FSU closes camp and begins preparation for Samford
Yet another goodbye, a rivals’ new nickname and more

**Jim Henry**

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Where to begin? First, another goodbye. Time just keeps marching on. Another Florida State Seminole - former offensive lineman Tria Thomas - has retired from the National Football League.

Thomas, a three-time Pro Bowler, retired Saturday after 12 years in the NFL. Thomas, 35, was signed by the San Diego Chargers in early June but was hurt early in training camp and had minor surgery on his right knee.

Thomas was a first-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Eagles in 1998. He went to the Pro Bowl after the 2001, ’02 and ’04 seasons. He played in five NFC championship games and one Super Bowl with the Eagles.

Thomas, at 6-foot-7, was the tallest player ever to play at FSU at the time. He was also a soft-spoken giant, but one who was polite and professional with the media.

Honestly, it doesn’t seem that long ago when Thomas played here in Tallahassee.

Of course, former FSU linebacker and Bucs All-Pro Derrick Brooks retired two weeks ago, while Walter Jones, widely considered one of the best offensive linemen in NFL history and possibly the best player produced by FSU - despite playing just one season - retired after 13 seasons in April.

Jones was Superman. On 5,703 pass plays in the NFL, Jones, a nine-time All-Pro selection allowed just 23 sacks. And he was called for holding nine times in his 180 games.

Long-time NFL coach Mike Holmgren said Jones was the best offensive player he ever coached and Holmgren coached Joe Montana, Steve Young and Brett Favre, just to name a few.

And, speaking of Brooks, he had some interesting things to say regarding the decision to name Fisher the Seminoles’ coach-in-waiting.

In fact, Brooks told columnist Mike Bianchi of the Orlando Sentinel that he did not want anybody to be named coach-in-waiting, saying he knew it would be the downfall of coach Bobby Bowden.

“That decision (to oust Bowden) was made in 2007,” Brooks told Bianchi.

“That’s when they started the time bomb ticking. It wasn’t going to be pretty for Coach Bowden. If he was winning, you’re not going to ask him to leave. If he was losing, another guy is going to want his turn. I stated very adamantly - literally standing on top of a table — that I disagreed with what they were doing.”

Brooks, a future Hall of Famer and an FSU Board of Trustee, admits it’s going to be strange not seeing Bowden and veteran defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews, who also retired following last season, on FSU’s sidelines this year.

“But you have to get used to it and move on,” Brooks said. “Right now everything is moving in positive direction.”

Second, a new nickname. It now appears two head coaches can play the same game.

FSU fans are well aware that Florida coach Urban Meyer never refers to FSU by name. He always calls it that “school out west.”

Well, Jimbo has eyes and ears, too.

While Fisher was breaking down the schedule for fans attending the team’s luncheon last Friday, he called UF “that little team down the road.”

Good for Jimbo.

Of course, the next step is to beat “that little team down the road” or that “school of west” will continue to catch grief from its rival.

Third, sounding great.

I had the opportunity to chat on the telephone with Bobby Bowden last week for nearly 30 minutes. I can’t begin to tell you how reinvigorated Bowden sounded. He was in great spirits and has thoroughly enjoyed his new life as a motivational speaker.

Bowden’s new book, “Called to Coach,” will also be released this week. “To be honest with you, it (retirement) feels good,” Bowden explained.

“I didn’t realize the pressure that comes off your shoulders once you step out. You don’t have to worry about classes, injuries, grades, recruiting - it’s such a release that you didn’t realize that, hey this is what life is really like. At my age, I am going to enjoy sitting back and watching it (football).”

Bowden, who splits time between his residences in Tallahassee and Panama City Beach, plans to watch FSU’s opener against Samford with his family. He will also be in Tallahassee the night before the game for a book signing.

For more on Bowden, including comments from son Terry, check out my story on page eight.

Fourth, start your engines.

It’s time for the ACC to make a statement.

Has the ACC had any more momentum than it has this year heading into a season? Five teams are ranked in the top 20 of the recently released Associated Press poll, headlined by No. 10 Virginia Tech.

Think about it.

