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## Justin Peden - Conference Coach of the Year

NOVEMBER 04TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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**Dexter, Missouri** - It's always nice to win a Conference Title in football and the Dexter Bearcats know that feeling this year. It was a 3-way tie with Caruthersville and New Madrid County Central, but in our hearts the Bearcats are always #1.

Each year a coach is chosen as Conference Coach of the Year. This year two coaches have been named, Caruthersville coach Jimmy Jackson and our own Dexter Bearcats head football coach Justin Peden.

This is Coach Peden's second time in four years being honored as Conference Coach of the Year. His first time was in his first season as head football coach at Hayti. This year he is proud to share this honor with coach Jackson who Peden coached with for one season at Hayti.

"I am honored and humbled to receive the Coach of the Year this season," stated Peden. "Sharing this honor with Jimmy is a pretty neat thing because we coached together for a year and have continued to remain friends."

"I think it also shows that the younger coaches in the area are coming into their own and are ready to lead their programs for a long time. I share this honor with my assistant coaches, who have put in countless hours preparing for games."

"I can honestly say I feel like I have the best group of guys in southeast Missouri in my corner." Continued Peden. "I also wish to thank the players. It would be

hard to have someone new come in and adjust to a different way of doing things, but they did it. These are great young men and I am proud to be their coach.”

“The community and parents have also been amazing,” Peden went on to say. “The amount of support they have shown me and the players is overwhelming at times and it is very appreciated. I would name everyone individually, but that would take hours!”

“Finally I want to thank my family. My wife, Jennifer, is absolutely amazing and so understanding of the time it takes to be a coach. Without her I don’t think I could do this job. My boys, Jaxson and Liam, are also amazing. Jaxson helps me ‘draw plays’ and always has a hug for me win or lose!”

Dexter hit some milestones this year. Defeating Sikeston on their home turf was quite the highlight and hadn’t been done several years. Beating Charleston by 67 points was the second most scored game in the last 15 years. Winning Homecoming is always nice and this year it was Kennett the Bearcats defeated. Three great wins equaled terrific atmosphere and dedicated fans who cheered from the sidelines!

But with those highlights it was the Bearcats who became a family on and off the field. They are dedicated to each other and to their school. Once a Bearcat always a Bearcat as the old saying goes. These athletes will remember their high school football games probably more than anything else that happened to them in high school. They will always remain the ‘Boys of Fall’ at class reunions and their hearts will always bleed red and black forever.

As for our head coach it’s twice in four years as a head coach of a football team that he has been honored with Conference Coach of the Year and that says it all about his program and his ability to lead these young men on the field. He is dedicated to the sport, to the school, to the students and to the community and we are very proud of him.

While the football season did not end the way everyone wanted the Bearcats accomplished much on and off the field.

“I am very proud of our accomplishments this year,” stated Peden. “We doubled our win total for the second year, beat Sikeston and got a piece of the Conference Championship! I would call that a successful season in a lot of ways.”

As for the seniors, it’s always a bittersweet end to the season, their last game they will play as a Bearcat, but what a year they between the uprights. They accomplished much and should hold their heads high.

“Saying goodbye to the seniors will be tough, but we are looking forward to next year with a lot of excitement and optimism. We feel that we can continue to be competitive and make more improvements next year. A lot of younger players are going to have to step into leadership roles, but I know they are ready for the task. For me there is no off-season. I am ready to get back into the weight room, watch films and draw-up depth charts for next season.”

“Year three promises to be a great one for the Bearcats!”

Congratulations Coach Peden! The players, the community, and the fans, are extremely proud of your accomplishments this year. We can’t wait until next season when the athletes return to Charles Bland Stadium and make that first touchdown in the 2015 Bearcat Football Season!!

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