

Pollard Named Head Coach at Duke

Written by Mike Flynn

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Appalachian State University baseball head coach Chris Pollard, the 2012 Southern Conference Coach of the Year and second-winningest coach in Appalachian history, resigned his post on Thursday to become the head coach at Duke University. In eight seasons at the helm at Appalachian State, Pollard engineered the turnaround of a program

saddled with back-to-back 10-win seasons in 2004-05 to a team that came within three wins of the College World Series in 2012. He finishes with a 244-210-2 record in eight years at Appalachian, good for the second-highest victory total in the program's 109-year history (behind only the 611 wins compiled by current Mountaineer baseball radio analyst Jim Morris from 1974-98). Appalachian's current string of six-straight 30-win seasons matches the program record originally set from 1981-86.

In 2012, Pollard led the Mountaineers to the finest season in program history, setting a school record for victories with a 41-18 overall record and winning the Southern Conference championship with a 21-9 league mark. Appalachian earned a berth in the 2012 NCAA Division I Baseball Championship and advanced to the championship round of the Charlottesville Regional with wins over national powers Virginia and Oklahoma. The Apps ultimately fell one victory shy of winning an NCAA regional for the first time and just three wins short of becoming only the third Southern Conference club to ever appear in the College World Series.

Highlighting the spectacular 2012 season, Pollard's Mountaineers won their first conference championship since 1987, advanced to NCAA postseason play for the first time since 1986 and won their first NCAA Tournament games since 1973. They also claimed four wins over nationally ranked teams — including winning 2-of-3 games at No. 7 LSU during the regular season — and spent six weeks in the national rankings themselves. Prior to record-breaking campaign, Appalachian boasted just one win over a nationally ranked team since 1982 (a 7-5 win at No. 20 Miami (Fla.) in 2011) and one appearance in a major college baseball poll (in the final Collegiate Baseball rankings of the 1984 regular season).

Despite the nearly unprecedented success on the field, Pollard's tenure at Appalachian State was punctuated by the top-notch talent that he brought to the High Country. Headlining the impressive collection of players that Pollard recruited and coached in his time in the High Country were 13 players selected in the past five Major League Baseball Drafts.

"Duke is getting a terrific baseball coach and an even better person," Appalachian State director of athletics Charlie Cobb said. "While we're disappointed to lose a top-notch coach and role model for our student-athletes, I am very happy for Chris and wish him, (his wife) Stephanie and (sons) Thomas and Brady nothing but the best."

Cobb said that a national search for Pollard's replacement will begin immediately.

"During his eight seasons here, Coach Pollard proved that Appalachian baseball can compete for trips to Omaha and has left the program in terrific shape for the next coach," Cobb said. "Our program is stocked with great baseball players and student-athletes that we are proud of in the classroom and the community. I am excited for the future of Mountaineer baseball in 2013 and beyond."

Appalachian assistant coach Josh Jordan will be a part of Pollard's staff at Duke.

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Photo Courtesy: Chris Pollard, ASU Athletics