FSU and Miami should be better, maybe even like the old days. North Carolina has an opportunity to make some noise if it can overcome NCAA distractions. Georgia Tech should be fine (the triple option is nasty to defend) and let’s not forget about Clemson with the return of quarterback Kyle Parker.

Still, the ACC must start winning key non-conference games this season to earn its respect. And there’s a ton of them that will help define the season.

Among them: Virginia Tech vs. Boise State (at Washington, D.C.), Miami vs. Ohio State, FSU at Oklahoma, Clemson at Auburn, Miami at Pittsburgh, Georgia Tech at Kansas, North Carolina vs. LSU (at Atlanta).

Fifth, can you believe it?

Here we are, in late August, and we’re still talking conference expansion.

In case you missed it, the commissioners of the Mountain West Conference and Conference USA say the leagues are not planning to merge.

If that’s not enough, BYU, a member of the MWC, is contemplating going independent in football. It has until Sept. 1 to inform the conference that it is leaving if it hopes to strike out on its own for the 2011 season.

Heading into the 2010 college football season, three independents remain: Army, Navy and Notre Dame, which has been an independent throughout its long football history.

If I am BYU, I am staying P-U-T.

Inside this week’s Osceola

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Florida State head coach Jimbo Fisher met with the media following the football team's second and final scrimmage of the pre-season. Here is a transcript of that conversation.

Q: You said it was “moving day.” (the day that positions were solidified), who moved today?
A: We’ll wait. We have to wait for the film, see the film, and judge it on what we see. Then we’ll make our decisions.

Q: Have you made progress from last week?
A: Yeah, I think there was some progress on both sides. There were better plays. Some guys made plays.

Like I said the other day, one team would make a good play, and the other side would still make a good play. It was covered right, or it was broken up the right way, or a guy ran a good route.

It was good defense, it was good offense. A lot more consistency that way than a lot of busted assignments, which pleased me.

Q: Were you still sloppy on offense?
A: No. It’s about right. You start getting better. We’re still a long ways off. We’re still a long ways off. We’ve got to get guys in the right position now, and if we have to make some moves, we’ll make some moves.

Q: How did the defense look in the scrimmage?
A: Good. Solid. Made some plays, gave up some plays. Just a solid job.

Q: What did you like best about what you saw?
A: Just I think that both sides won parts of the scrimmage. One side will get it, then the other side will battle back. We’ve got some consistency in competition. More like a game up and down, and some things of that nature.

Q: What didn’t you like?
A: I still think we’re a little sloppy at times. We’ve just got to clean up some things. Some guys that we’re counting on pretty good have got to realize how important it is, the urgency taking over.

It’s not big things. But just how every little thing - if you’re a guy and you’re playing every down, you can’t take a couple plays off because it will cost you a drive... it can cost you a ballgame.

Q: How did you feel they handled the game-time scenario situation?
A: Oh good. We didn’t have any problems. No cramps or things like that. There were a lot of reps out there today. A lot of situations. A lot of specialty teams. They were running a lot.

Q: You’ve got to be pleased with their conditioning.
A: We’re in condition and handling it. Doing it well. That’s why I like practicing.

Q: Did any of your running backs stand out to you?
A: I don’t think any of them stood out, but I think they did a pretty good job. I mean, most of them, for the most part, did what they were supposed to do. Pass blocking is getting much better.

I’ve been pleased with that. Knowing who to chip and when to help when a lineman’s got a mismatch and those kinds of things. They did a pretty good job.

Again, it’s hard to [evaluate quickly]. I’ll watch the film and see exactly. Because I wasn’t in the middle of the field. I called it on the sideline. We called it like a game-like situation. We had the headquarters, and those things, because it’s a new staff. And so when you’re out there behind the play where I used to watch it, I could tell you right now because you’ve got that end zone view. It sticks out more. But on the sideline, I’ll wait until I look at the film before I stick my foot in my mouth.

Q: You mentioned a little bit of sloppiness, but how was the overall game management?
A: Not many delay of games. Got substitutions in. Got different personnel and all of us going in. They got the nickel and dime packages going in. We split personnel for the most part when the situations are right.

We didn’t have a lot of game management issues, which is pretty good.

Q: How was it working with the coaches in the booth for the first time?
A: Good. It was smooth. They seemed to do a good job getting their people in and out, and they got their information.

