

# VIEWFINDER

By Ron Page • The Post-Crescent



**LAWRENCE MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH JOEL DEPAGTER:** "I'm fortunate and blessed that my path has been what it was."

## Basketball coach builds 'family' at Lawrence

A single word is all you hear. When the Lawrence University men's basketball team breaks its huddle after listening to its coach, you expect exclamations of "team," "win" or "dominate." But from these players and coaches, you hear something different. If you're sitting nearby, you find yourself leaning forward trying to catch the word.

"Family."

A single word stated calmly, not shouted, more of a simple statement instead of a chorus of hopeful conviction. It's a word that says something about the basketball team and its coaches.

If you're around gyms long enough or at least read a sports page, you'll find someone who believes a team plays like its coach. If that's the case, Lawrence plays with a certain calm and assurance

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**Audio slideshow:**  
Hear Joel DePagter talk about coaching at Lawrence.

Maybe it comes from coach Joel DePagter's history as a player at Lawrence, learning the ropes as an assistant coach under John Tharp and, for the last four years, as head coach, continuing a tradition of turning a team into a family.

"Memories and experiences and the journeys we have together last," DePagter said. "Wins and losses will be forgotten. Points scored and turnovers made will be forgotten. I'm fortunate and blessed that my path has been what it was."

For a coach at the



**JOEL DEPAGTER** huddles with his Vikings during a Dec. 6 game against Wisconsin Lutheran.

NCAA Division III level, there are no million-dollar contracts or press conferences covered by ESPN. It's more about squeezing coaching in along with getting the team laundry squared away and making sure the work that happens behind the scenes is handled before practice ever

starts.

And always there's the thought of next year — recruiting. The unending search throughout the year to find the next players who will fit with the existing team.

"It is not a 9-to-5 job,