

Carpenter blessed for tenure as UTM's golf coach

By KEVIN WEAKS
 Messenger Sports Editor

Jerry Carpenter's coaching tenure ended a few months — and perhaps one championship — too soon.

The long-time Skyhawks' golf coach, who has been associated with UTM in various ways for more than half a century, was scheduled to retire from his coaching post in June.

By that time, his team realistically could have added another Ohio Valley Conference championship to the bulging trophy case.

But, the world changed in March. The COVID-19 outbreak was sweeping across the globe, and its effects reached everywhere, including NCAA athletics.

All spring sports were shut down on March 12, and that marked the end of Carpenter's coaching career as well as his team's pursuit of a league title.

"When all this came down, we didn't know exactly what was going to happen at that time. Nobody did," Carpenter said. "We sent everybody home for two days, and then the university extended that. There's a whole lot of things more important than golf. I fully understand that, and our players do. My guys are very smart, very intelligent young men. Our GPA last year was like a 3.48, and so that's a tribute to them.

"But, that was tough when we sat down on Wednesday and told them what was happening, that NCAA had canceled all spring sports championships. That meant, 'Hey, that's it for this year. We're done.' That was tough."

LOST SEASON

Picked to finish second in the conference in the preseason poll, UTM had a legitimate shot at winning the team championship.

UTM won four tournaments in the fall and had just wrapped a win in the Grover Page Classic at Jackson Country Club when the spring season was shut down.

Ross Redmont and Jack



MADE IT HAPPEN — Framed photos and a dedication plaque adorn the entrance to the Rhodes Golf Center, honoring Bill and Amy Rhodes for their financial assistance in getting the state-of-the-art facility built. Jerry

Story are seniors on the squad, and Carpenter said telling them was the toughest part.

"When (assistant coach) Austin (Swafford) and I sat there and we had to look at Ross and Jack, our two seniors, because they had — everybody else had worked hard — put everything into it, and this was their senior year and they wanted to go out on top, it was difficult," he said. "I feel like we had a good chance at it this year, and our players did, too, because that was one thing that they had worked toward. That was tough, sitting there having to tell them that, but they understood. Didn't make it go down any better, though."

One thing that did make it go a little better came earlier this week when the NCAA Division I committee voted to offer an extra year of eligibility to spring sports athletes.

Carpenter said his seniors have decided to take advantage of that ruling, one even postponing a lucrative post-graduation job to do so.

A fifth-year senior and double major with one being in accounting, Redmont has a position waiting for him at

a major accounting firm in Memphis. He is being allowed to delay his start, however, in order to pursue his lost senior season.

Meanwhile, Story is also coming back and will work on his masters while re-starting his senior season.

With the seniors coming back and a solid trio of freshmen set to join the already-loaded team, Carpenter has a message for Swafford, who takes over as head coach next year.

"I told Austin, 'You're going to be loaded. Everybody's going to be gunning for you,'" he said. "They're going to be shooting at him, that's for sure."

When Carpenter heard the news about the season being stopped, he didn't think about his coaching career being cut short. He was just sad that his players wouldn't be able to complete their quest.

"Just disappointed for my players because of the year we think we could have had," said Carpenter, who also managed the University Bookstore for 34 years prior to taking the golf post. "But for me, I mean, hey, what can I complain about? I've refereed 51 years on the foot-

ball field. Health has been good. I did have two stents put in 2006, but I never had any problems since then. I've been 18 years, coaching the golf team. That's about 52 years, I've been at UT Martin, plus going to school here four years. From that standpoint, no, because it's been rewarding, been good to me and my family, and I couldn't ask for a better career for anything, to be honest with you."

NEXT LEVEL

Taking over the head coaching position from Grover Page, a true UTM legend, Carpenter — he didn't take up the game until he was 44 years old — has helped take the program to new heights.

Getting the funding for the Rhodes Golf Center as the home of the program and then raising the money for a customized van so the team could travel in comfort and style, he has helped build a program that can — and does — attract top golfers from a wide range of high schools.

