

Nelson Named ASU Men's Soccer Coach

Written by Mike Flynn

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Matt Nelson, who was named the Southern Conference Men's Soccer Coach of the Year while serving as the acting head coach at Appalachian State University this past season, has been selected

to take over the position permanently, ASU director of athletics Charlie Cobb announced on Monday. Nelson's official appointment is pending approval of the ASU Board of Trustees and UNC Board of Governors.

Nelson, who came to Appalachian as an assistant coach in 2008, became the program's acting head coach just three matches into the 2011 season following the death of Shaun Pendleton. In the immediate aftermath of Pendleton's tragic death, Nelson rallied the Mountaineers and coached them to an 11-match unbeaten streak (7-0-4), the program's longest since 1978.

"I'm excited that Coach Nelson will lead our men's soccer program going forward. His performance since his arrival in 2008, particularly the leadership that he displayed during the last three months, made him the obvious choice," Cobb said.

Appalachian finished the season with a 10-5-4 record, tied for its most victories in nine years, and advanced to the SoCon Tournament semifinals. Among their many accomplishments, the Mountaineers set a school record with 11 shutouts and had three all-conference honorees, two SoCon all-freshman performers and an academic all-district selection.

Prior to his arrival at ASU in 2008, Nelson had assistant-coaching stints at Virginia Wesleyan (2003-05) and William & Mary (2005-06).

He was a standout goalkeeper at NCAA Division II powerhouse Lynn University from 1996-99, where he tallied 49 wins and 31 shutouts while allowing just 30 goals and making 134 saves over 59 career games. An all-conference and all-region performer, Nelson ranks second in Lynn history in games, starts (57), wins, shutouts, goals against, goals-against average (.54), saves and save percentage (.817). After earning scholar all-America recognition from the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) in 1999, he graduated from Lynn in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in international business.

Nelson played professionally for Kilkenny City A.F.C. of the Irish Premier League as well as for the Cape Cod Crusaders, South Jersey Barons, Virginia Beach Mariners, Harrisburg City Islanders and Vancouver Whitecaps of the United Soccer Leagues (USL). He earned all-USL Second Division accolades in 2000 and 2007 and was a USL First Division all-star in 2006.

"I would like to thank Charlie Cobb and everyone involved in the decision-making process," Nelson said. "I am truly honored by having the opportunity to be the head men's soccer coach at Appalachian State University.

"The level of support shown to myself and the program over the past few months has been outstanding," he continued. "I am excited to help continue the growth of a program that will make the community proud, both on and off the field. "

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Photo Courtesy: Matt Nelson, ASU Athletics