Q: That’s a big deal, right?
A: Oh, it’s a real big deal. That’s why we do it. And if we have to do it again, we’ll do it again. We have still two weeks to do those kinds of things, so I thought it was important to do that.

Q: How do you organize it?
A: Offensive coordinator James Coley and [quarterbacks coach Danneyune] Craig were up (in the booth) for us, and on the other side it was defensive ends coach D.J. [Ellis] and a graduate assistant.

So [linebackers coach Greg] Hudson, and [defensive coordinator Mark] Stoops, and [defensive tackles coach] Odell [Haggins] were on the field.

Q: How has JUCO transfer CB Mike Harris looked these past few weeks?
A: Good. Mike is a good player. Mike’s a real good player. I like what Mike does. He breaks on the ball.

He’s almost like a quiet assassin. I mean, you never hear him out there, but he’s just always in the right place. Ball makes a lot of sense to him. He does a good job.

Q: Christian Ponder mentioned that sophomore receiver Willie Haulstead has had a couple good practices. Is that something you’ve noticed?
A: He did. He had a couple plays today. Made a few things happen today. I’m going to look at the film on some things and judge, but he makes plays.

Q: With your receiver situation being what it is, you’ve been looking for guys to step up. Does Haulstead look like someone capable of that?
A: He’s trying. He’s getting there. He’s not where he needs to be, but he’s getting there. He’s coming. He’s got a lot of ability.

Q: What needs to happen for someone to emerge at running back?
A: I don’t know why you’ve got to have a dominant one. If you’ve got a dominant one, you’ve got it. If you’ve got two or three of them, that’s good. You’re going to need them all anyway.

So [they need to] just keep doing what they’re doing. I think they’re playing good ball.

Q: How did Ponder look?

Q: Better than last week?
A: A little better. Still some things I wish we’d clean up. As we get better at wideout, get a little more consistent. I think his game will go up a little bit. He played a real good day. He had a pretty good day last week. Another solid day today. I wouldn’t say anything spectacular, but he was solid.

Q: How is Nigel Bradham coming along for the defense?
A: Good. He made a lot of plays. I’ve got to see them again, when I see the film, who is making plays. I was calling the game. When you’re calling the game, boy, it’s different.

But he’s getting a lot better in a lot of situations. Playing the pass better. Showing up a lot more.

Q: Any fumbles? Any fumble problems?
A: No, not really. I think we might have had one. I can’t remember off the top of my head, but nothing like last week.

Q: Andrew Datko and David Spurlock have missed practice with minor injuries. How’s the offensive line hanging together?
A: Oh, they’re getting better. I think this may win us a couple games late in the year with some injuries. Guys have to go in there and you find out what they can do. It will be good to get those guys (starters) back though.

Q: Coley was up in the box last year, too. So is it really any different this year?
A: No. Not really. You’ve just got Danneyune with another good set of eyes up there. That’s what we’re doing.

Q: Are you going to keep the team in Tallahassee the night before home games? (Under Bobby Bowden, the team would travel to a hotel in Thomasville, Ga., or Crawfordville, Fla.)
A: Yes. It’s a lot easier for recruiting on the weekends. It’s a lot for them to travel back and forth. They don’t have to travel an hour way.

You can secure the hotel, put guards on each floor. They ain’t going out, they ain’t coming in. You can eat here, do things. We can go to movie night before the game... You don’t want to ride down an hour then turn around. Nothing against that, it’s just hard to go that far.

Q: Will you start preparing for Samford this week?
A: Yeah we’ll start some Samford stuff (this week).

The FSU coaching staff donned headsets for the first time Saturday.
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AP pre-season poll puts ’Noles at No. 20

Osceola Staff Report

The national perception of the Florida State football team is apparently unanimous.

Two weeks after checking into the pre-season coaches poll at No. 20, FSU found itself in the exact same spot in the Associated Press’ pre-season ballot.

While the Seminoles’ slot remained the same, the AP poll does have a few discrepancies from the coaches.

Alabama and Ohio State held firm at Nos. 1 and 2, but Boise State, fifth in the coaches poll, landed at No. 3 in the AP and even garnered a first place vote.

