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COURIER photo/Gabriel Fenoy

**Steve Jackson has been named the new head coach of the Claremont High School baseball team. Mr. Jackson, who is replacing Mike Lee as head coach, is also a division chief for the Montclair Fire Department.**

### New CHS baseball coach has an eye on fundamentals

The 2009 Claremont High School baseball team will have a new face at the helm for the coming season. City of Montclair Fire Department Division Chief Steve Jackson has taken the reins as the team's new head coach.

"I was talked to by people within the Claremont program who came to me and asked if I was interested," Coach Jackson explained. "I then found out that the application was online so I applied and I got the job."

Coach Jackson represents the 5th coach in as many years for the team. Last year Mike Lee led the Wolfpack to a 7-8 record and a 3rd place finish in the Baseline League in his lone season as head coach. While Claremont's new coach works full-time for the City of Montclair Fire Department, he also brings to the table a wealth of baseball knowledge and experience.

At the same time, Coach Jackson is also sensitive to the fact that he may be the 2nd, 3rd or 4th coach that the CHS players have played under during their baseball tenures.

"I think there's great kids here at Claremont and they really need stability," said Coach Jackson, regarding being the 5th CHS baseball coach in 5 seasons. "It's really tough on the kids and the parents. They're looking for something solid and they're looking for stability. I feel really strong about the future of the program and I look forward to bringing some stability to the kids."

After a collegiate baseball career at Chaffey College and the University of Northern Alabama (UNA), Coach Jackson then turned to the coaching ranks, where he has accumulated 13 years of experience coaching American Legion and travel ball. Yet according to CHS Principal Brett O'Connor, the knowledge and experience that Coach Jackson brings to the baseball program are just 2 of the many qualities that make the new coach more than qualified for the coaching position.

"Whenever people talk about Mr. Jackson, they talk not only about his baseball knowledge, but also his integrity, leadership and passion," Dr. O'Connor pointed out. "I know Steve has the depth of knowledge to not only mentor young men in the game of baseball but, more importantly, as individuals."

With a son who played on last year's CHS freshman team and then was moved up to the varsity squad, Coach Jackson is already familiar with many of the players that he will be coaching this season. He also had a chance to see a lot of the players during the summer leagues.

Fundamentals, a solid workout program and an equally solid practice routine are 3 components that the new CHS coach feels are keys to Wolfpack success next spring. Coach Jackson plans to put together a coaching staff that not only will be able to impart knowledge to the players, but also will be able to work with the CHS players in their respective positions.

"We're real excited about the possibilities with Steve Jackson," said Rick Dutton, CHS Athletic Director.

Viewing the CHS squad as a group of talented players, Coach Jackson believes that a strong focus on fundamentals will only help to enhance their talents. Having played under good coaches throughout his high school and collegiate career, Coach Jackson believes one of the greatest

tools that he can impart to the CHS players is how to be fundamentally sound.

“Baseball is a very simple game—it’s a game of repetition,” he said. “I was fortunate to be coached by very good coaches that knew how to teach the fundamentals of the game. It’s all about fundamentals. Kids nowadays play year-round baseball and have such great ability. Now it’s time to fine tune their skills through fundamentals and teach them baseball in all aspects of the game.”

—Landus Rigsby