



THE PENNINGTON SCHOOL

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PENNINGTON, N.J., May 11, 2023 --- The Pennington School has announced the appointment of Michael Watkins as head coach of the School's long-running football program, effective in September 2023. Current Head Coach Jerry Eure will remain director of athletics at the School.

Watkins joined The Pennington School in the fall of 2022 to serve in three critical capacities—admission counselor, athletic liaison, and assistant coach for Varsity Football. Watkins joined the School's coaching ranks with a tremendous depth of experience, serving most recently as the director of athletics and head football coach at Bishop McDevitt High School in Wyncote, PA, where he helped build a thriving program. A Kean University graduate and four-year defensive back starter, Watkins has dedicated the past two decades of his career to both developing talent on the field and identifying potential off the field.

The Pennington School's mission of developing individual excellence in all of its students, combined with Pennington football's team philosophy, is what initially attracted Watkins to Pennington. He says, "I could see from the start the positive culture that has been created with Pennington's football program through years of expert coaching from Head Coach Jerry Eure '75 and his current coaching team. The Pennington athletes are willing and eager to learn; they leave their egos to the side and are held to high expectations on and off the field. I feel very grateful to have this opportunity and am eager to help Pennington build on this strong foundation."

Watkins knows that building exceptional teams is only possible by recruiting students who are, first and foremost, a good fit for the School—and attracting talent to Pennington is only part of the equation. Ensuring those scholar-athletes will thrive here and grow both academically and as part of their team is an essential component of success. Watkins' work with the Admission department as an athletic liaison is an important part of this strategic recruitment. "At Pennington, we are looking for well-rounded, team-minded scholar-athletes," he notes. "We want our athletes to play multiple sports or join other activities in order to expand their horizons and discover new skills."

In addition to his recruiting and coaching strengths, Watkins brings a tremendous set of college and university connections to Pennington. He has developed networks across the country, including with programs at Syracuse, Penn State, Michigan, Dartmouth, and West Point, and he enjoys helping players at all levels continue their love of the game in college. Watkins emphasizes, "I was so excited to join Pennington Football this year. Nothing brings a community together like this game. You can see the pride on the faces of alumni, parents, students, and staff as they watch our players in action."

Jerry Eure, known fondly as "Chief" to the Pennington School community, remains director of athletics at Pennington. He is a Trenton native, a 1975 graduate of Pennington, has been a member of the faculty since 1986, and has held the position of head varsity football coach since 1992. A graduate of the University of Wyoming with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Eure led Pennington football teams to undefeated seasons in 1992 and 1993 and has had 152 career wins. Named Coach of the Year by area newspapers eight times, he was also named the National Football Foundation

and College Hall of Fame Coach of the Year in 1994. Eure has taught health and driver education classes and has also coached varsity and JV baseball and JV basketball.

As a Pennington student, Eure earned the ranking of All State in football, basketball, and baseball; he was one of the School's first Athletic Hall of Fame inductees. A four-year member of the Wyoming football team, he gained All-WAC team honors and All-American Honorable Mention status as a defensive back. After a free-agent tryout with the NFL's New York Giants, Eure spent several years in sales and management before returning to his alma mater to teach and coach.

“We are delighted to welcome Mike to Pennington this year, and I am grateful that Jerry has agreed to stop talking about his retirement so that he can continue to lead our athletics program,” said Head of School Bill Hawkey. “We are very lucky to have two incredibly talented individuals who will both help our athletes reach new heights in the years to come. Jerry Eure is a one-of-a-kind person with an incredibly generous and big heart and so much good will and knowledge to share with students and colleagues. He has given his talents and dedication to Pennington for many, many years, and we look forward to continued success in 2023-24.” Chief's presence on the football field will always be felt at Pennington!

The Pennington School is an independent coeducational school for students in grades 6 through 12, in both day and boarding programs. The curriculum is college preparatory, with an emphasis on individual excellence, fostering the development of the whole student through academics, athletics, community service, and the creative and performing arts.

Caption for photo: Jerry “Chief” Eure (left) and Mike Watkins