Cincinnati was tops in the others receiving votes category, followed by Stanford and Utah, which was ranked No. 24 in the coaches poll.

Four of FSU’s 2010 opponents are ranked in the Top 25: Florida (No.4), Oklahoma (No. 7) Miami (No. 13) and North Carolina (No. 18).

Pre-season Top 25 Poll

1. Alabama (54)
2. Ohio State (3)
3. Boise State (1)
4. Florida
5. Texas (1)
6. TCU
7. Oklahoma
8. Nebraska
9. Iowa
10. Virginia Tech
11. Oregon
12. Wisconsin
13. Miami (FL)
14. USC
15. Pittsburgh
16. Georgia Tech
17. Arkansas
18. North Carolina
19. Penn State
20. Florida State
21. LSU
22. Auburn
23. Georgia
24. Oregon State
25. West Virginia

Seminole offense gets back on track

By Tim Linafelt

Neither was ready to sing too many praises, but it was clear Saturday that both Jimbo Fisher and Christian Ponder were pleased with the offense’s improvement from where it was this time last week.

The coach and the quarterback both said the offense played far better than last week’s first scrimmage, which was plagued by turnovers and a general lack of cohesion. Saturday afternoon, the offense suffered just two turnovers.

“It’s about right. You start getting better,” Fisher said.

“We’re still a long ways off. We’ve got to get some guys in the right position now. If we have to make some moves, we’ll make some moves.”

Fisher wouldn’t comment much on the ongoing running back position battle, but did say that he was pleased with their improvement, especially in the pass-blocking arena.

“I don’t know if any of them stood out, but they did a pretty good job,” he said.

“Most of them, for the most part, did what they were supposed to do. Pass blocking is getting much better.”

“I’ve been pleased with that, and understanding when to chip and help when a lineman’s got a mismatch and those kinds of things. They did a pretty good job of that.”

Fisher also noted that Ponder has made some strides in the past week, and still expects that the fifth-year senior’s play will improve as FSU continues to get better around him.

Christian Ponder drops back to pass with Jimbo Fisher watching intently.

Ponder: ‘He’s probably the most talented guy in the group’

By Bob Ferrante

What looked like a competition between Jermaine Thomas and Chris Thompson for the starting running back job appears to be a three-horse race.

Ty Jones has built upon his strong spring and both coach Jimbo Fisher and quarterback Christian Ponder describe Jones as a “different” person.

“Different guy, different attitude, different person, different demeanor,” Fisher said. “I mean, really, I’ve been very pleased with a lot of things he’s doing.”

Jones played in six games last year, starting three, and ran for 251 yards and five touchdowns. While he averaged 4.9 yards per carry and finished second to Thomas in rushing yards and touchdowns, he sat out five games while FSU coaches instead opted to hand off to Thomas, Thompson and Pryor.

But Jones, a 5-foot-10, 210-pound junior, is getting plenty of reps now. Teammates say he has been able to get a better grip on his diabetes with help from the nutrition staff at FSU and that Jones has improved his conditioning.

The Tampa native shared the carries with Thomas and Thompson in the second and final August scrimmage on Saturday.

And now Fisher and running backs Eddie Gran clearly have a decision to make: who’s the starter and then who gets the other carries? Fisher made it sound like carries could be split evenly.

“I don’t know why you have to have a dominant one,” Fisher said. “If you’ve got two or three of them you’re good. You play them all.”

Jones has proven elusive off the field, dodging requests from reporters to talk about his improvement in the offseason. But it’s clear that his commitment has made an impact on the decision-making for Fisher and Gran.

Ponder said he can see the improvement in Jones. And in the end he has confidence in whoever runs the ball.

“Ty is a guy who has battled his diabetes and kind of struggled with it the first couple of years he was here,” Ponder said. “This summer he has really made a lot of strides. He’s a totally different guy. He has a lot of ability and a lot of potential. He’s probably the most talented guy in the group.”

Jones looks to make RB battle a three-horse race

Colin Hackley- Osceola

Ty Jones runs the ball during a recent practice session at FSU.
DBs Jenije and Rhodes remain friends despite position battle

By Paul Thomas

The old saying goes “Keeps your friends close, and your enemies closer.”

