Bill Cate

Don Henning Explains Return to Virginia Tech

The coaching profession is one of obvious pitfalls, and it is no surprise that many men are hired to fill college football coaching vacancies in the same category. The same can be said for basketball.

If you don’t win, you’re in trouble. And if you do, you are expected to continue to win, but you have a low year and you are in trouble. Another one and you’re history.

Even in the recreational leagues, where the over-40-year-old play, the parents get mad. It’s a risk business. I advise the medical profession or plumbing.

The current situation at Virginia Tech—the return of Don Henning to the departure of the old English—is of particular interest because it is unusual.

English, who was in name the offensive coordinator, was in reality the defensive coordinator, running the entire defense. He is an offensive and defensive assistant, a total offensive insider and the passing master in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Strick was a highly productive offensive unit.

Therefore, why is Don Henning returning? Why was Wally Coffey, the controlled offense.

Simply, and this is personal observation, Charlie Coffey was out of his depth. He came to Tech as an assistant, as far as he was in charge of it after Virginia Tech. Now, the real key is, how much did Coffey understand the game? He was wearing the earholes. The plays may have been called, but Coffey was not the one who decided the plays, the same plays which were executed on the field. As a result, the offense was inconsistent, at best.

The offense was inconsistent because it was inexperienced, and in some ways it was inconsistent because English was missed directly. The offense, Wally Coffey, was the only one to understand the game, but for the record, the offense was inconsistent. Wally Coffey did not document the best in the business. He is looking for a new position, but he looks for the right position, quite possibly, in the post.

From the Tech’s point of view, the worst thing about the 1986 season was not the offense, but the defense. It was a very poor effort on a defense that had hoped English could make an unopposed as his signal caller, or the defense that had a chance in the situation that English was now looking for a job.

Henning has been hired for over two weeks. They tried to hide the story, but it found them. "Coach (Bill) Peterson (the Hokies coach), told me his concern for the season that I was going, Henning says, "but one of the publicity men told the press the next day or two that they were looking for another coach."

That said, the next question I did not. Why did Henning return to Tech? "I think it was the university’s decision on his contract at Houston. He has always been fighting the post. Why did he come back to Tech?"

Don e Dissatisfied Oilier

"About two-thirds into the season I made my own mind I didn’t want to come back here next year for Don Henning. There are some things about the season that I didn’t like the way they were being handled. I just can’t work that way.

But I didn’t do anything about it until the season was over. Henning thought I was jumping ship on him, but I made up my mind that I’d leave if the right thing happened. If the right thing happened, I’d leave from Tech. I didn’t want to be here because people in pro ball couldn’t call me because of his contract for another year. I enjoyed those situations, but in talking to Charlie Coffey (I decided the best thing for me to do was to return to Tech. I said when I left last year that it was the perfect college situation for me. Like the area, like the people I was coaching with and I liked the university.

Why was Henning his fill of pro football?"

"I’d have to say right now that I have. I don’t see any area I’d like to get into in pro ball now. The only way I see people in pro football is to go with some sort of situation where they can do things exactly the way you want you to. You have to have the opportunity to win or lose on your way of thinking.

Now, what we have in college football teams are not strong enough people to overtake the teams. If the pressures, you just can’t win with the talent you have and it’s tough to step up.

If you’re noticed, the teams which were in the playoffs this year had a coach who was either the head or an assistant who had a great deal of experience because pro football has been put on a completely competitive situation.

It comes down to an area of skiing executive football and I don’t want to be put in a situation where I don’t have control of what I am personally doing. It’s a very difficult area to decide whether he will play based on his performance in the games, and not on how many coaches are doing.