

# ‘Business as Usual’

Alan Huss and Greg McDermott begin a new coaching arrangement with sights firmly set on the program’s continued success. **BY JON NYATAWA**

Creighton associate men’s basketball coach Alan Huss, BSBA’02, knows what you’re thinking. And yes, he can admit that he’s allowed himself to momentarily ponder the incredible thrill of what lies ahead for him, as improbable as it still feels.

He will be the next head coach of Creighton’s men’s basketball program.

That is happening. Someday. Perhaps sooner than later.

There’s no official countdown clock on display to indicate the status of Greg McDermott’s eventual retirement. The Bluejays’ all-time winningest men’s basketball coach (and the architect of the program’s recent rise to national prominence) will decide when it’s time, when he’s ready to hand the reigns over to his protégé. Maybe next season. Maybe two or three years.

Until then, McDermott’s fully in charge. Just like the last time Huss was on staff (from 2017-2023). And Huss, who gave up a successful head-coaching gig to return to an associate head coach role at his alma mater, said he’s perfectly comfortable with this dynamic.

“Mostly, it’s been business as usual, and it’s been a lot of fun,” Huss says.

The culture and atmosphere that McDermott’s established for coaches working within his program is a major reason why. There’s no need for Huss to daydream about what he might do in the future — he can scheme up new tactics and strategies to implement now. McDermott has always encouraged his assistant coaches to think like head coaches, even if they can’t have the final say every day.

Huss runs practices. He takes the lead on

recruiting evaluations. He dives into the film and the numbers to help players get better. He brainstorms new ideas to utilize in game plans.

“It really is a collaborative setting with a sound methodology, where we as a staff go through our meetings or our game-planning process and we work through it all together,” Huss says. “Coach Mac is never going to say ‘no’ just for the sake of telling you ‘no.’ It’s your job to present your approach and your plan, rooted in facts and data.

“By the end of it, everybody walks out of that room all in lockstep — if we’ve changed course or if we haven’t, we understand why. And Coach Mac, he’s a maestro in that space.”

Huss says he’s just grateful he gets to soak up a few more lessons from a legend.

After all, when Huss took the head coaching job at High Point University in 2023, he says he essentially tried to recreate the best traits of the Creighton program at his new institution. It was more challenging than he realized, Huss says.

But his efforts produced unprecedented results. Huss led the Panthers to back-to-back regular season Big South Conference championships, twice won the league’s coach of the year award and helped High Point earn its first NCAA Tournament berth in 2025.

Several Division I programs looking for new head coaches reached out to Huss during his

tenure. He quickly became a rising star in the profession.

It’s why McDermott wanted Huss back at Creighton, for the long haul.

In April, Huss was named an associate head coach and the coach in waiting. It was announced then that when McDermott retires, Huss will take over. The succession plan isn’t a new concept in college sports — but it is rare. Often, its effectiveness is determined by the cohesiveness and the vision of the coaches involved.

Huss and McDermott have been aligned for a long time. There’s mutual respect. They have symmetrical mentalities. They both love the game, and the chance to help young men grow on and off the court.

What McDermott says he most appreciates about Huss, though, is his ability to think outside the box.

During his first stint as an assistant, Huss helped the Bluejays win a share of their first BIG EAST Conference regular season title in 2020 and reach the NCAA Tournament’s Elite Eight in 2023.

Huss was integral in ensuring Creighton was ready for a new college sports landscape in 2021, when student-athletes began benefiting financially from their name, image and likeness. The Bluejay players actually ended up partnering with a marketing agency that year and hosted their own fan fest event at CHI Health Center Omaha.

Huss built the key relationships to ensure Creighton won major recruiting battles. He led the charge as the program moved to incorporate

© Greg McDermott, left, and Alan Huss, BSBA’02, in the McDermott Center.



REBECCA GRATZ

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GREG MCDERMOTT

analytics and advanced statistics as a guiding tool within its player development models and game-planning strategies.

On the court, Huss has always had a knack for offensive ingenuity. He and McDermott masterfully created a perimeter-based attack to highlight the strengths of the 2019-2020 championship Bluejay team, overcoming its severe lack of height and size. McDermott was named the BIG EAST Coach of the Year that season.

A couple of years later, McDermott shared a classic mid-timeout conversation he had with Huss that showcased the all-too-common nature of their everyday exchanges.

Huss, in the heat of the moment, prefaced his suggestion with a tongue-in-cheek caveat — “you’re going to think I’m crazy.” Then he proposed that Creighton put the ball in the hands of a freshman reserve to clinch a double-overtime win at Marquette. McDermott went with Huss’ plan and the rookie delivered, guiding in a layup with 17 seconds left.

