

Despite Growing Pains, Coach Hopes to Build an ACC Power

By MICHAEL JOHNSON
Chronicle Sports Writer

To hear Wake Forest football coach Jim Caldwell tell it, the hardest adjustment he's made since coming to town has not been replacing Bill Dooley, the Atlantic Coast Conference's all-time winningest coach who resigned after six seasons at the helm.

Rather, it was putting away his longjohns for an extra couple of months that took Caldwell a while getting used to.

"By this time of the year, I'm usually two or three extra layers of clothes on the field at Penn State," Caldwell said with a slight chuckle. "Here, I'm at practice wearing shorts and it's 80 degrees outside with a wind blowing. Compared to my native home of Wisconsin, this is like the Bahamas."

If Caldwell's biggest worry is not wearing an overcoat, then the former Penn State offensive coach should not have any problems in Winston-Salem. When Caldwell accepted the job last December, he wasn't worried about following in the shadows of Dooley, who posted an 8-4 record last year, highlighted by the school's first bowl win in 47 years before retiring. Nor is he concerned about following in the footsteps of Joe Paterno, Dennis Green and all the other coaches who were his bosses, mentors and colleagues.

Caldwell said his first priority was to establish the name Jim Caldwell as an integral part of the Wake Forest and the Winston-Salem community.

"I'm excited to be here in the community and at the school," said Caldwell, who joins Temple's Ron Dickerson and Ron Cooper of Eastern Michigan as the only black head football coaches in Division I. "Having come to a quality institution and a great city such as Winston-Salem, I couldn't think of a better situation. This institution and city is a perfect match for me. My family and I feel fortunate to have a home here."

The Caldwell era has gotten off to an inauspicious 2-5 start, with the Demon Deacons losing 21-13 to Duke Saturday. But Caldwell coached Wake to a 13-10 decision over ACC rival Clemson Oct. 16. It



Jim Caldwell

national championship, while Green has become a highly regarded head coach with the Minnesota Vikings.

"When you have an opportunity to learn from the best, it's going to help you in terms of defining your strengths as a coach faster," said Caldwell, who still keeps in contact with his former employers. "Now I'm prepared to do the things that are necessary to become a successful coach for a long time."

Something that is not lost to Caldwell is the fact he is the first black coach in the history of the ACC. While he acknowledges the historical implications, he hopes it brings attention to the plight of minorities and coaching positions in

major college football.

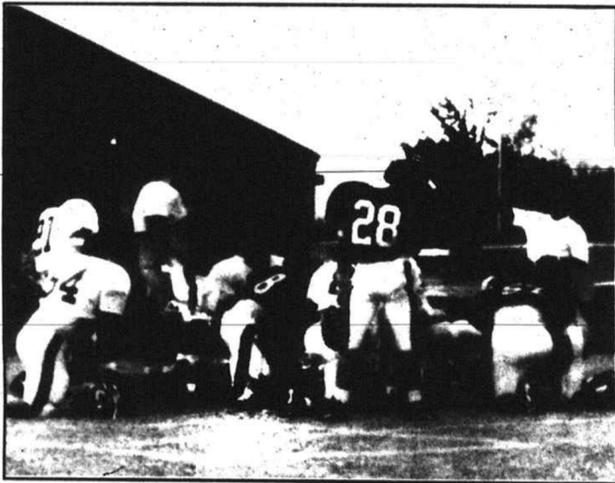
"Maybe if more attention is brought to the fact, then maybe someone will notice and be willing to give someone else an opportunity to coach in this conference," he said. "We have as blacks a small amount of representation on the sidelines compared to what we have out on the field."

It was during his stay at Penn State that Caldwell was able to collect a championship ring of his own in 1986. Caldwell believes the day he can add another to his hand is on the horizon.

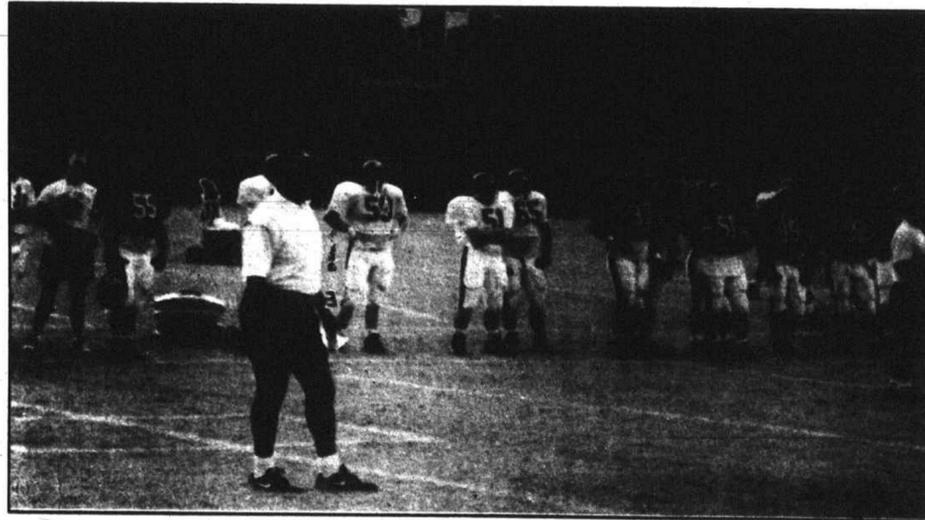
"I place expectations but I don't set limitations. I believe in the saying 'Be careful how you think because your life is shaped by your thoughts,'" Caldwell said. "If we go into the season saying 'we're 7-4' and thinking we had a great season, that's mediocrity. I didn't come here to be mediocre."

"I think that one day we can be champions, but it's going to take time. That winning attitude takes awhile to be shaped, into the way I would like to see it done. We get the players to train hard and that confidence level will come to surface and then we'll see a better product out there."

"I'm a very positive individual and believe that as a man should think, so shall he be."



Coach Jim Caldwell prepares his Wake Forest squad for Saturday's game against top-ranked Florida State in Tallahassee.



Coach Jim Caldwell is staring at a losing season in his first year as a head coach.

was the second consecutive year the Deacons have beaten Clemson and the first time since 1961 that a Wake Forest team left Death Valley with a victory.

Most importantly, it was Caldwell's first conference win as coach.

"To tell the truth, I wish had gotten that win earlier in the season," Caldwell said. "But we played a great game against Clemson and it got the fans excited about our football team again."

Caldwell has Demon Deacon fans excited about the future because of his impressive credentials. After starting out as an graduate assistant at Iowa, Caldwell left his alma mater and has been an assistant coach at Southern Illinois, Northwestern, Colorado, Louisville and Penn State.

During that time, Caldwell has been associated with the names Rey Dempsey, Dennis Green, Bill McCartney, Howard Schnellenberger, and Joe Paterno. Dempsey, Schnellenberger, McCartney, and Paterno have each won a collegiate



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