

From Crimson Tide To Purple Pride

Mike DuBose, head football coach of the University of Alabama from 1996 to 2000, has become the newest member of the Millsaps College football coaching staff.

DuBose assumes the role of defensive coordinator after serving as head coach at Luverne High School in Luverne, Alabama, near Montgomery, a small 2A school that DuBose led to a state championship in 2003.

“We’re delighted to have a coach of Mike DuBose’s caliber at Millsaps College,” said Ron Jurney, director of athletics. “He will be a welcome addition to our great group of assistant coaches.”

DuBose was an assistant for the Crimson Tide from 1983 to 1986 and then again from 1990 to 1996, when he was named head coach of the Crimson Tide.

Picked as Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year in 1999, DuBose led the Tide to an SEC Championship and a Bowl Championship Series Orange Bowl appearance in 2000.

DuBose said he felt Millsaps was the right choice at the right time. “We’ve talked about it and prayed about it,” DuBose said. “My wife, Polly, and I looked at possibly staying at Luverne in a part-time role. We tried to make some sense out of it, and it didn’t work. It wasn’t all about getting back into college coaching. I had some talks with high schools in Florida. The timing didn’t work out.”

Then DuBose got a phone call from a friend of Millsaps Head Coach David Saunders. “He asked if I would be interested,” DuBose said. “From that point on, we began to talk and got the details worked out.”

“At every hiring opportunity, we have been fortunate to attract great coaches and assemble one of the best football staffs in the country,” Saunders said.

“The hiring of Mike DuBose continues that trend of hiring great coaches. Revered

by his peers as one of the best defensive coaches in the nation, Mike’s experience, expertise, and history of winning at a championship level make him an exciting addition to the Millsaps College football staff. During this process, we discussed our program putting a mark on Division III football by competing for and winning championships. Mike understands that language, that mindset, and wanted to be a part of it. I am pleased to have him as a member of our staff.”

In 13 years of coaching at the University of Alabama, DuBose served as defensive line coach, defensive coordinator, and head coach.

A native of Opp, Alabama, DuBose was a standout athlete for Opp High School, earning four varsity letters. While playing for the Tide from 1972 to 1974, DuBose, a defensive lineman, led his teams to three SEC Championships, three bowl games, and with teammate Sylvester Croom, now the head football coach at Mississippi State University, a national championship in 1973.

DuBose remained at Alabama when Ray Perkins arrived as head coach and he followed Perkins to the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1987 and coached the defensive line for three seasons before returning to Alabama in 1990 under new head coach Gene Stallings.

DuBose’s defense was ranked eighth or better against the run a total of four times, including the nation’s best rushing defense in the 1992 national championship season. The Tide allowed just 55.0 yards per game on the ground to lead the nation. DuBose has supplied the NFL with five first-round selections, five first-team All-Americans, and 10 All-SEC team selections. —B. E.



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Friends and Family Cope with Sudden Loss of Ned Welles

Ned Welles was lovingly called “Grandpa” by his former soccer teammates, current players, and colleagues. And judging from his memorial service on campus and the large number who traveled to Ponchatoula, Louisiana, to his funeral, they loved him like they love their own grandparents. “Grandpa” just fit his personality.

Welles, the men’s soccer graduate assistant coach, was killed in an automobile accident in Ponchatoula in December.

The campus memorial service, attended by many of the Millsaps family, as well as current soccer players and friends of the program, was held in January. The Welles family, along with Millsaps Men’s Soccer Coach Lee Johnson and several of Ned’s friends, spread his ashes in Ponchatoula and on the grass soccer field, on the north end of campus, where he played every game during his career as a Millsaps Major.

“He was a teacher, director, and leader of young people, and he had real potential that was starting to blossom,” said his father, John (Sparky) Welles, at the campus memorial. “He had a passion for sports, especially soccer.”

His leadership role on the team, especially during his senior year, earned him the nickname “The Ned.” For those with problems or needing to talk, he was always there.

“He was always someone we could look up to,” said junior Franklin Childress, a teammate. “He was never afraid to lead by example, which became most evident when he took on the role of graduate assistant this past season. His personality demanded respect, and his leadership skills and passion on the field earned him that.”

“He also firmly believed in being fair to people,” said Lee Johnson, current head coach of the men’s soccer program. “Opponents respected him because of how



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fairly he played the game. Welles would also let the referees know if they were not being fair.”

He never hesitated to pull out the rule book during a game and explain why he thought the referee’s call was incorrect. “I will never forget the day that he convinced a referee to change a penalty kick to an indirect kick in our box,” said Johnson.

Welles just knew he was right. He was also on the right track to a bright future. A member of Kappa Alpha fraternity, Welles was set to receive an M.B.A. from the College in May.

An intensely motivated player and student, Welles was remembered for his ability to relax and enjoy the company of friends and family. “We all saw Ned work and play hard, but there was a much softer side,” said Sparky Welles. “He loved his parents, sister, girlfriend, and grandmother almost to extremes.”

This, according to all accounts, was a trait his parents passed down to him. Sparky and Cathy Welles “loved Ned and it shows in how involved they were in everything he took part in at Millsaps,” said Childress. They “hardly ever missed a game, they would take us out to eat after games, even hang out in the fraternity house with us. I hope they understand that even though Ned has left us for a while, we still need them in our lives, even more now than ever.”

“Having Ned as a friend really influenced my life,” said Johnson. “If you were a friend of Ned’s, you were also a son or daughter to Sparky and Cathy.”

The players on the 2005 fall season’s team have decided to play in the memory of their friend, coach, and motivator. They hope to play the game as Ned Welles played, with “real desire and love for what you are doing,” his father said. “It cannot be masked—it was genuine, and he enjoyed every moment.”

“I will miss the opportunity to have that lifelong friendship with Ned,” said Johnson. “But I know he is in a better place. We will all miss him, but we will never forget him.”

A memorial fund has been established in Welles’s name. For further information, please contact Colleen Fagan at 601-974-1037 or faganacs@millsaps.edu. —B. E.

Wetzel Is Drafted By MLB’s Rockies

Millsaps College junior shortstop Garner Wetzel was taken in the 10th round of Major League Baseball’s June Amateur Draft by the Colorado Rockies.

The slugging 6-foot-2 215-pound shortstop from Gulfport was the fifth native Mississippian taken in the draft. Some experts predict Wetzel could eventually make the move to third base. Wetzel is the fourth player drafted from a Millsaps College ball club coached by Jim Page.

The Majors won their seventh Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference championship under Page in 2005.

Page was named SCAC Coach of the Year for a conference record sixth time. Wetzel was named SCAC Player of the Year after leading the conference in nearly every offensive category. —B. E.