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Holtz watch continues

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Another day came and went Wednesday without an announcement from the University of South Florida about who its next head football coach will be.

As it happened, much of the city of Greenville continued to hold its breath wondering whether East Carolina head coach Skip Holtz’s name will be attached to the USF announcement when it does come.

Holtz remained the favorite, and seemingly only candidate to head to Tampa to replace fired Bulls coach Jim Leavitt.

Holtz was back in Greenville Wednesday after a visit to Orlando, Fla., to attend the American Football Coaches Association convention. Holtz was contacted by USF last Sunday to discuss the Bulls position and told Florida media members Tuesday the job was an attractive one.

Among those left wondering what might happen next were Holtz’s players, assistant coaches and a slew of recruits whose futures could ultimately rest on the outcome.

According to a player reached Wednesday evening, Holtz had not yet met with the team, and it was unknown with the players what would happen with their coach. The player said he expected the team to know by Friday.

The extent to which the mid-January USF job search has been an interruption to ECU’s recruiting is tough to measure at the moment, but it comes during the most critical month of the recruiting period, when important visits are made by both recruits and coaches.

Coaching veterans know, however, that the lure of other opportunities — especially at schools affiliated with the Bowl Championship Series which serves as the crescendo to the college football season — can come at any time.

“Cable time of year and the way college football is in this era, that’s the way it is,” said ECU wide receivers coach Donnie Kirkpatrick, who was at Charlotte’s Douglas International Airport on his way home from the AFCA convention Wednesday. “This is somewhat the price of success at a school that’s not a BCS school.”

While he cannot comment specifically on recruits, and did not comment on the status of the Holtz situation, Kirkpatrick seemed certain of one thing — with or without Holtz at the helm, the success ECU has had in the last four years should keep talent coming to Greenville one way or the other.

“I don’t think it’s going to end up costing East Carolina any recruits regardless of what happens,” said Kirkpatrick, former head coach at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.

Inevitably, recruits are left to make a difficult decision any time a college coach decides to leave a program.

According to Kirkpatrick, the uncertainty of coaches’ futures always plays a hand in the recruiting process.

“Our staff becomes extremely involved with (recruits) and they do with us,” he said. “That’s why we always emphasize for a kid to sign with the school and not the head coach or the coaching staff. ECU is a great school and a great football program and you hope the kids are sold on it for that reason, though it’s not always the case.”

If the Holtz announcement comes today, it will mark the end of a remarkable era in ECU football history. The Pirates have won 38 games in five seasons with Holtz on the sideline, have played in four consecutive bowl games and won two straight Conference USA championships.

What’s more, Holtz teams have taken on and beaten regional BCS powers Virginia Tech, West Virginia, N.C. State and North Carolina.

Leavitt was fired last week when a USF investigation concluded that the coach assaulted a player during halftime of a game last season. The only coach in the Bulls’ 13-year history, Leavitt had a brief post-termination meeting Wednesday morning with USF officials, finalizing his ouster.

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Previous story:

Despite expressing interest in the University of South Florida’s head football coaching job on Tuesday, East Carolina’s Skip Holtz still was with the Pirates by night’s end, and Holtz would not confirm whether a deal was being finalized for him to take over the Bulls.
In text messages Monday and Tuesday, Holtz did not confirm or deny that he was in line to become the replacement for fired USF coach Jim Leavitt, only agreeing that he would speak if there was a change in his status as ECU's head coach.

Holtz is in Florida attending the American Football Coaches Association conference, and told reporters from Tampa and St. Petersburg the USF job was an attractive one. Holtz’s wife, Jennifer, is from Port Charlotte, Fla., and the two met while she was working at Florida State. Both she and Holtz have family in Florida.

The fifth-year ECU coach — who has guided the Pirates to four consecutive winning seasons and two straight Conference USA championships — has previously been connected with coaching vacancies at Syracuse, Kansas and Cincinnati.

Despite reiterating the notion that he does not have an agent and is not trying to leave ECU, Holtz admitted the USF job was appealing for numerous reasons.

“There are a lot of positives to it. I think it’s definitely an up-and-coming program, so yeah, there would be interest,” Holtz told the Tampa Tribune at the AFCA conference Tuesday morning.

Holtz confirmed USF contacted him last Sunday to gauge his interest in the position.

No other candidates have been confirmed to be in contact with the Bulls, who will have to act quickly in their hiring with national signing day looming in February. Should Holtz take the job, the Pirates would be in the same boat in terms of signing new players.

Under normal circumstances, the principle recruiting period begins in December, when coaches are free to make visits to players’ homes and schools host extensive weekend visits for players. By mid January, available scholarships are largely spoken for at most schools as a majority of recruits have given verbal commitments to their schools of choice.

When Holtz came to ECU in December 2004, he began a frantic recruiting spree that was largely successful, but the coach has said it took his staff more than a year to establish what he considered a normal recruiting schedule.

Holtz’s contract runs through 2013, and the coach is in line to make $655,000 this year, with considerably more available in incentives. The contract has a buyout clause of $100,000.

