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Jake and Candice Dickert honor their past by investing in UWSP’s future

##### Written by Kim Westerman,University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

Jake Dickert, newly minted head coach of the Wake Forest University football team in Winston-Salem, NC, is a man on a mission. He was hired, of course, for his winning record, but his work is much broader than his football cred — at heart, he’s a teacher, and for Dickert, football is a vehicle for teaching and learning.

Dickert, born and raised in Wisconsin, played football at UWSP under the legendary John Miech from 2002-06, earning All-Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) honors as a wide receiver during his senior season. He was also named his team’s Wide Receiver of the Year during both his junior and senior years. The star athlete earned a bachelor’s degree in secondary math education in 2007 and his master’s degree in general education in 2009, both from Stevens Point.

Dickert credits Coach Miech with opening the door to what he would soon know as his vocation. He had gotten a job teaching math right after graduation, but it didn’t take him long to understand that he never should’ve left the field — the football field, that is. Miech offered him a role as a graduate assistant coaching defense for Point, and he’s never looked back. In his 17 years as a college football coach, Dickert has become known as someone who cares as much about his athletes’ personal growth as their football acumen.

Dickert met his wife, Candice (’07) — also a Wisconsinite and UWSP alum — when she moved upstairs from him in an apartment on College Avenue in Stevens Point. He calls his years at Point “the best time of [my] life, playing and then coaching under Miech and starting a life with Candice.” Three kids and 11 moves later, Dickert and his family are settling into what he senses will be an extraordinary recruiting opportunity, given the proximity to football-obsessed high schools up and down the East Coast. That, paired with Wake Forest’s strong alumni community and a tight-knit student body of just 6,000, sounds to him like the staple ingredients of a classic recipe.

Meanwhile, he is grateful for the path he traveled, and he and Candice recently made the decision to honor that journey by giving to the UWSP Football Program in honor of Coach Miech, which will result in renaming the locker room after his mentor.

“The impact of Jake and Candice’s philanthropy cannot be overstated. The two have made a commitment to UWSP Athletics that ushers in a new era for our football program and we are forever grateful,” said Athletic Director Brad Duckworth.  “Jake and Candice are a true example of the impact alumni continue to make at Stevens Point.” The impact of their gift comes to life for the incoming football team  just as UWSP recently started the public phase of its Discover Your Purpose Comprehensive Campaign. Learn more about [the project and the campaign](https://give.uwsp.edu/page/dypcampaign).

Over the last three NFL Draft cycles, seven of Dickert’s players from Washington State were recruited into the pros, and the three players selected in 2024 marked the highest number for the school since 2005.

While Dickert is used to being the new guy, he also understands the challenges facing college football, and he’s resolute in his stance: “There’s no point in resisting change. I’m going to go with it and maintain belief in my team and work with them to build the best program I can.”