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Liberal Native Continues Coaching Success at Arkansas Tech

Everything he touches seems to turn to gold. Liberal High School graduate and former SCCC coach Dave Wilburs has been successful at every turn and his current job as the head coach of the Arkansas Tech women's program has been no different. The 1986 LHS graduate is 76-18 after three years as head coach at the Division 2 school. He led Tech to a 31-3 season this year. Wilburs says his team had all the makings of a winner. "We were big, fast, and athletic," the 42 year old Wilburs said. "The best thing about it is I've got every one of these kids back next year. We were the youngest team in division 2 last year so we'll probably be ranked number one in the nation next year in the polls." Wilburs says the support for the school in Russellville, Arkansas reminds him of the good old days in Liberal. "We sold out our gym the last eight games which holds about three thousand people," Wilburs said. "It reminds me of the times even in high school when I played and we were selling out the gym for our state championship run (1986) and when I was coaching those years with Jim Littell (at SCCC). There were times when we would come out for our game at 6 PM and there wasn't a seat available. Those are some great memories." Wilburs was an assistant coach at Missouri and Oral Roberts before taking the head job at Arkansas Tech. Before those jobs he was an assistant for Jim Littell at Seward County and began something special in Liberal. From 1993-98 Littell and Wilburs went 143-21 with four Jayhawk West titles. Wilburs was also head volleyball coach at Seward and led the 1996 team to a 54-6 record. He was a quarterback for coach Alan Haskell's Redskins during the mid 80's. But he and his LHS classmates are best known for the 1986 state championship. He was a starter on a team which included Ricky Johnson who went on and played at Maryland and played in the NFL for the Rams; Gary Johnson who was one of the leading scorers in division 2 history at Cameron; Gary Husky who played at Nevada; and Tim Lee who played football at Stanford. He says the success started at the top. "It started with leadership," Wilburs said of Liberal's only state championship basketball team. "We had a great coach in Phil Stines. He did a fantastic job. We were a pretty simple team. We didn't do a lot but what we did was excellent. Then you throw in some of the best athletes who ever went through Liberal High School. You're talking about some amazing athletes. But most importantly, we developed some close friendships. It started when we were freshmen and sophomores in high school. We would get together at the park and play all day and all night. We took care of each other. We're still friends and we still have relationships and talk. That state championship was a highlight of our careers." He is married to his wife Christina and they have an 11 year old daughter (Bailey) and a five year old boy (Brett).

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