

4-1-2017

Back Home

Vince Moore
Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine>

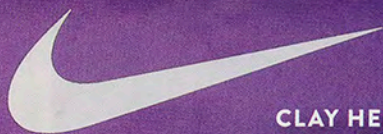
Recommended Citation

Moore, Vince (2017) "Back Home," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 60 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.
Available at: <http://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol60/iss1/18>

This Article is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the [FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines](#). For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.



NOTES
FROM THE
FIELD



CLAY HENDRIX '86
was introduced as Furman's
Football Coach December 19.



JEREMY FLEMING

Back Home

Clay Hendrix named head football coach.

BY VINCE MOORE

Clay Hendrix '86 got a solid ovation from the large crowd at the Pearce-Horton Football Complex when he was introduced in December as Furman's new head football coach. He got another good round of applause when he joked he would do his best to beat the "rear end" of lifelong friend and former Furman teammate Bobby Lamb, who now coaches at Southern Conference foe Mercer.

But the biggest applause came when he promised that his team would run the football next season.

It's easy to understand why the Furman supporters cheered Hendrix's proclamation. Because if there is anything that has epitomized the struggles of the Paladins' football program since 2010—five losing seasons and only one playoff appearance—it has been their inability to run the ball effectively, which is something the Paladins did exceptionally well when they were winning a lot more often than not.

"We'll be committed to running the football," Hendrix told the crowd. "I know that's important to a lot of people around here, and it's important to me, too."

Running the football has occupied Hendrix's entire career. He played on the offensive line for some of Furman's greatest teams in the 1980s, and he coached the Paladins' offensive line for another 19 years before moving on to the Air Force Academy, where he coached the offensive line and served as both offensive coordinator and associate head coach for a program that runs the ball as successfully as anyone in the Football Bowl Subdivision.

"I've been in coaching for 31 years, and I've never been part of a team that wasn't fully committed to running the football," said Hendrix, who spent 10 seasons at Air Force. "I know that's not everybody's philosophy these days, but I'm of the old school of thought that you've got to be able to run the ball and you have to be able to stop the run. It makes you tougher and better on both sides of the ball when your defense is facing a good running team in practice every day."

If there is a blueprint for achieving the level of excellence Furman enjoyed for the better part of three decades under coaches

**“WE’LL BE
COMMITTED
TO RUNNING
THE FOOTBALL.”
—HENDRIX**



When Hendrix played at Furman, the Paladins defeated South Carolina, Georgia Tech and North Carolina State.

like Dick Sheridan, Jimmy Satterfield and Bobby Johnson, Hendrix has gotten a good look at it.

During his time as a player, Furman beat South Carolina, Georgia Tech and North Carolina State (twice). As an assistant coach from 1988 through 2006, he helped the Paladins post a 155-77-1 record and claim six league championships. The Paladins also made 11 appearances in the NCAA FCS playoffs during that period, which included a national championship in 1988 and a national runner-up finish in 2001.

“We’ve done it before and I know we can do it again,” Hendrix said. “If I didn’t believe we can recruit the kind of players that can graduate and win

football games, I wouldn’t be standing here now.”

Hendrix’s first two assistant coach hires prove he is committed to upgrading things on the offensive side of the ball. He named former Furman assistant coach Drew Cronic as offensive coordinator and chose former Furman receiver and legendary Tennessee high school coach **George Quarles ’89** to serve as associate head coach.

Cronic spent the past two years as head coach at Reinhardt (Ga.) University, where he posted a combined record of 22-3. Last fall, his team went 13-1 and reached the semifinal round of the NAIA tournament while averaging 51.1 points and 550.6 yards per game.

In 18 years as head coach at Maryville High School, Quarles’ teams appeared in 15 state title games and won 11 of them. The Rebels won 74 consecutive games from 2004 to 2008, and Quarles posted a 240-9 record over his final 16 seasons. At the end of 2016, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* listed his leaving Maryville for Furman among the top 10 Tennessee sports stories of the year.

“I feel like I’m batting a thousand on those two hires,” Hendrix said. “The three of us think alike when it comes to running the ball and what it takes to be successful offensively, but we’ve all been a little bit different in our approach. I’m looking forward

to all of us getting together in a room and deciding exactly what it is we’re going to do.”

Hendrix is optimistic and ready to get started, especially since he believes the football program has more going for it than it did 10 years ago when he left for the Air Force Academy. Those advantages include the addition of the new football complex and the fact that Greenville’s remarkable growth and good press over the past decade can only be a boon for recruiting.

“We have the best school, the best campus, and the best city of any schools we compete against,” Hendrix said. “That’s a pretty good combination for success.” ●