

# Sports

## Baker named new LaRue County boys' track coach

**BY JOSH CLAYWELL**  
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

A familiar name has been named the new boys' track & field coach at LaRue County High School.

Athletic Director Ben Schell last week announced the hiring of Clarence Baker, someone who has long been associated with Hawk athletics over the years.

Schell and LaRue County's administration feel the hiring of Baker, who takes over the role of former head coach Jamie Hardin, is a home run. Baker joins the program alongside recently hired girls' coach Marcus Abel.

"The LCHS athletic department is absolutely thrilled to announce Clarence Baker as our new boys' track head coach," Schell said. "Coach Baker brings many years of coaching experience to the track program, and he's been involved in track for a number of years as a parent of track athletes and is very knowledgeable about what it takes to be successful on the track and in field events at the high school and collegiate levels. Coach Baker is also an assistant coach with the LCHS football team, and that will allow him to bring student-athletes from the football team to the boys track team. Numbers for our boys track team will definitely increase under the guidance of Coach Baker."

Baker is a longtime coach in the LaRue County system, and he has spent many of those years coaching in the middle school ranks.

He is ready to hit the ground running with the track team and knows the importance of building participation numbers up.

"I've always had an interest in track and field, especially after watching my two older sons have such positive experiences with the sport during their high school and collegiate careers," Baker said. "Seeing how much they grew — both as athletes and as young men — really sparked a passion in me to be part of that journey for other students. When the opportunity came up to lead the boys' team, I felt called to step in and help build a program where more kids can have those same kinds of meaningful, character-shaping experiences."

Like he has during all of his year as a coach, Baker is looking forward to being able to invest in current and future athletes in the program.

Having someone invested in them will help the team grow its numbers, and Baker believes that's essential to the Hawks' success.

"What excites me most is the chance to invest in student-athletes — not just in their athletic growth but in their

confidence, discipline and teamwork," he said. "Track and field offers so many opportunities for individual improvement while still being part of a team, and I'm looking forward to helping each athlete find their strengths and push past their limits. I'm also excited to help build a culture of hard work, accountability and pride in representing our school."

When it came to interviewing for the position, Baker understandably leaned on his experience in the school system.

A LaRue County alum, Baker has been a coach in the school system for more than 15 years now — and that's what helped him stand out among the applicant field.

"I believe what helped me stand out to the hiring committee was my long-standing commitment to our school community," Baker said. "I've been coaching within the school system for over 15 years and have built strong, positive relationships with both student-athletes and their families. That trust and familiarity, along with my passion for helping young people grow through sports, likely played a big role in their decision."

Baker also is looking forward to working with Abel, who was hired earlier this month as the girls' track coach as



Photo by Ben Schell

**Clarence Baker has been named the new head coach of the boys' track & field team at LaRue County High School.**

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JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise

**Fort Knox sophomore outside back Ben Withrow returns a pass during a passing drill Wednesday morning at Fort Knox Middle High School.**



JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise

**Fort Knox sophomore Carleigh Manahan hits a goal kick Tuesday afternoon at Scott Middle School.**

## Eagles boys soccer returns with core, developing youth

**BY JAKE KLINECT**  
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

**Editor's Note:** First of a series previewing the eight area high school soccer teams.

Out on the turf soccer field of the Fort Knox Army base, the Eagles boys' soccer team has been seen hard at work in the mornings conducting agility drills, passing combinations and honing dribbling technique to prepare for the upcoming season.

The 2024 boys' soccer season was a tough 1-16 endeavor for the Eagles, but Carl Stanley, the four-year coach of the Fort Knox boys' soccer team, described the recent offseason as his "most relaxing one yet."

Whereas Fort Knox's athletics programs typically find themselves shorthanded in roster numbers, Stanley said he expects to fill in 22 roster spots to start the season.

A deeper bench provides the Eagles an extended opportunity to develop the younger players that Stanley said were at Fort Knox for the foreseeable future.

"I have a couple guys that are two or three years in development that are finally starting to get to where they need to be, but it's those young ones that you get that are so raw on the bottom of your roster," Stanley said. "That's where it's so rewarding to teach and watch them learn and grow as players. We've never had this nice balance before. I literally returned enough starters that I could fill the starting lineup with the kids I returned. That's rare here."

The Eagles return senior Maxwell Alladin-Fuentes at the



JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise

**Fort Knox junior midfielder Evan Neagoe switches the point of attack to the wing during a passing drill Wednesday morning at Fort Knox Middle High School.**

center forward position, and a core junior trio between Evan Neagoe, Nikolaj Nikandrov and Mateo Gutierrez.

Alladin-Fuentes tied with his brother, the now-graduated Jair Alladin-Fuentes, for the team's leading goal scorer honor with two goals last season.

Neagoe and Nikandrov will serve as important midfield assets while Gutierrez will take control of the back line.

"I've been working with that core of the roster since they were freshmen," Stanley said. "It's going to be really exciting to see how they're going to play this season."

According to Stanley, the Eagles will take on a more

defensive style of play in order to ease his developing players into the game.

"We want to continue to allow those younger attacking players to kind of catch up and then we'll build everything off of that," he said. "I'm a big fan of aggressive soccer, but we're going to play smart, simple and clean soccer."

Fort Knox takes a step away from the 17th District this season, opting for a non-district schedule in the hopes of meeting a more level competition.

"It's all about putting ourselves in a competitive situation, and

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## Steady roster boosts Fort Knox girls soccer before opener

**BY JAKE KLINECT**  
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

**Editor's Note:** First of a series previewing the eight area high school soccer teams.

The Fort Knox girls' soccer team is looking like a complete roster this year, coming into the season with depth on the bench and only one new face to account for.

With some room to work and a group familiar faces on the field, coach Christie Tabiri said the upcoming season will be a chance to take advantage of the already established team chemistry.

"We still have a lot of returning players, which is the bad thing with the military base because once you get players, they start playing together and you start building something, people move and you have new people who can move in," Tabiri said. "We're just trying to get them to all play together and work on strategy and stuff like that. So far they're looking good."

Last year's top goal scorer for Fort Knox with 11 goals, junior Kera Tomassi, will be among the roster's key returners.

Another group of three juniors, including Ashlyn Dean, Addison Duke and Anja Nikandrova also look to make big contributions as key assets on the right and left wings.

Primary losses from last year came in the midfield, but Tabiri said the big spot to fill comes at the goalkeeper position.

Rachael Davis, Fort Knox's senior leader between the posts last season, left the position open after recording an important 292 saves in her senior year.

"I have to find somebody else. I'm just trying out different kids, even if they might not think they're good at goalie," Tabiri said. "I can do a half-and-half thing so that girls can switch out between being goalie and playing on the field."

Development is at the forefront for the Eagles who are taking the preseason to



JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise

**Fort Knox's Jordyn Clontz, left, and Izabella Brubaker, right, chase down a free ball Tuesday afternoon during a preseason practice at Scott Middle School.**

hone in on basic skills and movement off the ball.

"We've been trying to reiterate on being proactive," Tabiri said. "We're trying to figure out where the ball's going to go and be there, versus being reactive, waiting for it to get there and then going in to take it away."

Fort Knox will not be competing in a 17th District schedule this year, opening up the opportunity to continue development and play level competition following last year's 3-15 record.

The Eagles will not participate in the 17th District tournament, but will face John Hardin in a non-district matchup Aug. 20 at home.

John Hardin was the one E'town team that we were semi-competitive with," Tabiri said. "The other ones are just huge schools compared to what we have here."

Fort Knox opens its season Aug. 11 at home against Fern Creek.

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