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# Jordana LeSavage Spreads her Wings as the New Cross Country and Track & Field Coach

Tyra Okuda, Copy Chief & Online Editor

Following a three-year run as a volunteer and assistant coach for the Redhawks, Jordana LeSavage was named head coach of Seattle University Cross Country and Track & Field Aug. 15.

LeSavage's coaching days started out in 2017, when she served as the head coach of Ralston Valley High School in Arvada, Co. From there, she moved to Flagstaff, Ariz. to shadow a professional running group.

During the time leading up to the 2020 Olympic trials, she was given the option of participating in a formal internship with that professional group or going to Florida State University and working with the cross country and track & field program there.

"I felt, at that time, that there were going to be more doors that could open for me in the collegiate setting versus the professional running setting."

And she would be correct. It was during her tenure at Florida State that she was introduced to former Seattle U head coach, Kelly Sullivan, and was given the opportunity to coach for the Redhawks.

"He was sharing a lot of stories about the amazing young men and women who make up the program at Seattle University. To me, it was a no-brainer."

LeSavage arrived in Seattle in April 2022, working as a volunteer coach for the Redhawks to end the year. She then became the assistant coach starting in the fall of that same year. LeSavage described the knowledge gained under Coach Sullivan as transformative, stating that he helped develop her into the coach and person she is today.

"He empowered me to bolster my toolbox and really just get my hands dirty in a variety of areas to make me the best well-rounded coach I can be, and support these young men and women in their athletic and academic endeavors."

LeSavage graduated with a degree in health and exercise science, acknowledging how imperative it is for the athletes to have something to fall back on.



Image courtesy of Seattle U Athletics

"I think back to my time as a collegiate athlete. I was very much about my sport, but there comes a day where you hang up the spikes and the singlet becomes framed and is memorabilia."



Image courtesy of Andrew Khauv/Seattle U Athletics

Given her belief that outside endeavors are imperative to an athlete's college experience, one of the things she appreciates about being at Seattle U is the opportunity for students to gain experience through practicums, internships and job shadowing.

A former collegiate runner at Winona State University, LeSavage hopes to hone in on her own experience as a way to be a better coach. Describing her collegiate career as "full of ups and downs," she hopes that her background will allow her to provide better guidance. Taking from the failures she has gone through, LeSavage aims to better relate and empathize with those who are going through a rough patch.

"Whether it's in their running, personal life, or in their studies, I feel like I've been through and seen a lot of things personally. Although I'm a young coach, I feel well equipped to be able to support the athletes in a variety of ways."

Sept. 3 marked LeSavage's first meet as head coach, with the cross country team participating in a dual meet against the University of Washington. As the team's season spans from September to June, LeSavage said that this was an opportunity to check in on their fitness and use it as a place to build upon.

"It's kind of a slow release, if you will. We're not looking to be our best in early September."

LeSavage described her style of coaching as passionate and energetic. While she mentioned that she's not super chatty, she still brings the energy and has a lot of gratitude when she shows up every day.

As LeSavage takes on her first year as a collegiate head coach, she is looking forward to continuing to "spread her wings" and grow with the rest of the athletes.

"I'm very excited to embark on this journey of running and school and life with these young men and women," LeSavage said. "These are the days that I live for."