

Rebel football has Strong leadership

By Mark Landwehr
Staff Reporter

The 1990 version of Rebel football begins on Saturday, Sept. 7 at 7 p.m. at the Silver Bowl against Southwest Missouri State. The game marks the beginning of a new season, and a new era for UNLV football. Saturday's game is the first for the Rebels under new head coach Jim Strong.

Coach Strong comes to UNLV fresh off a stint as offensive coordinator for Notre Dame University. For those of you unfamiliar with Notre Dame's achievements the last couple of years, suffice it to say that they finished undefeated and ranked number one in 1988, and finished 12-1 and ranked number two last year.

UNLV represents the opposite end of the spectrum, as the Rebels come off three consecutive losing seasons. Strong could make the difference in turning around a program that had lapsed into mediocrity.

This is 35 year old Strong's first job as a head football coach, but he has been an assistant for Notre Dame University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Tulsa and the University of Arkansas.

Everywhere Strong has coached, success has followed. In 1978, at the University of Arkansas, Strong was head junior varsity coach. The following year Arkansas went 10-2 and was ranked sixth before losing to Alabama in the Sugar Bowl.

The University of Tulsa won three consecutive Missouri Valley Championships while Strong was the receiver's coach there.

In 1984, Strong went on to the University of Minnesota as offensive backfield coach and recruiting coordinator. Minnesota went to two bowl appearances in three years during Strong's ten-

ure.

In 1987, Strong joined Notre Dame University as offensive backfield coach, and became offensive coordinator in 1989.

Strong was named as head football coach at UNLV on December 23, 1989, replacing Wayne Nunnely. Strong was hired not only for his football expertise, but for his emphasis on academics.

UNLV President Robert Maxson said, "We wanted to know if the coach we were going to hire placed an emphasis on academics. And Jim Strong received an A-plus in that category."

Head Coach of Notre Dame, Lou Holtz, said of Strong, "Jim is a man of tremendous dedication to his job. I am totally convinced that he will take UNLV football to new heights."

Coach Strong was attracted to the UNLV job, not only because of the opportunity to be a head coach, but because UNLV gave him an unlimited recruiting budget to work with. Strong took advantage of this in his recruiting this year, and is expected to do so even more in years to come in order to build a winning program.

Strong's goals this year are modest, "Our number one goal is to have a winning season."

This may be more than a modest goal considering UNLV hasn't had a winning season since 1986. Given Strong's credentials, however, perhaps his secondary goal is achievable, "Our secondary goal is to win the conference championship and go to a bowl game."

The Rebel players sing Strong's praises loudly. Words like, "winner", "genius" and "great leader" flow from their mouths with ease and frequency. Every player interviewed answered the same when asked the question, "What is the main difference be-



Yell Photo / Robert Anderson

It's not Notre Dame, but - New Rebel football coach Jim Strong is optimistic for a good season.

tween this year's team and last?" Their answer—the attitude.

When asked, "What's responsible for the change in attitude?" the resounding answer was, "Coach Strong."

Last year's MVP wide receiver Keenan McCardell said,

"Coach Strong could run for President."

For now Strong is the Commander-in-Chief of UNLV football, and he will lead his troops in to battle for the first time this Saturday against S.W. Missouri

St., (10-3, last year).

The game begins at 7 pm at the Silver Bowl. A 500 seat section has been reserved for students with validated I.D.s at no charge at the Thomas & Mack plus they can get an additional ticket at half price.

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