

McClelland has TSU Athletics Department Back on Track

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine
Wednesday, 27 March 2013 00:00



As the old saying goes, anything good doesn't come easy, and the task of turning around the Texas Southern University Athletics Department, wasn't for Dr. Charles McClelland.

Approaching his fifth year anniversary as the head man in charge, Dr. McClelland along with his coaches, support staff, and the blessing of TSU President Dr. John Rudley, has the Tigers athletics program back on track and in much better shape than what he inherited.

Dr. Charles McClelland was named Texas Southern University's Director of Athletics in April of 2008. In his position as athletics director, McClelland supervises 16 sports- nine women's and seven men's. His daily duties include managing budgets, scheduling, fundraising, marketing and keeping abreast of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules and regulations.

For McClelland, success in athletics is not just about winning championships, but it's about graduating student-athletes.

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“TSU athletic program is on a strong solid foundation,” McClelland said during a recent interview. “We’ve put a lot of time and energy in putting together a strategic plan across the board.”

Part of that plan includes the following: 1) Moving the graduation ration from 29% to 50%. The department as a whole is currently at 46%. When the APR numbers come out in May, 2013, Texas Southern University Athletics Department will be way above the 70%-percentile of where they were in 2008. 2) The second part of that plan included making sure that the athletes had the best facilities to practice, train, and compete in.

“Dr. Rudley stepped up and gave us the resources we needed to accomplish this,” McClelland stated. “With his help we were able to do a id="mce_marker" million track upgrade to the Durley Track & Athletic Complex, we were able to do a id="mce_marker" million renovation of our men’s and women’s basketball offices and lockerrooms, we renovated the football offices, and our football team now plays in BBVA Compass Stadium, which is an \$85 million facility.”

It took a lot of work but TSU has overcome quite a few NCAA infractions over the past five years. They went from being one of the nation’s worst programs academically and they are now considered one of the best!

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“The proof is in the pudding!” Here is a look at the numbers for TSU’s APR over the past four years:

1) 2008-2009 731

2) 2009-2010 734

3) 2010-2011 854

4) 2011-2012 961

Texas Southern University Athletics Department has showed across the board that they can compete with the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, and others. They can stick their chests out now and the community can be proud.

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“The support from the community has been overwhelming,” McClelland said. “Especially from various groups of alumni. We’ve taken a lot of hits, but we’ve rose to the occasion.”

“The resiliency of the university has been great! None of the improvements would have ever been done without the resources provided by Dr. John Rudley.”

Dr. Rudley wanted Texas Southern University Athletics Department to set a strong foundation that the university could benefit from in the future.

“Our president, Dr. Rudley deserves so much more credit,” Dr. McClelland stated. “For he was the architect. And without him this task would have been impossible.”

Houston Forward Times Sports Editor, Yolande Y. Lezine asked Dr. McClelland to give the readers a glimpse of where each athletic program stands at present and here’s what he had to say:

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Tigers Football: "I have 100% confidence that head football coach Darrell Asberry will bring us a SWAC Championship. Our process of winning in football is a 2 to 4 year process. Infractions and self-imposing penalties were a challenge."

"To our fans- Give us enough time to build this program. I've been in this business for 13 years and I know a winner, and Coach Asberry is a winner! I'm pleased that we are where we are at this time. The infractions didn't hurt us in recruiting. And I promised all of the football players that I will get them championship rings if they win the SWAC regular season title-outright! We don't have to go to Birmingham, Alabama to win a championship."

Men's and Women's Basketball: "The turnaround of our men's and women's basketball programs has truly been remarkable. Both teams put themselves in position to win the SWAC regular season title and they did. Our ladies program went from 5-26 to setting new records. They've won more games this season than the previous two years. Cynthia Cooper-Dyke is the key and the ladies bought into her plan. They truly made a believer out of me!"

"Seniors Omar Strong, the SWAC Player of the Year and Fred Sturdivant-1st team All-SWAC, could have left and went to other programs when we brought in Coach Mike Davis, but they stayed. This team will go down as one of the best championship teams by what they did by staying here when they had the opportunity to do something else."

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“The infractions piece only affected the seniors from being able to participate in the SWAC postseason tournament and any other postseason tournaments; however, it didn’t stop them from winning the SWAC regular season men’s title outright.”

Men and Women’s Track & Field: “The men’s team finished 3rd in the SWAC Indoor Meet in 2013 under head coach Clyde Duncan. And the women, under head coach Pauline Banks finished 5th in the Indoor Meet. Overall I’ve been very pleased that we have very strong programs.”

Volleyball: “Under Coach Adams, the Lady Tigers volleyball team had one of their best seasons in recent history, and she has quite a few of those same players returning next season. Former women’s volleyball coach Dwalah Fisher was the last one to win the SWAC West Division, which this year’s team split that with Prairie View.”

Baseball & Softball: “Coach Robinson’s team is looking pretty good right now. Our pitching is strong and it has to be to compete in the SWAC and the NCAA Tournament.”

“In softball Coach Baston have won some big games thus far this season. They captured wins over UTEP and SE Louisiana, just to name a few. I’m looking for bigger things from them as the season continues.”

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Bowling: “Coach Rose, our new coaches are a husband and wife team that took over for former Coach Powell who passed away after a long illness. They are getting ready to go to the championships here shortly.”

Men’s & Women’s Golf: “Both programs are doing well and we are proud to have the #9 ranked female golfer in the nation.”

In closing, I asked Dr. McClelland to envision where he sees the TSU athletics program in the next five years.

“I see the Texas Southern University athletics department as a legitimate player in mid-major sports,” Dr. McClelland said. “We want to graduate student-athletes and win championships.”

“In the future we hope to renovate the Durley Fieldhouse; Get our own baseball stadium; get our own softball field, and build another Football Fieldhouse.”

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The football program already has added Howard in 2014 and Bethune-Cookman in 2015 to their schedule.

Despite all of the success and the various opportunities that continue to come up for Dr. Charles McClelland to go elsewhere, he has no plans on leaving his post at Texas Southern for many years!

“I love it here at TSU and I want to be here,” Dr. McClelland said. “I’m very comfortable here and very much respected.”

“My family has embraced Texas Southern University also, and my oldest son Cainan has future plans to major in Pharmacy and play basketball at TSU.

TSU has opened its arms to me and it can’t get much better than that!”