“A good coach is always bringing ideas to the table and Al’s one of the best at that,” McDermott says. “He spends a lot of time studying the game, studying people that he respects and studying systems that are successful — and then he’s always thinking about how we can take what they do and make it fit with how we play, without reinventing the wheel.”

It’s no wonder the transition back to Creighton has worked out so well for Huss in preparing for this season.

There’s a lot of places to focus your attention as a coach dedicated to helping this program succeed. The Bluejays are replacing one of the best players in program history, Ryan Kalkbrenner, BSBA’23, MS’25, and they’re doing it with a reshaped roster full of newcomers.

If you let him, Huss could go on and on about his priority list ...

Do we have the personnel to blitz pick-and-roll screens and double team ball handlers on the perimeter? Can we be a team that plays

## Rosen and Kingston Take the Helm at Creighton

Replacing coaching legends is no small task. But for Creighton’s new volleyball and baseball coaches, the challenge isn’t reinventing the game — it’s honoring what works and writing the next chapter in a story already rich with success.

**IT DID NOT TAKE LONG FOR EITHER** of Creighton’s two newest head coaches to recognize how well the campus culture and athletic department vision aligned with their own approach to building successful programs.

A phone call three years ago did the trick for volleyball coach Brian Rosen. A text message exchange last year got the ball rolling for baseball coach Mark Kingston.

Rosen and Kingston are both in charge now, tasked with replacing two Creighton coaching legends and building off the winning blueprint previously established in their respective programs. Rosen made his debut with the nationally ranked Bluejay volleyball team in August. Kingston will open his first season as head baseball coach in February.

But neither has felt a need to change too much. They had already endorsed each of their program’s paths to prominence.

“I knew this was my kind of place,” Kingston said during his introductory press conference this past summer. “I’ve just been thrilled with how it’s felt ever since. It’s been the right fit, a breath of fresh air.”

Says Rosen: “There’s just no place on earth that I would rather be than right here, with this team and this program.”

But now the challenge begins.

Rosen replaces Kirsten Bernthal Booth, who, in 22 seasons, built Creighton’s volleyball program from the ground up, regularly went toe-to-toe with bigger-budget powerhouses and capped off her tenure with a historic 2024 campaign that ended in the NCAA Tournament’s Elite Eight.

Kingston, who most recently had a successful tenure at the University of South Carolina, will be trying to solve the puzzle that every Midwestern school faces: how to maintain consistency in a sport with built-in climate disadvantages. Plus, he’s replacing Ed Servais, the program’s all-time winningest coach who retired after taking Creighton back to an NCAA Regional last year for the first time since 2019.

But he’s been sold on Creighton’s potential since his first few texts with McCormick Endowed Athletic Director Marcus Blossom. Then he joined the staff as an associate coach and head coach in waiting.

The elite education. The chance to help young men grow, on the field and off. The fan base. The program’s partnership with the College World Series and connection with a baseball community that’s transformed



JOEL DEWAN



CREIGHTON ATHLETICS

**Top:** Brian Rosen during the Creighton vs. Louisville volleyball match at DJ. Sokol Arena in September.

**Bottom:** After leading Creighton baseball back to the NCAA Tournament as the associate coach/coach in waiting during the 2025 season, Mark Kingston is now the 11th head coach for the Bluejay program.

Omaha into the sport’s mecca. There’s a legacy of leadership here, too.

“(Servais) wanted to win and he wanted to do it with class and dignity,” Kingston says. “That’s what you’ll continue to see with our program.”

Rosen’s carrying his predecessors’ team-building hallmarks into his first Bluejay season as well.

He’s a Florida native who spent his previous volleyball coaching stops at institutions in the South — no one in his family even owned a winter coat until they’d booked their flight for their first trip to Omaha. Yet an hour-long phone call with Booth was all that Rosen needed to realize Creighton was perfect for him.

Rosen joined the Bluejays as an assistant in 2022. He watched as the team embodied Booth’s persona — the joy, the honesty, the humility, the work ethic, the passion. He just wants to carry that forward.

“I promised the student-athletes that Coach Booth’s core values are what will continue to define this program,” Rosen says. “Culture is who we are at Creighton. That’s our identity. That isn’t going to change.”



REBECCA GRATZ

multiple defenses in a game? Should we? How fast can we play? Do our guys understand our non-negotiables on offense? What drills might help them in practice?