"That's what changed everything around for us," he said. "I mean, our success right now goes back to getting this facility and getting it going and everything."

Carpenter says the facility gets prospects on campus, and then the school sells itself. It's led to a team OVC title in 2016 and a near-miss in 2014, highly decorated players Brendon Caballero and Hunter Richardson, six academic All-America selections, six All-OVC and five All-OVC Tournament players, three freshmen of the year, nine newcomers of the year and, most importantly to Carpenter, seven OVC Sportsmanship Awards.

Carpenter himself is a two-time OVC Coach of the Year winner.

The Rhodes Center, a the product of hard work, dedication and some good fortune, came about through connections to the program.

Bill Rhodes, a 1987 NCAA Division II Tournament qualifier and honorable mention All-America pick, and his wife Amy were the main financial contributors, and Carpenter and his wife Linda have put in countless hours on maintenance and upkeep. His son Scott has also been huge in the program's growth in his role as volunteer assistant

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Briefly

Titans' Henry signs franchise tender

NASHVILLE (AP) — Titans running back Derrick Henry has signed a franchise tender that puts him under contract for the 2020 season as Tennessee works toward reaching a long-term deal with the 2019 NFL rushing leader.

Team officials announced Thursday that Henry had signed the tender.

The Titans gave him a franchise tag March 16, a move that means he will be paid \$10.2 million in the 2020 season unless they sign him to a long-term deal by July 15.

Titans general manager Jon Robinson said during a Wednesday conference call that he spoke to Henry's agents after the team tagged him.

Henry rushed for an NFL-leading 1,540 yards and averaged 4.8 yards per carry while earning his first Pro Bowl invitation last season.

He also became the first man to run for at least 180 yards in three consecutive games at any point in a season.

He rushed for 16 touchdowns during the regular season to tie Green Bay's Aaron Jones for the league lead.

Tennessee reached the AFC Championship game last season.

Leach apologizes for virus tweet

STARKVILLE, Miss. (AP) - Mississippi State football coach Mike Leach has apologized on social media for posting a tweet that drew criticism from Bulldogs players and an assistant professor at the school before it was deleted.

The outspoken coach on Wednesday night tweeted a picture depicting an elderly woman with knitting needles in her hand, the Clarion Ledger in Jackson, Miss. reported.

The caption read, "After 2 weeks of quarantine with her husband, Gertrude decided to knit him a scarf..." but the picture showed her knitting a noose with the hangman's knot already tied, the newspaper reported.

Leach's tweet had more than 4,000 likes on Thursday morning, the newspaper said.

But several MSU players responded to the post with face-palm and raised-eyebrow emojis and a profane acronym, the newspaper reported.

Mississippi State assistant sociology professor and author Margaret A. Hagerman chastised Leach and wrote that lynching jokes are incredibly offensive anywhere and "especially in Mississippi."

Leach deleted the tweet sometime Thursday morning, according to the newspaper.

Skyhawks' Perry adds All-America to list of honors

ATLANTA — For just the fourth time in program history, a UT Martin women's basketball player has claimed All-American honors as junior star Chelsey Perry was tabbed to the 2020 WBCA NCAA Division I Coaches' All-American honorable mention team.

Headlining the 2020 WBCA NCAA Division I Coaches' All-American team was The Wade Trophy winner Sabrina Ionescu (Oregon).

She was joined on the 10-member team by Chennedy

Carter (Texas A&M), Lauren Cox (Baylor), Kathleen Doyle (Iowa), Dana Evans (Louisville), Tyasha Harris (South Carolina), Ruthy Hebard (Oregon), Aari McDonald (Arizona), Satou Sabally (Oregon) and Megan Walker (UConn).

Additionally, 42 players were named to the honorable mention team — including just seven from mid-major programs.

Perry joins a decorated list of All-Americans recognized for their athletic accomplishments in UT

Martin's history.

She now stands alongside former standouts Heather Butler (Senior CLASS), Ashia Jones (Associated Press) and Jasmine Newsome (Associated Press).

A native of Middleton, Perry joined the nation's elite after a stunning junior campaign.

