

Getting to Know Joe Callero

Q&A with Cal Poly's new men's basketball coach

By Stacia Momburg

Q: How did you get started coaching?

A: I began coaching for Highline Community College in Seattle, Wash., when I was 23 years old.



Cal Poly men's basketball coach Joe Callero.

All photos by D.R. Middlecamp

A: First, I wanted to be part of an organization that could go to the NCAA championship. I have an opportunity to build an NCAA-worthy team. Second, I found all Cal Poly's men's and women's athletic programs have had some success. There is also strong leadership from the athletic director and the president, as well as stability; there's no revolving door for coaches. Another factor is that San Luis Obispo is a college town and therefore we're the only "game" in town. That can't be recreated in a major city, where there may be several professional and college teams. Lastly, I think quality of life was a major factor. San Luis Obispo has minimal traffic, crime and pollution. The schools are good, and it's sunny 300 days a year, which is completely opposite of Seattle.

Q: When did you know you wanted to make a career of coaching?

A: My junior college coach asked me if I'd help him coach. I wanted to take six months off to try my hand at something other than basketball. I wanted to know if there was more to life than athletics. The funny thing is I figured out that, for me, athletics is more than life. There wasn't a daily meaning for me without basketball. I thoroughly enjoy all aspects of basketball, from teaching and recruiting to the camaraderie and the game.

Q: What made you decide to come to Cal Poly?

A: I bring enthusiasm, optimism, a strong work ethic and a passion for maximizing Cal Poly's existing strengths. We signed six recruits in four months from all parts of the U.S. They love the location, college atmosphere and commitment to academic excellence.

Q: How do you plan to get new and current players to work together?

A: I always start with conditioning and discipline as a foundation for building any team. I will help the team identify strengths and weaknesses. We have good returners and good recruits, but there are some inherent chemistry issues that we'll deal with. I think if we get back to basic offensive and defensive fundamentals, we'll get

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Joe Callero promises a hard-working and hard-playing team during his upcoming first season as Cal Poly men's basketball coach.

Multimedia: [Joe Callero Slideshow](#)

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Photo of the Year

some cohesion. Most importantly, I want this team to have fun.

Q: What is your philosophy as a

coach?

A: I believe in building leaders both on and off the court. I expect passion, commitment, discipline, communication and balance. Discipline comes with making expectations clear, setting priorities and understanding commitment. I understand that college is about studying, dating, parties, etc. My job is to try to help my players figure out how to effectively balance those things and still play great ball. We require our team to attend study hall at 7 a.m. two days a week. This helps them keep good focus and discipline, both academically and socially. Also communication is a requirement, not a luxury. If I don't communicate my needs and expectations, I can't expect my team to communicate theirs. And if we don't communicate, we are going to lose games.

Q: Offense or Defense?

A: Defense. It's the first part of offense. You have to stop the guy with the ball and get the ball to score. We will be aggressive on defense and trap various players at various spots on the court to force turnovers and create easy scoring opportunities.

Q: What can fans expect to see this year?

A: I'm not guaranteeing wins this year. I will guarantee that our fans will see passion and camaraderie. They'll also see a match-up zone defense – a combination of man-to-man and zone. We have the ability to switch on screens or double team the post inside. We will be running an offense that emphasizes passing, cutting and screening. We're not going to focus on running plays; we're going to focus on taking the best possible shots.



Cal Poly basketball player Matt Titchenal (left) looks on as coach Joe Callero (second from left) tries to show player Charles Anderson how to spin a basketball on his finger. Behind them, player Dylan Royer spins and looks on.

Q: Tell me about your game persona.

A: I'm pretty relaxed on the court. I bring intensity when it's needed. When the game is intense, I try to stay calm. The players don't need to see me stressing out when they're focused. If our players are lagging on the court, I'll get off the bench and try to get their heads in the game. I try not to lose focus on the game by wasting too much energy on the officials, and I'm careful about choosing which calls to protest with the refs.

Q: What's your biggest challenge as a coach?

A: Truthfully? Patience. I want players to take my 23 years of knowledge and experience and learn it in 23 minutes. That's unrealistic. It's extremely difficult to attain a high level of success quickly. I want to go to the NCAA dance. But it's going to take time to get there. It may take half a season; it may take two to three years. I just hope our fans can be as patient as I'm trying to be.



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New Cal Poly men's basketball coach Joe Callero.

Age: 46

AKA: Joe, Joey, Daddy

Children: Malia, 10

Married to: Erika 13 years

Education: Enumclaw High School, Enumclaw, Wash., '81; Central Washington University, Ellensburg Wash (Psych, '86); Seattle University (M.Ed. '91)

On his iPod: U2, Bruce Springsteen, Coldplay, Jackson Browne

Favorite Movie: Rocky ("Probably because I had a crush on Adrian")

Favorite Basketball Movie: Hoosiers

Food: Clams at Steamers in Pismo or Firestone tri-tip. ("I'm hoping the plugs net me some free food.")

Favorite Seattle Food: "Anything at Wild Ginger Restaurant"

Hobbies: Family time, Golf, Texas Hold 'em

Other favorite sports: College football and "All the sports at the school I'm working for. I'd rather watch and support our teams over any others."

Favorite Old School Baller: Dennis Johnson, Seattle SuperSonics

Favorite Current Players: Dwyane Wade, Miami Heat. "He's a great scorer but also really good at locking guys up." LeBron James, Cleveland Cavaliers. "He's a basketball player in a linebacker's body."

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California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

805.756.1511

polynews@calpoly.edu