Tech Looking for Coach, Not A Salesman

BY DENNIS LATTA
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BLACKSBURG—"There is no such thing as a good time to look for a top football coach. But that time is worse than others. No doubt, having to find a coach now will stymie our program a little."

Virginia Tech athletic director Frank Moseley has looked for a head coach for the Hokies before. But he has never had to find one in a hurry and at the height of the recruiting season like now.

The pressure is on Moseley and Tech to come up with a known coach who can build a winner in Blacksburg. It's just not easy to attract established coaches to a team that had a 2-8 season and isn't winning many battles in the recruiting wars.

"Sure it surprised us when coach (Charlie) Coffey quit last week. We didn't expect it. I don't think anyone expected it right then," Moseley says.

So Moseley, who is retiring this spring, is looking for a coach.

"Right now, I have three lists of coaches. First there are the ones we'd like to contact. Then there are those who have been recommended to us and thirdly there are those who have submitted firm applications."

"The whole search is wide open right now. I have had a rather lengthy talk with coach (Bear) Bryant. I have also discussed it with (Don) Shula and ( Ara) Parseghian. A lot of people have made recommendations."

"I think we can get a good man. That's what we're working for. If we could get a top man today—wonderful. But if it takes days, weeks, or even months, we'll take that long. Whatever it takes, we want to get a man who can do the job. Time is important, but the man is more important," says Mosely.

Tech isn't the only major college searching for a new head football coach. Mississippi, Florida State and Colorado are also in the market for a known coach. Moseley is optimistic that the Tech offer is the most inviting.

"I've had one or two apply who might surprise you. I think that Tech has a lot to offer. It is common knowledge, especially in the South, that we have a good school and a good program. We are financially stable, but neither rich nor poor."

So Moseley thinks that Tech is in a position to be a little choosy.

"The first prerequisite for the job is that the man has to be able to command a good staff of his own. He has to have a good rapport with the student athletes and be able to communicate with them."

"Secondly he has to be a good recruiter. He should be able to recognize talent when he sees it."

Coffey has been given credit for doing the best selling job in recent history at Tech, but Moseley isn't looking for a salesman.

"I think we need a football coach first. All I want is someone who will come in here and say that he will do the best he can with what he has. He doesn't have to make any promises he can't keep."

If Moseley can locate a man to meet all his requirements, then he'll get down to discussing his contract and salary.

"The type of contract is not settled and the salary is open. This job should demand a good salary and is open to future possibilities. As for the contract, well if I was a coach I wouldn't sign for less than three years."

But while all the looking and talking is going on, Tech is losing out on the best recruits. Monday Ronnie's Ricky Rush signed with Tech, but he is one of the few really good players to agree to come to Blacksburg.

"Those who really want to come to VPI will come anyway," says Moseley. "Some of the others are a little undecided. Most of them have agreed to wait and see who the new coach is before they make a decision."

That's why time is important. They won't wait too long.

Even after the head coach is named, he has to start building a whole new staff. At present, there is no football coach at any kind at Tech. There are a lot of vacancies to fill.

"We had to give the new man a free hand to pick who he wanted. I wouldn't want to tie a man's hands. He can choose who he wants for his staff."

Then the new man and his new staff will have only one goal for next year according to Moseley. "All we want is a coach who will continually improve the program. All we ask is that he beats this year's record."