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UTSA Football Progress Report - Month 3

[By Dan McCarney](#)- Express-News

With two more months until UTSA can reopen contacts with recruits on Sept. 1, Roadrunners coach Larry Coker turned his attention to more practical matters — purchasing a technology system, feeling out potential assistants, looking into scheduling options and his first summer camp.

He discussed that and more with Express-News UTSA beat writer Dan McCarney in the latest of his monthly progress reports leading up to kickoff in the fall of 2011.

Q & A

Now that summer's here, are things starting to slow down a bit?

A little bit. I had a chance to be at a couple of clinics, one in the (Rio Grande) Valley, one in Laredo. I just had my first camp, probably 130 kids, ninth grade and below. It was a really good camp. I enjoyed it. I think it was very well done. I just got a letter from one of the dads thanking us for the experience his son had. That's what you like to hear. Those are the types of footprints we're trying to leave around San Antonio. Someday we might have a few of those kids in our program. There were at least two that looked like young phenoms. One lineman was about 2 inches taller than me, a big, physical kid who could really move. We had about an 8-year-old running back/athlete/linebacker. He was like a mini Jerome Bettis, could really run and catch. He was impressive.

So is it too early, or do you make mental notes on a kid like that?

You don't really pull them aside, but you do try to encourage them. That's a long way away, with growth and academics and all that. So you don't really give a recruiting spiel to an 8-year-old. But we do have his name filed away. We know who was at our camp. It's interesting — I've never told anyone this story — but when I recruited Jeremy Shockey out of junior college (at Miami), he was from one of the high schools I was responsible for, and I didn't recruit him. He was only about a 6-foot-5, 195 (-pound) receiver. So I passed on him, and he grew up in junior college. So these kids are going to grow and change.

When was the last time you'd had a whistle around your neck?

Probably at the (2006 MPC Computers Bowl) in my last year at Miami. I haven't been to a camp since. I didn't really think about it. It was instant recall. I've been to a few practices and camps over the years. But yeah, I did catch myself enjoying it. It was a fun time. President (Ricardo) Romo came out and addressed the camp. I've been to camps at five major universities, and I've never had the president come out to address the kids.

What does a gesture like that mean to you?

He's been so supportive. Just the fact he came out, it meant a lot to our staff. That was really, really good. It's a strong indication of the support we have. (Athletic director) Lynn Hickey was there for part of the camp. It was kind of a groundbreaking moment — the first football camp at UTSA.

Does a milestone like that help you keep the timeline in perspective?

It really does, because if you're not careful, things can catch up on you. We don't kick off until 2011, but you can't let that settle in your mind that it's a long way off. It is, but it really isn't. This stuff lets you know that the train is moving, and it's speeding up, so we have to make sure we're keeping up.

What else have been you spending your time on?

We're visiting different technology companies, looking at recruiting technology, video technology, just the nuts and bolts of football that you take for granted when all that's in place. We can't do that. It's been a labor of love right now, a lot of fun. It's been a while (since I've met with equipment salesmen). As a former high school coach, I've done all that before. I was even the equipment man at Tulsa; everybody had their own little job, and that was mine. (Technology) changes by the minute. It's like what Bill Parcells used to say: If you're using a legal pad and your opponent has computer, you're probably going to get beat. So we're trying to figure out what's really good, what we need, and what we can afford. That's been the big focus the past couple days. Like this Twitter stuff, it's stuff you have to learn about. How much we'll be involved with that, I don't know. But we need to know about it. You never know how that might be able to help you.

How much more advanced are things now compared to when you started?

When you first started, if you wanted to make a highlight film of the season, we went through every 16 millimeter film, cut it, tape the pieces on the wall, then you'd put them through a splicing machine, hope those hold, and that's how you made those films. It would take days. Now you can do it almost instantly. The thing too, DVDs are so easy to store and categorize. You can send the kids home with a DVD with all the third-and-3 runs your opponent have run, and they can watch it at home on their laptops. They don't have to do all that with us. I don't know that I enjoy (the advances), but it's a necessary evil because you need to learn about it.

Now that you've had a taste, what are your thoughts about Twitter?

I see something like that, it surprises me a little bit that anybody would care what I do. But I do know coaches, they'll send stuff about where they are recruiting. So I can see some use for it. Not really the silly stuff, but there are some positive uses for it, so I need to learn how.

Even though you won't be hiring until next year, have you made any progress towards filling out the rest of your staff?

Yeah, I've had definite contacts with people. I've got a leg up with some guys I'd like to bring in for next year. I feel pretty good with the people I've talked to, but nothing regarding contracts, or where anybody's signed anything. Some guys still have jobs they're working right now, so you don't want to do anything to jeopardize that. Some guys might not be working now, or in a different field, so that's different. But coaches that are coaching at universities, I won't interfere with that.

What about anything else tangible? Have you lined up any opponents?


We kind of borrowed an idea from Florida Atlantic, South Florida, just to see who they played (in their first few years). People would like to see us play (Texas) Tech and Baylor. Eventually we'd love to do that, but we can't do that right away. That wouldn't benefit them and it wouldn't benefit us. So we're trying to see how we can be competitive. Georgia State, the new program in Atlanta, they're a year ahead of us, but we'll probably play them the first few years, a game in the Georgia Dome and they'll be here in the Alamodome. Nothing we can confirm yet, but we have some contracts out. We've contacted some of the schools in the Southland (Conference) — I'm not going to be specific. Monterrey Tech called and was interested in playing us. No contracts out, but we have been in contact with them. I don't know much about the structure in Mexico, but I do know they've got a good team. They'd probably come up here; we wouldn't play them in Monterrey.

With four early commitments, how do you keep that momentum going through the summer dead period?

In reality, what we have to do is deal in numbers. For example, Texas might offer 27 scholarships and get 24 commitments. For us, we have to have a lot of opportunities out there to get our 25 signees in February (2010). The thing we're trying to do is recruit Division I talent. With that, they're going to have chances to go elsewhere. There will be a lot of competition for these kids. And things can change at the very end. So we have a lot of work to do to keep the kids we already have and get the ones we want. We had a great four weeks out, but now what? You have to make sure to maintain that degree of intensity. That's where the technology comes in. We can't go out (until September), but our letters can go out. We have some offers out right now — not really sure exactly how many — but again, that's preliminary. Other than the response we've gotten has been pretty good. Some of the guys we're recruiting, and the commitments we have, they can play anywhere.

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