

DAWN OF A NEW DAY! New Head Football Coach Seeks to Bring Yates Back to Football Prominence

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor
Wednesday, 06 February 2013 00:00



Jeff Caesar was introduced to current members of the Yates football team as the school's new head football coach this past Monday.

Caesar, who is currently a football coach at Baytown Lee, is extremely excited about the opportunity and is ready to go to work.

"I want to thank Principal McNeal-Sheppard, the administrative staff and selection committee for giving me this opportunity for which I truly appreciate," said Caesar. "I had always wanted to become a head coach, so to coach at Yates, a school with such a rich tradition and proud history, I am even more excited about the opportunity to bring the football program back to prominence."

Caesar replaces Ronald Miller, who served as the Yates head coach for five years, and finished the 2012 football season with a 7-4 record after suffering a first-round playoff loss to the Stafford Spartans.

YATES FOOTBALL TIES

Caesar, who is originally from Louisiana, is certainly no stranger to Yates.

Caesar served as Assistant Coach and Defensive Backs coach, under former Yates head

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football coach and current Texas A&M running backs coach and recruiting coordinator, Clarence McKinney.

When McKinney accepted the new head coaching job at Yates in 2005, Caesar was asked to join his coaching staff to which he agreed. Caesar left North Shore and joined McKinney's coaching staff at Yates, and while there, they compiled a winning record of 30-8 in three seasons.

HISTORY OF YATES FOOTBALL

The rich history of Yates football extends all the way back to 1927, when William Sylvester "Babe" Holland was hired by Principal James D. Ryan to coach football as well as basketball and track. Holland led the program to instant success, as Yates won the 1930 Texas Negro High School state championship.

Since 1927, the Yates football program has won its share of four Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL) Negro League State titles. Originally called the Texas Interscholastic League of Colored Schools, the PVIL served as the governing body for extra-curricular activities for Texas' African American high schools. After becoming a part of the University Interscholastic League (UIL), the Yates football program had a run of 27 consecutive district titles from 1970 to 1996, while appearing in nine state championship games and winning five titles.

It has been a little over 28 years since the record-setting 1985 Yates Lions team became the first UIL 5A football champion from a historically Black high school in the state of Texas. The 85' Lions team, coached by legendary high school football coach Luther Booker, finished the season with a 16-0 record and is widely considered to be one of the greatest teams in the history of Texas high school football. That 85' Lions team broke several state football records and manhandled perennial powerhouse Odessa Permian, 37-0, in the UIL state championship game.

Yates was the first UIL class 5A team to win 16 games in a single season as well as the first UIL state champion since 1953 and the last from the Houston Independent School District (HISD) to win the title. Of their records, the Lions allowed only 4.8 points per game, recorded eight shutouts and scored a then record 659 points (41.1 per game). The 85' team was voted "Team

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of the Decade” by the Houston Chronicle and Dave Campbell’s Texas Football.

Fast forward to 2013 and new coach Jeff Caesar believes that he has what it takes to rekindle that tradition and bring the school back to statewide prominence.

WINNING ATTITUDE

In college, Caesar played for legendary coach Eddie Robinson at Grambling State University and learned a lot about discipline. Having coached at Yates before, Caesar knows that there will be heavy expectations on him to win and win big.

“Having played for a high school team in a community that expects you to win, I know what that’s like,” said Caesar. “Going into this upcoming football season, I will have been coaching for 16 years and I plan to assemble the right coaching staff and establish a solid foundation so that we can quickly move forward and see positive results right away.”

Caesar believes that his coaching experience at Yates and interaction with the young men that played for him proved to him that they all wanted to win. He believes that the current players that he will be inheriting have that same spirit, and will keep that spirit when they practice and when they take the field.

ACADEMICS IS KEY

Of the players on the 85’ Yates championship team, 30 of the 36 seniors on the team received college football scholarships. At least 19 played four years of college football, 21 earned degrees and at least five signed with NFL teams.

While Caesar is proud of the roughly 35 kids that he was instrumental with helping go to college during his three-year coaching stint at Yates, he hopes to increase that number significantly and develop a well-organized program centered on education.

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“I care about my players’ education,” said Caesar. “I let the parents know that every kid is important to the program, but they also have to know that everything their kid does in the classroom works with connection to the field. I want to make productive young men out of all of my players, whether they go on to college or continue on in football.”

One former player that Caesar points to, who implemented his disciplinary wisdom while coaching at Yates, was Damian Square. Square is the starting senior defensive end and co-captain for the national champion Alabama Crimson Tide. Playing under Caesar, Square was listed as the 24th ranked defensive end in the nation by ESPN.com. Caesar says that Square’s success began when he started applying the discipline and fundamentals he learned while playing at Yates.

“I coached Damian Square when he was a young sophomore and while I was the Defensive Line Coach at Yates,” said Caesar. “He had raw talent, but we wanted to teach him discipline and fundamentals so that he would be successful beyond his career at Yates. I am so proud to see that he has reached the pinnacle of college success and hope to see him in the NFL.”

Square, who has been on the Crimson Tide team since graduating from Yates, has been a part of Alabama’s three national championships in the past four years.

MOVING FORWARD

Caesar wants the alumni and community to support the team and the school. More importantly, Caesar is hoping that parents and potential players, ‘come back home’ and strongly consider Yates to be their school of choice when it comes to playing football and getting a quality education.

“We have some work to do and we have to evaluate the talent that we have so that we can put the best game plan together that works for us,” said Caesar. “Many players on the team have already been to the playoffs and are seasoned so we want to build on the experience of those returning players and on that playoff momentum.”

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The upcoming high school football season is sure to be an exciting one for the Jack Yates Lions. The Houston Forward Times will be following them and all the action when the UIL releases its varsity football schedule for the upcoming season.{jcomments on}