When his mind wanders, this is usually where it goes. Not multiple years forward. But right now — how do we get better today?

“When Al was here before, especially the last few years that he was with us, he had a voice in a lot of what we did, just like other assistant coaches have had,” McDermott says. “And now that he’s back and he’s been a head coach, I think he’s got probably a more complete understanding of the chair that I sit in. From that standpoint, it’s made him even better.”

And Huss still sees so many ways that he can keep growing. That’s his humility surfacing, and it often ends up being a driving force for him to avoid complacency.

He’s not joking when he says he can’t believe how his professional arc has played out. He played four years at Creighton from 1997 to 2001. He graduated with a business degree and took a “real” job back home in Illinois — but a local varsity basketball coach sat him down at a summer festival and persuaded him to coach the high school freshman team.

From there, Huss began building prep school programs, including the now-powerhouse La Lumiere in Indiana. He was an assistant at New Mexico before joining McDermott’s Creighton staff.

“The fact that I get to do this at all, I just count my blessings,” Huss says. “I’m thankful because I know that there are so many coaches, so many people that I have worked with and competed against, who don’t get the big breaks.”

And now Huss is home again, working for a man he admires, within a program that means so much to him. He’s the head coach in waiting, for however long it takes. He couldn’t be happier about it.

“Had it not been my alma mater, had it not been Coach Mac, I would’ve hung the phone up on anybody else who asked me to do this,” Huss says. “But I’m so incredibly grateful to be back. I’m still kind of laughing at all of it, actually, because I don’t know how the heck I’ve been so lucky.”

“The fact that I get to do this at all, I just count my blessings.”

ALAN HUSS, BSBA’02



# The Next Play: Creighton Athletics Balances Tradition, Growth and Change

From record-breaking seasons to a \$300 million facilities investment, Creighton Athletics has momentum on its side. Now, as college sports enter uncharted territory, the Bluejays are ready to rise to the challenge.

**IF THERE WERE EVER A TIME** for Creighton’s Athletics Department to begin boldly navigating its way through a new, unpredictable era of college sports, now is that time.

That’s not to say there won’t be hurdles. McCormick Endowed Athletic Director Marcus Blossom knows full well that there are challenges ahead.

But he’s also extremely fired up. Why? Because Creighton is in a great place. Consider what Blossom, now entering his fifth year with the Bluejays, has witnessed in the last few months alone.

The men’s basketball team won an NCAA Tournament game for the fifth consecutive year, established a strategic succession plan for legendary coach Greg McDermott and recorded a 95% renewal rate for season tickets.

The volleyball team reached the Elite Eight last year and set a program record for wins (32). The women’s basketball team reached a fourth consecutive NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history. The baseball team won the BIG EAST Conference title and made it to an NCAA Regional for the first time since 2019.

There’s positive momentum for so many other programs. Plus, in October, Creighton announced Fly Together, a nearly \$300 million donor investment in 11 new or upgraded athletics and recreation facilities on the east side of campus. Creighton also debuted a new softball stadium this fall and will open a new baseball practice field in the summer.

“It is an exciting time to be a Bluejay,” Blossom says. “Our student-athletes, coaches and staff are dedicated to maintaining a legacy built on excellence. We are so grateful for the support of our alumni, our donors and our fans, who continue to inspire us to raise our standard and compete with the nation’s elite teams.”

Here’s where it gets complicated, though: The entire landscape of college sports has shifted significantly, and it’s still evolving.

College programs can now share revenue with



© Entering his fifth year at Creighton, Marcus Blossom, McCormick Endowed Athletic Director, is leading the Athletics Department in a new era of collegiate sports.

student-athletes. That means a portion of what Creighton brings in from TV deals, ticket sales, private donations and more will go to the players.

Third-party name, image and likeness (NIL) deals are still being arranged, too, with a bit more NCAA-designed oversight. Additionally, the NCAA is distributing \$2.78 billion in back payments to student-athletes who competed after 2015 but did not have access to NIL opportunities. As a result, the NCAA will reduce its annual monetary distribution to schools.

In response, Creighton is growing its Corporate Partnership Program to identify local and national businesses that align with its vision. It’s expanding and refining its sport-specific funds for general operations, to help donors better direct their gifts to specific areas of the programs they would like to support. There’s been a department-wide initiative to increase revenue through royalties and licensing, facility rentals and special events.

“It is a new era for college sports,” Blossom says. “However, we are well positioned to build on our success, and we’re mindful that we can’t reach our goals without the support of alumni and fans.”