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Office of University Communications

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# Gardner-Webb University Hires Carroll McCray as Head Football Coach

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Office of University Communications

January 28, 2013

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University announced Monday that 1983 graduate Carroll McCray has been hired as head football coach.

An introductory press conference will be held at 4 p.m. Monday afternoon in the Tucker Student Center on campus.

McCray spent last season as the head coach at North Greenville University. He has previous stops as associate head coach at Mercer and as head coach at Austin Peay. As an assistant, McCray has an outstanding track record with stops at Furman, Mississippi State, Samford, South Carolina and Appalachian State.

“Our focus with this search was to quickly identify and target an experienced coach who has an understanding of this university and its football program,” said Gardner-Webb Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. “We have found that coach in Carroll McCray. He is a man of impeccable character and a person we are confident is an outstanding fit here at Gardner-Webb.”

McCray is an ordained Baptist deacon and member of Taylors First Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina.

“I am humbled and overjoyed with the opportunity to return to Gardner-Webb University as head football coach,” said McCray. “This place has always been very special to our family. This is a wonderful school, filled with some of the best people around. It’s home. I am excited to reconnect with the Runnin’ Bulldog family and look forward to the challenge of getting Gardner-Webb football on track.

“Our teams will play aggressively and with purpose on the field. They will also respect the educational opportunity they are blessed with and pursue a degree with the same purpose. Fielding a good team isn’t the only part of the equation. Building a program this university can take pride in, a highly-respected program, is the ultimate goal. The wins will come.”

McCray is the ninth head coach in Gardner-Webb’s senior college history. He is the first alumnus to serve as head coach since Woody Fish did so from 1984-1996.

“I am delighted that we have secured a coach who meets three very important criteria,” said Gardner-Webb President Dr. Frank Bonner. “He is a strong Christian who will provide character-based leadership for our football program. As an alumnus and former Gardner-

Webb football player, he knows and believes in the values, principles and culture of our university. And further, Carroll McCray has extensive coaching experience, including time with several major programs and experience as a head coach.”

McCray returns to his alma mater after one season as the head coach at NCAA Division II North Greenville University. Despite inheriting a team that returned just 11 starters, McCray molded the Crusaders into a competitive program by season’s end. North Greenville won five of its final six games in 2012, including victories over South Atlantic Conference members Newberry, Brevard, Catawba and Wingate.

McCray got his start in coaching at Appalachian State in 1984, serving under Coach Sparky Woods as a graduate assistant coach working with tight ends and tackles. After earning his master’s degree in 1985, McCray began a full-time stint under Woods, helping the Mountaineers to their first Southern Conference title in 32 years in 1986. In three seasons coaching the team’s outside linebackers, McCray saw Appalachian State post a 38-19-2 record, two SoCon titles and two top-10 finishes in the I-AA national polls. The Mountaineers also made playoff appearances in 1986 and 1987 with a combined 20-5-1 record.

McCray followed Woods to the University of South Carolina, coaching the Gamecocks offensive line, tight ends and H-Backs from 1989-1993. While in Columbia, McCray tutored future first-round draft pick Earnest Dye, and was part of a staff that helped the program transition to the Southeastern Conference. Dye became the program’s first All-SEC selection before being selected with the 18th overall pick in the 1993 draft by the Cardinals.

McCray pupils Calvin Stephens (Patriots, 1991), Corey Louchiey (Bills, 1994) and James Dexter (Cardinals, 1996) also went on to be drafted.

Following his time at South Carolina, McCray coached the offensive line at Samford from 1994-2000, helping the Bulldogs to winning records five times in his seven seasons with the program. In 2000, Samford rushed for a school-record 3,439 yards and 41 touchdowns. Offensive tackle Phillip Duplantis earned first-team Division I-AA All-Independents honors under McCray’s guidance in 1999. Tight end Aaron Bryant went on to sign a free agent contract with the Tennessee Titans in 1999.

He worked under legendary head coach Jackie Sherrill for two seasons at Mississippi State (2001-2002), with center Tommy Watson signing a free agent contract with the NFL’s Tennessee Titans in 2002 and tackle David Stewart drafted once his career in Starkville concluded in 2005.

McCray earned his first head coaching job in 2003, serving as head coach at Austin Peay from 2003-2006. McCray took over a non-scholarship program in Clarksville, Tenn., and was charged with directing the Governors from the Pioneer League back to the Ohio Valley

Conference. During his tenure, 13 Governors earned All-Pioneer League honors and eight were named Academic All-America.

He coached the offensive line at Furman from 2007-2010, tutoring five All-SoCon selections for the Paladins – including 2008 Jacobs Blocking Trophy winner Joel Bell. Bell earned All-America honors that same season and signed a free agent contract with the Buffalo Bills. The Paladins posted winning records in three of McCray's seasons on staff. Guard Ryan Lee went on to sign a free agent contract with the Steelers in 2012.

McCray spent one season as Associate Head Coach at Mercer University, assisting head coach Bobby Lamb in starting a new Division I FCS non-scholarship program in Macon, Ga. He was named head coach at North Greenville on January 15, 2012.

The Monroe, N.C., native was a three-year letterwinner on the offensive line at Gardner-Webb under Coach Tom Moore, teaming with future Hall of Famers Cameron Brooks, Charlie Harbison, Chip Stuart and Ralph Warthen in the early 1980s. As a senior in 1982, McCray and the Runnin' Bulldogs stormed their way to a 7-3 record – tying the program record to that point for senior college wins and posting the team's first winning ledger since 1977.

McCray graduated in 1983 with a degree in social science. He and his wife Angel, also a graduate of Gardner-Webb, have two children – Trey and Meredith.

Gardner-Webb opens the 2013 season at home on Saturday, August 31, against Furman in Ernest W. Spangler Stadium.