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Taking On The World

Ron Wagner '93

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SPORTS BRIEFS



Jason Donnelly speaks during a meet-and-greet event on August 1 in the Pearce-Horton Football Complex.

DONNELLY NAMED NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

BY VINCE MOORE

Jason Donnelly, the former senior associate athletics director and executive director of athletics development at Villanova University, became Furman’s new athletics director on August 12.

Donnelly, who had worked at Villanova since 2005, was most recently responsible for leading the Villanova athletics fund, which manages fundraising and external support for all 24 varsity sports. During the past four years, Donnelly helped raise more than \$120 million for Villanova athletics, which included three consecutive record-breaking fundraising years and a 330% increase in dollars raised.

A native of Colonia, New Jersey, Donnelly graduated from Muhlenberg College in 1999, where he played basketball and was a student leader. He holds a master’s of public administration from Villanova. Donnelly and his wife, Rachel, have three children — Aidan, 8, Raeyln, 6, and Allister, 2.

TAKING ON THE WORLD

BY RON WAGNER '93

By late September, the summer heat has finally started dissipating in South Carolina.

The same is true halfway around the world in the Middle East. Although “dissipate” is a relative term when the average high drops to 100 degrees, something Furman track and field and cross-country coach Robert Gary experienced firsthand as the Team USA men’s head coach for the 2019 IAAF World Championship, held Sept. 27-Oct. 6 in Doha, Qatar.

Reaching one of the highest pinnacles of professional achievement made the scorching temperatures quite a bit easier to bear, however.

“I was really honored to be the head coach,” Gary says. “This was my first head-coaching assignment at a world championship, so I was really excited.”

Gary has been training world-class runners for international competitions for more than a decade, and being selected by USA Track and Field reflects the reputation he has earned. Bringing Furman onto the national collegiate stage only helped his chances.

Before Gary arrived in 2012, the total number of Paladin individuals or teams that had ever qualified for the NCAA championships could be counted on one hand, but Furman purple hasn’t

been absent from a single track or cross-country national championship since 2014. That coaching success means just as much to Gary as his own impressive athletic accomplishments, which include being an All-American at Ohio State University and competing in the 3,000-meter steeplechase in both the 1996 and 2004 Olympics and the 1999 and 2003 World Championships.

“A lot of people think track is a pretty non-team sport. It’s just individuals running around,” he says. “Sometimes it can feel that way, but some of my favorite experiences are when the men’s and women’s programs work closely together and we really look at the team competition and trying to take on the rest of the world.” ♦

