

Coach-in-waiting fad hot in NCAA

College Notebook

By Doug Doughty

With the announcement Monday that Oregon offensive coordinator Chip Kelly eventually will succeed Mike Bellotti as the Ducks' head coach, the list of Division I-A schools with coaches in waiting has grown to five. Purdue, Kentucky and Florida State made the move previously, and Texas has gone that route this year.

Virginia Tech athletic director Jim Weaver could not be reached for comment Wednesday on his planned discussion with Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds, who last week tapped Longhorns' defensive coordinator Will Muschamp as the heir to head coach Mack Brown, but Internet sites are buzzing.

Many Tech fans have suggested that Weaver consider such an arrangement with longtime defensive coordinator Bud Foster, although some have questioned the legality of such a move.

"I don't think that there's any legal prohibition against it under state law," said Roanoke attorney David Paxton, who specializes in contracts for the Roanoke firm of Gentry, Locke, Rakes and Moore.

"Local governments sometimes can't enter into long-term agreements because they can't find future boards. That may be what some people are thinking about."

What about the perception that state jobs must be advertised for 30 days?

"There's no per se requirement that you advertise," Paxton said. "The NFL has a requirement [for advertising] but that's a league rule. That's not something that's required. Federal law says that positions can be filled any way a company wants."

"They are encouraged to post them because, historically, people never knew when positions opened and, in particular, African-Americans, never had a chance to apply."

Precedent

The absence of a statement confirming Al Groh's return as Virginia football coach in 2009 has revived memories of his Wake Forest coaching tenure.

Groh's last season as Wake Forest head coach was 1986, when the Deacons finished 5-6, but Groh didn't resign as coach until nearly two months after the season.

Groh could have returned as Wake coach in 1987 but wanted more of a long-term commitment than athletic director Gene Hooks was prepared to offer. That was the year when Groh's name was being named in connection with the Virginia Tech opening, another source of friction.

Virginia athletic director Craig Littlepage announced Sunday that he would not be exercising the rollover clause in Groh's contract and that he would meet with Groh within 48 hours to conduct a year-end review of the football program.

An annual 5-percent cost-of-living increase in Groh's contract would put him over \$2 million for the first time since he signed a \$1.7-million per-year deal in 2005. Groh is slated to make \$2.07 million in 2009, \$2.17 million in 2010 and \$2.28 million in 2011.

Select company

In more than 50 seasons of ACC football, only nine players from the Roanoke Times' circulation area had made first-team all-conference before Bath County's John Phillips was recognized earlier this week.

Phillips was the first Timesland player to make first-team All-ACC since John St. Clair from William Fleming and Chris Combs from Patrick Henry were selected in 1999. Combs, a defensive lineman at Duke, also made first-team All-ACC in 1998.

Phillips beat out Boston College's Ryan Purvis, who was a first-team all-conference selection in 2007 and also made the preseason All-ACC team this year. Purvis had 20 receptions for 147 yards and did not have a touchdown this year, compared to Phillips, who had 48 catches for 385 yards and two TDs.

"I never thought I'd make the preseason team," said Phillips, who had a total of 21 receptions in his first three seasons, "I'd never had an opportunity to put up big numbers, but I told my position coach [Bob Price] that this was my goal."

Recruiting

Paul Wheeler, an assistant at Pulaski County in the 1970s and later the head coach at George Wythe, said that Lafayette High School defensive lineman Will Hill (6 foot 4, 265 pounds) will be the first player he has coached to sign a Division I-A grant in the last 29 years.

Lafayette has called a news conference for 8 a.m. Friday at which Hill will choose from Virginia, Maryland and Penn State. He also received offers from Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina.

Hill is a rarity of another sort, in that he plans to graduate from Lafayette in December and enroll in January, even if his choice is Virginia, where he would be something of a test cast. Few Virginia school systems provide for December graduation.

Connections

Mississippi head coach Houston Nutt was the most noteworthy spectator Monday at Hargrave Military Academy's annual football combine for college scouts. Six of the nation's top 10 prep-school players, as rated by rivals.com, played for Hargrave. That includes 6-8, 295-pound, Arkansas-bound offensive lineman Anthony Oden, whose older brother, Greg, was the first player chosen in the 2007 NBA Draft.