

# Hammond named new baseball coach at HPU

BY GREER SMITH  
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HIGH POINT — Joey Hammond is back coaching in his hometown.

Hammond, a former state championship coach at Westchester Country Day who spent the last seven seasons as a volunteer assistant at Wake Forest, was announced by High Point University athletics director Dan Hauser as the Panthers' fourth head baseball coach in the Division I era.

"This is the only place I would consider coming to," Hammond said. "I was in a great situation at Wake Forest. I loved it. I was being fulfilled. This is the only (head coaching) situation that I had interest in and entertained going to because you want to hitch your wagon to a place like this. It's going in the right direction. It's got the chassis for greatness. It just needs some direction, some energy and possibly a different outlook to achieve it."

The announcement was made

at a Steele Center press conference in front of Hammond's wife and three sons, HPU boosters and supporters and members of the High Point Rockers staff.

Hammond was an All-Conference USA shortstop at UNC Charlotte in the late 1990s, played 11 seasons in the minors, coached at Westchester for five and then was a part of Tom Walters' staff at Wake Forest from 2015-21.

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## HAMMOND

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"To have the opportunity to lead a program in a direction you feel strongly about, it needs to be rooted in energy," Hammond said. "That's something that I'll demand of everybody, whether it's staff members, players, support staff. Energy is ingredient No.1. The other is player development. When you have those things in place, winning is a byproduct."

Hammond replaces Craig Cozart, who parted ways with the university after his

13th season ended in a 14-31 record.

"When you look at (Hammond's) baseball success at all the levels, as a player in college and professionally, there was tremendous success; at Westchester, tremendous success, and then at Wake Forest," Hauser said. "Success has followed him. He's created success and experienced success at every place he's been."

Hammond has his home in High Point and commuted to Wake after leaving Westchester.

Hammond led Westchester to a 104-31-1 record and three state championships

in five years.

"This is a bigger stage," Hammond said "The competition is going to be different, but we can recruit, pick and choose, and put our imprint on that. There are similarities. I'm going to embrace that, from the private school standard and family-like environment and culture that we were able to create."

In his time at Wake, Hammond coached hitting and worked with the outfielders. He helped the Demon Deacons turn into one of the nation's best offenses — the peak coming in the 2017 season in which they

fell one game short of the College World Series, hit 106 homers, had 445 RBIs, and ranked among the top 20 in the country in batting average on-base percentage, doubles, runs, walks, hits and slugging percentage.

The Demon Deacons hit at least 48 homers per season in Hammond's six non-COVID seasons.

They went 191-152 with five winning seasons, had seven All-Americans and 17 All-ACC players during Hammond's tenure.

Hammond was scheduled to meet later Thursday with returning players through Zoom call and call his

incoming recruits individually. One of his other immediate priorities is putting together a staff.

"I'm going to dive right in on getting the staff right," Hammond said. "I want people who challenge and have the values that I have and the priority is the development of every single player. The next is to create relationships with the current and incoming players. I don't believe you can motivate and guide players unless you know where they're at to begin with."

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Joey Hammond, left, shown with High Point University Athletic Director Dan Hauser, is named the head coach of High Point's baseball program during a press conference Thursday. Hammond becomes the fourth head coach in HPU's Div. I era and the eighth head coach in program history.