USF athletic director Doug Woolard, like ECU athletic director Terry Holland, is not planning to comment on the matter until a coach is hired by the Bulls.

Leavitt was fired Friday after 13 seasons when the school determined he had assaulted a player in the team locker room during halftime of a game against Louisville in November.

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COMMENTS
Two Pirate players suspended

The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

East Carolina sophomore forward Darrius Morrow and freshman guard Wakefield Ellison have been suspended indefinitely for a violation of team rules, according to an announcement from ECU men's basketball coach Mack McCarthy on Wednesday.

"Darrius and Wakefield have been suspended indefinitely for a violation of team rules" McCarthy said. The third-year ECU head coach did not address specifics of the suspension, but added "there are conduct standards we have in place and expect those to be followed."

Morrow, 19, is facing charges for drug possession following a Dec. 21 arrest. The 6-foot-8 Atlanta native was charged with misdemeanor possession of one ounce of marijuana, according to Greenville Police reports.

The arrest occurred at Morrow's residence at Sunchase Apartments after police responded to a call for service. Morrow was released from the Pitt County Detention Center under a $500 secured bond, the report says. He is scheduled for a Feb. 2 court appearance.

Morrow is averaging 12.4 points and a team-high 6.7 rebounds per game in 16 starts this season.

Ellison, who wasn't involved in the Morrow case, has played in 10 games off the bench.

The Pirates are now without three scholarship players. Sophomore guard Chris Turner was suspended earlier this season after being ruled academically ineligible. Turner won't play again this season.
Two Pirates charged in altercation

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

East Carolina athletic officials confirmed on Tuesday two ECU football players were charged in a weekend incident off campus.

Cornerback Emanuel Davis, a rising junior for the 2010 season, and running back and fellow junior Brandon Jackson were each charged with disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, after allegedly joining an altercation already in progress.

According to Pitt County Court System records, Davis was also charged with possession of alcohol under the age of 21.

Jackson will also appear in court on charges of being intoxicated and disruptive, resisting a public officer and possession of and consumption of alcohol under the age of 21, all misdemeanors. He was also charged with driving while impaired and driving after consuming alcohol under the age of 21, both traffic offenses.

As a sophomore, Davis became a full-time starter at corner after Dekota Marshall broke his leg. He played in 12 games and was fifth on the team with 69 tackles. He also had a team-high 12 pass breakups and picked off a pair of passes, returning one for a touchdown against Tulsa.

Jackson started the season as the team's lead back behind senior Dominique Lindsay.

Though he saw limited action toward the end of the season, Jackson appeared in nine games and still managed to finish as the team's second leading rusher with 316 yards on 84 carries and three touchdowns.

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Going from here at NCSU

Randy Woodson is a most fortunate fellow, and he seems to know it. The new chancellor at N.C. State University included in his remarks upon confirmation by the UNC system's Board of Governors some gratitude and some humor. It was a polite, gracious and low-key beginning.

Given that Woodson, currently the provost at Purdue University in central Indiana, is taking over after a rather tumultuous time at State, he set the right tone and managed to single out various constituencies with which a university chancellor has to connect ... students, faculty, athletics boosters. He also doffed the hat to one attendee at the announcement of his hiring who deserved the recognition, and that was William Friday, president emeritus of the UNC system.

In Friday and in former Gov. Jim Hunt (two of N.C. State's most prominent alumni), Woodson has himself two capable advisers he'd be wise to call upon as he learns to navigate the politics in both higher education (which sometimes makes regular ol' politics seem tame) and down on Jones Street, where the university system's budget is combed, sprayed and approved.

But back to this thing about Woodson being a lucky guy. For all of the storms that have circled the administration building off Hillsborough Street these last months, the new chancellor has saddled one of the fastest horses in higher education. He's also connected with a university that has personally touched the lives of tens of thousands of North Carolina citizens in a multitude of personal ways, from the folks on campus in various divisions of a large agricultural education enterprise that deals with the state's farmers, or the continuing education programs that reach students, mid-career or elderly, or a marvelous vet school that helps with large animals or the family cat. This is a people's university, in every sense of the word.

And on the occasions I've had a chance to interact with students, faculty and administrators, including my own certification as an alum ... three summer school sessions that were of considerable assistance in finishing up at Chapel Hill ... I've been impressed with a modesty that's sometimes uncommon in higher education. The university community wears its excellence well, it might be said.

Every day one moves a few blocks in any direction in Raleigh, the Triangle and North Carolina, N.C. State's contributions are visible, tangible. It might be a building that came out of the School of Design. It might be software that was developed by a State alum. It might be a teacher schooled in the liberal arts or writing in Tompkins Hall. It might be a student working part-time in a bookstore or as a nanny. It might a piece of art standing in the sun outside a corporate headquarters. Or it might be through a conversation with one of the thousands of alums in these parts.

Chancellor-elect Woodson, who was capably preceded by interim Chancellor James Woodward, doubtless has been briefed about the university's problems, which are in fact mostly related to individuals and not to the institution's reputation at all. And there is a perception on the part of some inside that campus that NCSU doesn't get enough moments in the sun because of the shadow cast from Chapel Hill.
But if this alum might offer a friendly thought or two, he might begin with suggesting as watchwords: Go from here.

