

Leach agrees to coach Washington State

Written by Administrator
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SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Mike Leach is bringing his high-powered passing offense — and swashbuckling style — to long-dormant Washington State.

The school said Wednesday that the pirate-loving former Texas Tech coach agreed in principle to a five-year contract. He will be introduced Tuesday at a news conference in Pullman.

Leach will be paid a base annual salary of \$2 million, with supplemental income of \$250,000 a year, plus performance incentives, Athletic Director Bill Moos said.

The 50-year-old Leach was 84-43 at Texas Tech, leading the Red Raiders to 10 bowl appearances in 10 seasons. He was fired in 2009 amid allegations he mistreated a player with a concussion.

He replaces Paul Wulff, who was fired Tuesday after four losing seasons.

"I have always admired the tradition of Washington State," Leach said in a statement. "It's a university on the move that is experiencing growth. I'm excited about what they are doing with the facilities and it's a team that has battled through some hard times and shows great promise in the future.

"I'm proud to be a part of this team."

Moos said he has been talking with Leach since mid-November, and offered him the job Monday.

"A lot of schools wanted him. He wanted us," Moos said. This is the first time that Washington State has been able to hire a man with head coaching experience at a BCS-level school, he said.

Washington State could not have afforded Leach without revenue from the new Pac-12 television contract that will eventually pay each school up to \$20 million per year, Moos said.

Leach was at the top of Moos' list of candidates, in part because Moos wants a high-powered offense at WSU. While at Texas Tech, Leach's Air Raid offense routinely led the nation in

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passing and set numerous records.

Leach was offensive coordinator at Kentucky and Oklahoma before becoming the Red Raiders head coach in Lubbock in 2000.

In 2009, Texas Tech fired Leach two days after suspending him after it was alleged he mistreated receiver Adam James, who had a concussion. Leach denied the allegations and later sued for wrongful termination.

Leach has said he suspects an \$800,000 bonus he was due the next day was the reason he was fired.

In a separate case, Leach has also sued ESPN Inc. and a Dallas public relations firm, accusing them of libel and slander after he was fired. James is the son of ESPN analyst Craig James.

Leach has been out of coaching the past two seasons. During that time he has put out two books, worked in television and hosted a satellite radio show.

Wulff was fired after going 9-40 in four years during which he was charged with rebuilding a downtrodden football program. The Cougars finished 4-8 this season, the best record of his tenure.

Moos said Tuesday he was looking for a coach who would lead a high-powered offense that would win games, fill the stands at Martin Stadium and prompt donors to open their checkbooks. Leach would seem to fill all those criteria.

Construction has already started on an \$80 million project to add premium seating, luxury boxes and a new press box. Also on the drawing board is a \$60 million football operations building.

"I asked Athletic Director Bill Moos to select the best head football coach in the country and I am convinced that he has done exactly that," WSU President Elson S. Floyd said in a statement.

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Leach was born in Susanville, Calif., and raised in Cody, Wyo.

At Texas Tech, his offense led the nation in passing six times and three times accumulated the most total yards. In 2009, the Red Raiders were second in passing offense and fourth in total offense, with both marks tops among BCS conference schools.

Defensively, Texas Tech held opponents without an offensive touchdown a dozen times under Leach, including seven shutouts.

Leach spent one season as the offensive coordinator at Oklahoma (1999), as the Sooners set six Big 12 Conference records. He spent two seasons in a similar capacity at Kentucky (1997-98), the only two seasons in school history in which it passed for more than 4,000 yards.