

Rebel Football head coach Strong signals a new beginning

By Chuck Walker
YELLIN' REBEL

Spring is thought to be the season of new beginnings. For the football program, it is an appropriate thought.

The Rebels opened spring football practice not only with a new attitude, but almost an entirely new staff of assistant coaches. After going 19-25 the last four years under the direction of Wayne Nunnley, the Rebels also have a new head coach in the way of the former Notre Dame offensive coordinator - Jim Strong.

Strong, a native of Abbeyville Kansas, is a competitive man by nature. He lettered in both basketball and football while attending Abbeyville High School and went

on to play defensive back at Hutchinson Junior College and Southern Missouri. Strong began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at the University of Arkansas under current Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz. He also made stops at the University of Tulsa, Minnesota, and Arkansas (again) before becoming Notre Dame's Offensive Coordinator.

Strong's competitive nature led him to leave one of the nation's premier college football programs. Why then would he come to UNLV, a school better known for its powerhouse basketball team and apathy towards the football team? Why not better established programs like Minnesota or Florida?

"The opportunity to come out here and the challenge and thought

of being a part of taking something that was down and out and take it and go forward with it and make progress." Strong answers.

Hitting the floor at breakneck speed, Strong assembled a staff of assistant coaches that hit the recruiting road while he helped prepare Notre Dame for the Orange Bowl. Did it prove to be a distraction for him to hold down two jobs at once? Not according to Strong.

"I played two roles. I was preparing a football team at the Orange Bowl and because of the time difference, I'm in Miami and when I finished my work there at somewhere in the neighborhood of 11 to 11:15 at night, I would go back up to my room and start making calls to the west coast kids. I would call kids for three hours. My loyalties

and obligations were to Notre Dame."

The Rebel coaching staff travelled all over the country to sign 24 quality players in what could be the best recruiting class UNLV has had in years, despite only having seven weeks to complete recruiting.

"My assistant coaches did an outstanding job because they started the recruiting process while I was in Miami. We had seven weeks to actually recruit and I was very pleased with the type of class we had in a short period of time"

With the start of spring football, Strong and his staff now turn their attention to working with the present team. He has declared that no one has a starting position, including Rebel standouts Chuck Price, Jody Reinohl, and Keenan

McCardell.

"My most immediate goal is to develop fundamentals, techniques, and improve the work habits of the players already here to play the game of football. Right now what I've done is take the pieces of a puzzle and broken it down, thrown all the parts around on the floor. Now my coaching staff and I are trying to put the puzzle back together again." Strong commented.

Strong has plans to implement a balanced offense to replace predictable run offense. He also wants to put in a movement defense. Hopefully they won't give up 69 points the next time they play Houston.

Whatever happens next fall, Jim Strong and his Rebels will be ready for it.

BRENT'S LAST CBS BROADCAST



Yell Photo / Robert Anderson

-AND YOU'RE OUT! CBS sportscaster Brent Munsberger, pictured here with Billy Packer, called his final sporting event for CBS - The Championship NCAA game between Duke and UNLV. Munsberger was fired from the network because of reported contract disputes.

REBEL NOTES by Andrea Reitan

The Runnin' Rebels left for Washington, D.C. yesterday to tour the White House and meet President Bush as the 1990 NCAA Champions. They will join Stanford (women's champions) in D.C.

The Rebels will then fly to Reno, Nevada to meet and dine with Governor Bob Miller.

They will return to Las Vegas late Wednesday night.

Women's tennis player Jolene Watanabe finally broke the all-time victory record in Rebel

tennis history. Watanabe, who is the first Lady Rebel to win 100 singles matches, became the all-time winning tennis player in the school's history with her 113th win the week before Spring Break.

Watanabe surpassed former all-American Scott Warner who posted 112 wins in his career.

Watanabe is currently ranked 63 in the nation by the ITCA.

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