he wanted to be a part of our program, and it's very exciting to have him aboard."

A spot opened up on the Northern coaching staff after top assistant Larry Brazzle, who had been with Huse the past two years, decided to return to Los Angeles to be with his fiancé. Brazzle will be hoping to land a coaching job in the high school or junior college ranks in the Southern California area. Huse's staff will still include former MSU-Northern star Travis Noble, who has been an assistant at Northern the last three seasons.

"Coach Brazzle did a great job in his time here," Huse said. "He also finished his education, got his master's degree, and wanted to be closer to his fiancé. We were very fortunate to have his as part of our staff during his time here."

And now it's Daniel's turn to contribute to the Northern program, a program that returns all of its players from last year's Frontier Conference championship and NAIA national tournament team.

"It's a new challenge," Daniel said. "It's a chance to work with and learn from one of the best coaches in the Frontier Conference, if not the entire country. I get the opportunity to learn something new every day, as well as contribute what I can to an already amazing program. So it's a very exciting challenge in that way."



Havre Daily News/Nikki Carlson

Former Havre High standout Chris Daniel calls out a play while coaching the Chinook boys during the 2011 District 9C basketball tournament back in February. After five years of coaching in Chinook, Daniel has accepted an assistant coaching position with the Montana State University-Northern Lights.

Daniel has been in the coaching profession for the last nine years. He started as an assistant coach on the Havre High girls basketball team under Jason Wirt before moving to Chinook five years ago. In his time as a Sugarbeeter, Daniel coached the boys for five seasons and the girls for three, and did a phenomenal job while coaching both teams at the same time.

He's also overseen some of the most successful seasons in recent Chinook boys history. This past spring, Chinook captured its first-ever District 9C championship and finished fourth at the Northern C Divisional. In 2010, Daniel led the Beetlers to a second-place finish at the 9C tourney, and they reached the championship game of the Northern C before losing out in a challenge game.

"It was a tough decision to leave Chinook," he said. I have made some very good friends there, and I really enjoyed my time there. I have been around some fantastic kids, not just good athletes but great people. It was an enjoyable experience and I wish them all the best in the future."

And while Chinook basketball will go on, Daniel's future is headed for the world of college basketball. And both he and Huse are excited about that fact.

"Chris is a quality coach and a quality individual," Huse said. "And we're lucky and very fortunate to have him on our staff. This is a great opportunity for him and I'm really excited about having him be a part of our program.

"I'm very excited about this opportunity," Daniel said. "This is a chance to coach at a level of basketball above and beyond anything I've ever coached. I get a chance to learn from and beyond around a great coach and person in coach Huse, and I get a chance to be around and see phenomenal players. The players at this level are tremendous.

"I'm just really excited to be able to contribute in any way I can to a great program and learn from the best."