



UNLV alum Reggie Theus is the WAC's highest-paid coach.

Ex-UNLV Rebel top in WAC coach pay

LAS CRUCES, N.M. (AP) - Reggie Theus and New Mexico State have agreed to a new contract that will give the third-year coach the highest salary in the Western Athletic Conference. Theus has rejuvenated the Aggies program with consecutive winning seasons after being hired following a 6-24 record in 2004-05. The Aggies finished 25-9 last season, won the WAC tournament and played in the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1999. "We've talked about excellence across the board in our athletic department and Coach Theus had done a great job," athletics director McKinley Boston said recently. "Our goal is to have him be a member of the Aggie family for a long time."

It was announced last week that Theus was on the short list of candidates for the head coaching job with the NBA's Charlotte Bobcats. Boston said that interest wasn't talked about when the school decided to restructure the former NBA player's contract.

"We were talking about making an investment in a coach that we felt was the right fit for our program, university and our community," he said.

Theus said he was flattered about the interest in him, but he's happy to be at New Mexico State.

"I told you guys when I got here that we were going to do this thing, and not because I was a great coach, but because we are a community

that could put it together," he said at a news conference.

He added: "I wouldn't tell NBA teams to go away if they called. I would listen and talk to all of them because I think I owe them that respect."

The new contract provides a financial package worth \$466,000 per season and includes bonus opportunities.

It also provides a continuation of the five-year roll over term and a buyout clause of two times Theus' base salary if he leaves for another position in the next two years.

Theus was paid \$355,000 last season, including \$275,000 in base pay and \$80,000 in bonuses.

The bonuses were designed to reward Theus when the program reached set goals, such as winning 20 games, winning the WAC and reducing the number of academically at-risk student-athletes in the program.

Boston said the board of regents, the university president and the community believe the program is in good hands with Theus.

"The road map for success is there, the quality of the student-athletes is there and with the recruits we have coming in, it will position us to be competitive for a long time," he said.

The Aggies will return four of five starters and have signed six players for next season, including 6-foot-9 Herb Pope, a three-time all-state player from Pennsylvania who averaged 19 points and 11 rebounds as a senior.

Vick evasive on dog fighting

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. (AP) - Michael Vick looked as though he didn't have a care in the world when he emerged from the Atlanta Falcons locker room. He took a seat on the metal bleachers and broke into a slight grin when he looked up at the horde of reporters and camera crews, who had him pinned in from all sides.

"How y'all doing?" he asked.

Then things turned serious. Wearing a T-shirt that said "Pay The Price," the NFL's greatest running quar-

terback quickly made it clear he wouldn't be talking about his ties to an alleged dog-fighting ring. This was Vick in full scramble mode, attempting to elude the sordid case much as he might attempt to escape a 300-pound defensive end.

"I know y'all are here to talk about the ongoing investigation back home in Virginia," he said after the first practice of a mandatory three-day mini camp.

"As of right now, that situation is still under investigation. My attorney has advised

me not to talk about the situation right now. That's the best thing."

He took eight questions in just under 3 1/2 minutes, two of which appeared to be planted by the Falcons public relations department. Team broadcaster David Archer jumped in to ask Vick about the upcoming season and how excited he was to be calling audibles in new coach Bobby Petrino's system.

Of course, everyone else was there to poke and prod about the latest in a series on embarrassing revelations in-

volving the star quarterback. He did vow to change his ways, saying he is mindful of how he's viewed by fans. When asked for specifics, Vick replied, "You'll have to wait and see. Just don't plan on talking about me anymore unless it's about football."

The only other time he deviated from the "I can't talk about that" script came when someone queried him on his meeting with team owner Arthur Blank, who said he's worried that Vick's latest troubles could bring a

(See Vick, Page 19)

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