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IWU Picks Mia Smith as Women's Basketball Coach

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Mia Smith, who has been head volleyball and softball coach at Monmouth College since 1994, has been named as the women's basketball coach at Illinois Wesleyan University, IWU athletic director Dennie Bridges announced today.

"I'm excited about having Mia take over our basketball program," said Bridges. "I think she's a perfect fit for Illinois Wesleyan women's basketball and I'm looking forward to her producing exciting championship basketball."

Smith replaces Mandy Neal, who relinquished her dual role in April as basketball and softball coach to concentrate exclusively on softball.

"I think Illinois Wesleyan is a perfect place for me," said the 34-year-old Smith. "I'm excited about the school's academic integrity and happy to be getting back into coaching basketball, which is my passion."

Smith coached basketball and two other sports at Carrollton High School in west central Illinois from 1986 to 1994. Her basketball record was 156-55 with three consecutive regional and sectional titles and was twice named Illinois Basketball Coaches Association regional "Coach of the Year." Her 1992 team finished 28-3 and advanced to the quarterfinals of the Class A state tournament, and her 1993 and 1994 teams both lost in the super-sectional round.

In volleyball, Smith's Carrollton teams were 127-69 with five straight regional titles and her softball teams were 97-54 with three regional championships and two league championships.

At Monmouth, also a Division III school, her volleyball teams were 55-69 in four seasons and her record as a softball coach was 61-54.

"I'm thrilled about [having the opportunity to] coach in the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin, a very respected league with good coaches," Smith said. "I know, from my meeting with the IWU players, that we're looking to compete for the conference championship."

Smith said her IWU teams will be "aggressive, feature a lot of ball movement, and switch defensive schemes. We'll play as fast as we can."

A native of Farina, Ill., and graduate of LaGrove High School, Smith earned her bachelor's (1986) and master's (1996) degrees in physical education from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, where she was a four-year letterwinner in basketball and softball. She was the basketball team captain for three

seasons and earned "Defensive Player of the Year" honors four times. She was named to the 1983 Dial Classic all-tournament team.

A Dean's List student, she was an SIUE "Scholar-Athlete" and the school's "Sportsmanship Award" winner in 1986.

Smith will also teach classes in the IWU physical education department.

About Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994 and a \$25 million science center opened in fall 1995. The \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty, opened in August 1997, as did a new \$6.8 million residence hall. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 159 highly-selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive +" in its latest edition.