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Ed Alsene  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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# Illinois Wesleyan University



## Publicity Office

Bloomington  
Illinois 61702  
309/556-3181

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ed Alsene

Apr. 9, 1986

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.--Dennis Bridges announced today that he will give up his duties as men's basketball coach at Illinois Wesleyan University after the 1986-87 basketball season, but will remain as athletic director.

The 1961 graduate of IWU joined the faculty in 1964 as assistant to head basketball coach Jack Horenberger and became the head coach in 1965.

In 21 seasons Bridges' teams have won 356 games against 211 defeats. The 1985-86 team won the 10th College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin championship under Bridges and won the NCAA Division III Midwest Regional before losing to eventual national runnerup LeMoyne-Owen in a quarterfinal at Memphis, Tenn.

The Titans' 14-2 CCIW record boosted Wesleyan's conference record under Bridges to 244-84, a percentage of .744. His victories, championships and years coached in the league are all conference records.

Bridges, who is 47 years old, said the university will start searching immediately for a coach who will serve as his assistant next year and be expected to become head coach for the 1987-88 season.

"Basketball coaching at Wesleyan has been a thrilling experience but basketball coaching is a job of great stress and tension. I feel I am reaching the time to get away from that type of tension," said Bridges, who coached and taught at Plainfield High School three years before joining the IWU faculty.

"I've chosen to coach one more year because I want to end my career when my son graduates and at the same time come as close as possible to fulfilling my commitment to players who thought when I was recruiting them that I'd be their coach for four years," Bridges said. His son, Eric, has been a three-year regular and will be a co-captain with Keith Luechtefeld in his senior year.

His departure from basketball "will leave guys like Larry Lessen, Brian Coderre, Paul Petersen, Ron Rose and other sophomores the past season one year short but at the same time I feel good leaving those kinds of veterans to a new coach--much the same as Coach Horenberger did for me my first year," Bridges said.

When Horenberger gave up coaching after the 1964-65 season, he left Bridges with four returning starters from a squad that was 12-0 in the conference. The rookie coach then led the Titans to another league title and to the quarterfinal round in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics tourney in Kansas City. Bridges coached six more teams to the NAIA tourney and led the 1983-84 team to the NCAA III regional in IWU's first year of NCAA competition in basketball.

"It is important to me that IWU basketball remains strong. Having a season of transition will give a new coach the chance to become acquainted with the personnel, a chance to understand the chemistry of our success, to recruit with me and to become acquainted with the CCIW," Bridges said.

"It looks as if I'll coach baseball next spring, but what I do beyond that will be determined by the makeup of our staff at that time," he said.

Bridges took over baseball on an interim basis this season when baseball coach Tom Gramkow resigned in January to go into private business.

Bridges, who grew up in Anchor, Ill., was an all-round athletic star at Octavia High School and IWU.

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