This past season, she ranked first nationally in field goals made (286), second in total points (740) and third in both points per game (23.1) and field goal attempts (386).

The Skyhawk forward

also ranked 11th nationally in blocks (86) and 17th in blocks per game (2.69).

This honor adds to her numerous accolades, which include an Ohio Valley Conference regular season championship, being tabbed a finalist for the Becky Hammon Mid-Major Player of the Year Award, named OVC Player of the Year and being selected to the All-OVC first team.

Perry averaged 23.1 points, seven rebounds, 2.7 blocks, two assists and 1.6 steals in 34.2 minutes per game.

College athletic directors bracing for huge shortfall of incoming funds

By RALPH D. RUSSO
 AP College Writer

Athletic directors at the nation's biggest sports schools are bracing for a potential financial crisis related to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to a survey released Thursday by LEAD1, an association of athletic directors from 130 major college football schools, 63 percent forecast a worst-case scenario in which their revenues decrease by at least 20 percent during the 2020-21 school year. Even an abbreviated football season could cause schools to lose that much.

LEAD1 and Teamworks, a company that created an app designed to help keep teams and athletic departments connected, conducted the survey of more than 100 ADs from schools in

Division I's Football Bowl Subdivision. "The State of Athletics in the Face of the Coronavirus" provides a sobering glimpse of the top concerns for the wealthiest athletic departments in the country.

The NCAA canceled winter and spring sports on March 12, separating thousands of college athletes from teammates and coaches and leaving them unable to practice and compete.

Athletic directors surveyed said their greatest concerns about their athletes over the next three months were academic progress, mental health and a lack of resources for them while off campus.

And then there are the financial concerns.

Canceling the men's Division I basketball tournament cost the NCAA \$375 million it was sched-

uled to distribute to its member schools.

Asked for their worst-case scenario analysis, 65 percent of the athletic directors said revenue for the 2019-20 fiscal year would drop from 0-20 percent, including 35 percent expecting a decrease ranging from 0-10 percent.

Some schools are already taking steps to deal with this year's shortfalls.

Trying to make up \$5 million in lost revenue from basketball tournament cancellations, Iowa State has announced a one-year, temporary pay reduction for coaches and certain staff to save more than \$3 million. The school will also suspend bonuses for coaches for a year to save an additional \$1 million.

"I've talked to many of my peers and they want to do what we just did," Iowa

State athletic director Jamie Pollard said Friday.

Wyoming athletic director Tom Burman announced on Twitter he would be reducing his salary by 10 percent through Dec. 31.

In the LEAD1 survey, 40 percent of the 95 ADs who responded said they approve and strongly approve when asked if they believe high earners should voluntarily offer to make a personal financial sacrifice during the crisis; about 15 percent disapproved or strongly disapproved.

Football season is six months away and for most FBS schools it is by far the biggest revenue driver. Any disruption to the football season could be devastating to college sports because that revenue funds just about every other athletic program.

"We often hear from

ADs and MMR (multi-media rights) sellers that around 85 percent of revenue comes from football," said Matt Balvanz, senior vice president for analytics for Navigate, a sports marketing consulting firm.

He said the average Power Five school makes around \$120 million in revenue per year, "which means roughly \$100 million per year from football."

For the average Power Five team, a home game is worth \$14 million, including its value from a television rights deals, which is over 10 percent of average total revenue, Balvanz said.

"Larger departments can likely absorb a 10 percent loss, but if that increases to 20 percent and 30 percent with more games lost then that could be a major

issue," he said.

Playing games without fan in the stands? Balvanz said the average Power Five school gets some \$30 million in ticket sales. If 85 percent of that is from football, that's a loss of \$25 million.

Athletic directors surveyed by LEAD1 were asked what revenue streams were their most concerned about. Donations and ticket sales received the most votes.

Balvanz said a typical Power Five school brings in around \$20 million to \$30 million per year in donations, which could also take a hit in a struggling economy.

Schools in Group of Five conferences, which don't rake in hundreds of millions yearly from their television deals, would be more vulnerable.