

Houston Named Citadel Football Coach

Written by Staff Reports
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Mike Houston, who led Lenoir-Rhyne to the Division II national championship game last season, was named the 24th head football coach of The Citadel by

Director of Athletics Larry W. Leckonby on Thursday.

“I can assure the alumni, administration and fans of this great school that the program will maintain the honor, integrity and discipline that has always been a hallmark of this prestigious institution,” said Houston. “On the field, I look to carry on the triple-option scheme that has been employed by coach (Kevin) Higgins over the last four seasons.”

Houston spent the last three seasons as the head coach at Lenoir-Rhyne, leading the Bears to three consecutive South Atlantic Conference championships, including a school-record 13 wins last season to earn him his third straight SAC Coach of the Year honor. Houston also was named the Don Hansen Super Region II Coach of the Year in 2013.

Lenoir-Rhyne won its first three playoff games in 2013 before falling to Northwest Missouri State in the national championship game and was voted as the No. 2 team in the nation in the final polls.

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“I come to this job with a great deal of energy and to compete for championships at what I consider to be one of the premier institutions in the country,” added Houston.

While at the helm, Houston accumulated a 29-8 mark with Bears and in 2012 led the team to its first outright league title since 1975 and first playoff berth in 50 years. During that season, Lenoir-Rhyne also won its first playoff game since 1962, a 21-6 win over Fort Valley State, and advanced to the second round of the Division II playoffs.

Operating out of the triple-option offense, Houston's Bears were tops in rushing in Division II in 2013, averaging 370.9 yards per game, and set the NCAA record for all divisions in rushing yards in a single season with 5,563.

Defensively, Lenoir-Rhyne led the SAC in total defense (317.5 ypg), rushing defense (101.5 ypg), quarterback sacks (52) and scoring defense (17.9 ppg) and boasted the league's defensive player of the year in defensive back Michael Green. Green was joined as a Division II All-American by offensive tackle Joe Ray, who was the recipient of Jacobs Blocking Trophy in the SAC, and defensive tackle Blake Baker.

The Bears have boasted the Jacobs Blocking Trophy Award winner in each of the past four seasons and have had the conference's defensive player of the year in three of the past four years.

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In his first season at the helm in 2011, Houston led Lenoir-Rhyne to a 7-3 record (6-1 in the SAC) and guided the Bears to their first league championship since 1994.

Before being elevated to head coach, Houston was the Bears' defensive coordinator and secondary coach for four seasons (2007-10). In his final season as defensive coordinator in 2010, Lenoir-Rhyne led the SAC in total defense (276.6 ypg) and finished fourth in Division II in rushing defense (75.7 ypg).

"We are excited to have Mike, Amanda, Owen and Reid Houston join The Citadel family," said Leckonby. "Mike is a man of character and integrity and will help us develop leaders who will compete and win on the field."

Houston came to Lenoir-Rhyne after spending the 2006 season as the associate head coach and defensive coordinator at Brevard College.

Prior to his one season at Brevard, Houston served as the head coach at T.C. Roberson High

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School in Asheville, N.C., from 2001-05. Under Houston, T.C. Roberson went 42-18 (5-4 in the playoffs), and he was a two-time Asheville Citizen-Times Area Coach of the Year (2002 and '04).

Houston was also named as an assistant coach for the 2005 North Carolina Shrine Bowl staff and helped lead North Carolina to a 28-24 win over South Carolina.

Houston's 2004 T.C. Roberson squad was his best ever, as the team went through the regular season undefeated and finished 13-1 after losing in the state semifinals. That team averaged 38 points per game while allowing just nine points per outing as it won the first conference championship in school history.

Houston left T.C. Roberson with the highest winning percentage of any coach in school history and helped establish the Rams as one of the top football programs in the state of North Carolina.

Houston spent five years as T.C. Roberson's defensive coordinator (1996-2000) before taking over the head job. He started his coaching career at Forbush High School in East Bend, N.C., where he served two seasons as the Falcons' defensive coordinator (1994-95).

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Houston is a 1994 graduate of Mars Hill with a bachelor's degree in biology. He played tight end on the Lions' football squad.

Houston is married to the former Amanda Owen and the couple has two sons, Owen Michael and Reid Wilson.

Photo Courtesy: Mike Houston, SoCon Sports