The Lenoir-Rhyne University Football Team has hired Tripp Merritt as its new wide receivers coach. Merritt comes to L-R after eight seasons (2005-12) as

Davidson's Head Football Coach. As Wildcat mentor, Merritt fashioned 31 wins and was named the Pioneer Football League Coach Of The Year in 2006.

"This is a great next step for me," said Merritt. "There are so many good elements to the L-R program and I am especially impressed with the school's outstanding leadership."

Merritt, who also served as an assistant for Davidson for seven years (1993-99) including a stint as defensive coordinator, was the first Wildcat Coach to earn conference coach-of-the-year honors since 1969.

Merritt ranks fifth all-time in wins in Davidson history and shared the 2006 PFL Coach-Of-The-Year honors with current San Francisco 49ers Head Coach Jim Harbaugh (who headed up the University of San Diego at the time).

"We are very excited to have the opportunity to add a coach with the experience and abilities of Tripp Merritt to our staff here at Lenoir-Rhyne," said L-R Head Football Coach Mike Houston. "Tripp (Merritt) has an excellent football mind and is a proven motivator, teacher and recruiter," added Houston.

Merritt began his coaching career as a Graduate Assistant Coach at Western Carolina (1991-92) and also made stops as an assistant at St. Mary's (Calif.) (2000-02) and Bucknell (2003-04).

Merritt, a 1990 graduate of UNC Charlotte, and his wife, Sara, are the proud parents of one daughter: Ellie. The couple is also expecting a second child.

Last season, Lenoir-Rhyne finished with a 9-3 overall record including a 6-1 mark in league play en route to its second straight South Atlantic Conference Championship.

In addition, the Bears earned a trip to the postseason for the first time since 1962 and won its first playoff game in 50 years after downing Fort Valley State, 21-6, in the First Round of the NCAA Division II Playoffs.

**Photo Courtesy: Tripp Merritt, L-R Athletics**