

Sebrina Brunson gives MEAC officiating a 'woman's touch'

LaTasha Miles
SPORTS EDITOR

The Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference has stepped away from having the typical officials work the sidelines during football games.

Sebrina Brunson is a full-time felony probation officer in Gwinett County, Ga, but every weekend she travels to officiate college football games.

She is originally from Florida and resides in Georgia. Brunson is a graduate of Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

Brunson was the only female referee during two of Winston-Salem State's home games earlier this season against NC A&T and Florida A&M.

"Last year, I was the first female to officiate a game in the SIAC [Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference]," Brunson said.

"This year, I was given the opportunity to work a game in the SWAC [Southwestern Athletic Conference]."

Brunson got into the officiating profession through her ex-husband, Jerome Philpart. It was a way of spending quality time with him and their children. Her son also played

youth football.

"My officiating career started in youth football and expanded into high school, semi-pro and then the colle-

Brunson finally convinced high school officials to allow her to do so three years later. Shortly after, she began to come into her own and devel-

cepts, the more she liked it.

Brunson moved up to a reserve official in 2006. She is now a part of the regular officiating crews within the

game all dolled up," Brunson said in response to the spectators' reactions.

"And they make the comment, 'She's a girl.'"

In a recent interview with ncaafootball.fanhouse.com Brunson said that sometimes kids have called her sir. Then they change it to ma'am once they find out she is female, but she said she is not challenged.

"As an official I am accepted and don't feel anything different," Brunson said.

"They treat me like me and still carry on as though I am one of the guys.

"And being a female official, I don't get treated like royalty, but sometimes it is difficult trying to find a dressing room close to my crew members, but other than that, nothing more or less."

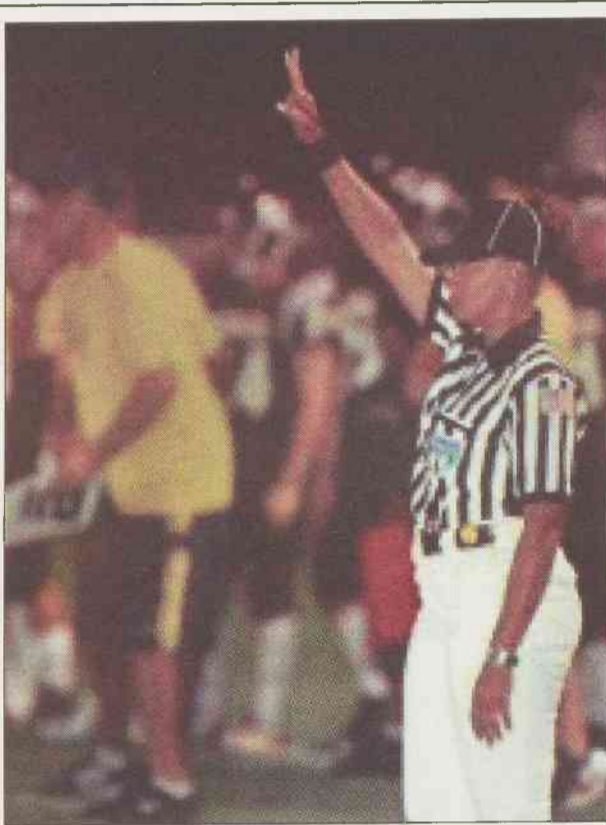
Brunson said she aspires to officiate in the NFL, a league that has no female referees.

"Most people are not fully aware of the strides females in general are making in this arena," Brunson said.

"But I am proud to be able to set examples for other young African-American females and be a positive role model."



Above: Sebrina Brunson away from officiating.



Right: Brunson in uniform officiating a football game.

Photos courtesy of Sebrina Brunson

giate level," Brunson said.

Her start came in 1996 when she began officiating junior varsity and youth level football games.

After attempting to officiate games on the varsity level,

opened the craft of officiating.

In 2001, Brunson attended football camps with the MEAC and SIAC.

She focused on the rules and mechanics of the game and said once she grasped the con-

MEAC.

When officiating, the feedback she receives serves as the most interesting moments for Brunson.

"The look on people's faces when I show up to officiate a

Chancellor Reaves chooses experienced Hayes as AD

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SPORTS EDITOR

After a nine-month search to fill the Athletic Director position at Winston-Salem State, Chancellor Reaves



Bill Hayes

announced in late October that former WSSU head football coach Bill Hayes would occupy the vacancy.

"I am very happy about Bill coming on as the University's Athletic Director," Reaves said.

"I am looking forward to having a good, solid working relationship with him."

Hayes has been associated with college sports for more than 36 years. Along with a former football coach and three-time CIAA Champion at WSSU for 12 years until 1987, Hayes went on to serve as head coach at NC A&T for 15 years.

His experience in college athletics expanded to Athletic Director at NC Central for five years, and most recently, he has held that same position at Florida A&M since January 2008.

"The Tallahassee Democrat" reported that Hayes resigned from his post at FAMU Oct. 3. His last day at FAMU is set for Dec. 31.

Hayes will begin his tenure as AD at WSSU Jan. 1, 2010.

"The primary factor [in hiring Hayes] was that he had a lot of experience that was directly related to the job," Reaves said.

"Along the way, he has established a tremendous track record of outstanding performance. His experience was the major determining factor."

Hayes agreed to a three-year contract at WSSU, for about \$130,000 a year, Reaves said in a recent "Winston-Salem Journal" article.

Hayes was making a reported \$175,000 a year at FAMU.

Under state law, Hayes is required to give up his retirement stipend from the state of North Carolina before he can begin to receive pay from WSSU.

"As a former athlete and coach, I have an abiding passion for athletics and the betterment of our young people through sports," Hayes said in a recent WFMY-2 interview.

"Also, having worked at WSSU under the legendary Clarence 'Big House' Gaines years ago, I have a true appreciation for the great tradition of Rams' sports."

Hayes could not be reached for comment to *The News Argus* at press time.

Reaves said the earliest situation Hayes must address in his new position will be the transition to remain in Division-II.

"That's the major activity going on in

athletics right now," Reaves said.

"I feel very good about the fact that I have an experienced athletic director at the helm there."

Upon making his selection, Reaves also took into account Hayes' relationship with the Winston-Salem area. In addition to his connection with WSSU, Hayes also served as an assistant football coach at Wake Forest University for three seasons, from 1973-1975 en route to becoming the first African-American assistant coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"Obviously, his past experience played a role here," Reaves said.

"I looked at his ability to interact with the Winston-Salem community and I certainly took that into consideration. Members of the community are excited. I've talked with students. They're excited. I'm excited."

Reaves has not yet established a working relationship with Hayes, but he said he expects that Hayes will be a good manager.

"[I expect] He will run a solid program, that he will run a clean program, and that he will run a program that operates in the best interest of our student athletes," Reaves said.

"I do want to compete and I want him to be competitive. We'll be in a different league. We'll be in the CIAA, but I want a competitive athletic program and he and I have talked about that."

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