First, alert the trustees and the boosters and the faculty who may be feeling wounded or resentful because of recent and even not-so-recent events that the campus needs to just move ahead from where it is. All of these great things are going on, the forecast on the Centennial Campus is terrific and there's much on which to build without worrying about the immediate past.

Second, talk more about the good stuff, and don't hide bright lights under a bushel. People who know students and faculty members are well-aware of a lot of ground-breaking scientific things now in progress, and there are authors among us with N.C. State connections, but the university doesn't seem to toot its own horn very much. Tune up.

Third, when bad things happen, embarrassing things or just goofs of one kind or another, talk about them, too, right away and with total candor.

Finally, seek and follow the counsel of people such as Friday and Hunt, who are (justifiably) much-admired, and who on a personal level are possessed of an uncommon measure of good sense.

Go from here.

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Getting a Job in College: Second Thoughts

BY STEPHEN KREIDER YODER, ISAAC S. YODER and LEVI YODER

ISAAC: My first semester at college was as fun and stimulating as I had hoped. Several classes already have changed my way of thinking, and I have a group of new friends.

But not everything went according to plan: I went back on one decision I made before going into college -- the decision to not work a job during the college year.

Dad and I had agreed before college that if taking my studies seriously was my most important goal, spending time and energy working a job could detract from that goal. My part-time job at a tea shop in high school created many sleep-deprived days at school and made it more difficult to complete all my assignments well. Though I ended up succeeding despite the extra work, I thought that this added stress would be more problematic in college, when I would have more, and harder, schoolwork.

But after only my first semester, I've already begun to work a job in student government, in addition to my other extracurriculars.

It's important to note that, though working in student government is a paying job, it is completely different from the grunt work at a cafe. I clock anywhere from five to 20 hours a week, but there's a lot more learning from this job than labor. Working with the school administration, I'm beginning to understand more about the bureaucratic machinery of an institution, how outsiders can make their opinions known, and how they might pressure higher-ups to act on important issues. I would have made this commitment even if it didn't pay.

Many of my classmates have similar types of jobs in areas that interest them -- such as working for the admissions department, the residential system or a campus publication.

Still, however much my friends and I learn from these jobs, there are clear downsides to them as well.

For instance, there were many nights over the past couple of months when, despite important essays and other class work hanging over me, I had to spend hours looking over charters for new student organizations or attend long committee meetings.

And then there's a financial consideration: Without this extra workload, I could probably be taking a fifth class, and thus squeeze a little more out of my tuition money. Going to a private college, I need to regularly consider the amount of academic value I'm getting per dollar, and this job might be reducing that.

I still think that my initial decision not to work made a lot of sense. But when I made that decision I was thinking of a job like the one I had in high school. The truth is that I learn almost as much from this job as I do from any course I take.

So here's my amended policy on working: I'll work during college if it's an educational job that I would willingly do even if it wasn't paid.

Now, let's see if I can stick to this policy a couple of years down the road when I'm low on cash.

STEVE: That's great work if you can get it.

Many college students don't have the luxury of being picky about their campus jobs -- or have the option not to work at all -- especially in this economy.

But a parent must ask: If it's costing $40,000 or more to buy eight months of college for Johnnie, is it a good use of those dearly bought hours for him to be working a job mainly for money?

I asked that question a lot after my own years in college. I worked several hours a day my freshman year loading the cafeteria dishwasher. There were two problems with this: There was nothing to learn after the first two days of shuffling dishes into the Hobart, and I could have better spent some of that time taking more classes or joining the drama club.
Unlike Isaac, I didn't have the choice not to work -- I needed the money to help pay tuition. But in later college years, I picked jobs I could learn something from -- like operating the movie projector in classes I wasn't enrolled in, or tutoring foreign students.

Certainly, for many students, there's value to working in college that goes beyond the money, especially for students who didn't have regular jobs in high school. A collegian who graduates without having learned the responsibility of a regular job is a graduate who isn't prepared for the realities of the world.

A campus job can be good, even for someone with a full ride from financial aid, because "it teaches you developmental life skills different from the academic," says Denise Hayes, director of counseling services at the Claremont University Consortium in California.

But "the caution always is the balance," she says. Students who have to work may place too much of a priority on the job and shortchange studies, she says, or "don't get to participate in that residential-life experience."

Ms. Hayes's advice echoes Isaac's approach: Find jobs with added value. She suggests students ask faculty about jobs in their departments, network with more-senior students about good jobs ("students often pass jobs on to one another," she says), and take volunteer jobs that demonstrate leadership and may lead to good paid jobs.

College is a rare period in life when a young person has broad access to a wealth of educational and life-enriching resources. I'd rather Isaac spent the time exploiting those opportunities. If he can do that, and get paid for it, too, all the better.

Read more about college -- choosing the right one, getting in and making the most of the experience once you're there -- at wsj.unigo.com. Email: yoder&son@wsj.com