But how close should you keep your competition?

Florida State cornerbacks Ochuko Jenije and Xavier Rhodes have been battling for a starting job since the beginning of spring practices back in March, yet throughout it all, both say they’re closer than ever.

“To be honest with you I think it’s brought us even closer,” said Jenije, who came to FSU out of Tallahassee’s North Florida Christian School. “Me and him, we’ll joke around, we work out with each other in the weight room.

“It’s probably one of the best things that’s ever happened to me.”

Jenije, a red-shirt senior has become somewhat of mentor to Rhodes, despite the fact that he’s essentially grooming the red-shirt freshman to take his starting job. Rhodes, a Miami native says the two talk about a variety of topics. They’ve learned about each other’s backgrounds, and they aren’t afraid to let the other know when they make a mistake on the field.

“We talk about football, life in general, things to do - Like don’t depend on football all the time, get your education,” Rhodes said. “I tell him when he messes up, and to do it again and let each other know we have each other’s back.

“We’re competing for a spot, but we’re still family at the same time.”

Because the two know that they’re locked in a competition, it has forced them to step up their game in each and every practice so far this preseason.

“It’s good to know that you have somebody there that if you mess up he’s going to take your spot,” Rhodes said. “So it makes you work even harder than what you expected to.”

Currently, Rhodes is considered to be the frontrunner for the starting job.

“Currently, Rhodes is considered to be the frontrunner for the starting job.”

In fact, he has been playing well enough that Jenije has been taking reps at safety as well as corner in an effort to create more depth in the secondary.

“It’s been a learning process,” Jenije said of the new position. “I’ve played corner the past four years but I’m looking forward to learning and getting the job done to try to get a spot.”

With five years in the program and experience nowhere but corner, it’d be hard to blame Jenije for feeling a little sore about the move. But through the process, Jenije has displayed the kind of selflessness the FSU coaches often preach, and said he’s excited about the opportunity to make the defense better.

“This what I like about Coach Fisher, his goal is to get the best 11 on the field, period,” Jenije said.

“So you could have a linebacker in the nickel spot, you could have a linebacker in the safety spot for that certain package.

They just want the best 11 on the field at that one time. He’s doing what we have to do to be the most successful we can be.”

The battle between Rhodes and Jenije has not only brought the two closer, but it has forced each of them to elevate their game.

Jenije says that, in the long run, the biggest benefit will be what the defense gains from their battle.

“It’s been a good battle, he makes plays, I make plays,” Jenije said.

“The best player is going to play either way so it’s been good”
Five-star athlete commits to FSU

Tampa’s James Wilder picks 'Noles over Gators, Bulldogs

By Tim Linafelt and Chris Nee

Jimbo Fisher has yet to win a game as Florida State’s football coach. But Fisher won his first major battle on Aug. 18, as Tampa Plant athlete James Wilder Jr., part of the 2011 class, committed to play for Fisher and the Seminoles.

Wilder, rated as a five-star athlete (meaning he can play multiple positions), made his intentions known in front of dozens of media outlets in a ceremony held at Plant High.

“I feel most comfortable there. I feel in my heart that is where I want to be at,” Wilder said. “I just made the decision … I think it is a great opportunity. I feel very comfortable there, comfortable at FSU.”

Rumors and speculation ran rampant during the hours leading up to Wilder’s announcement.

Just one day before, a report surfaced online that Wilder would be packing for Georgia's famous color scheme.

Regardless of shirt choice, it was the color of Wilder’s cap - Florida State’s garnet - that signified his commitment.

In the end, the nation’s No. 1 ranked athlete selected FSU over Florida and Georgia, but had several other major offers including Alabama, Miami, Auburn, Southern California and Tennessee.

Wilder grew up as a Gator fan, and many believed that he would eventually pledge his services to Urban Meyer.

However, after building a strong relationship with assistant coaches Lawrence Dawsey and Eddie Gran, as well as head coach Jimbo Fisher, Florida State became a major player in the Wilder sweepstakes.

“Coach Dawsey, I have known him since diapers. He definitely had a big impact on everything. I trust him and I had to build a trust with Coach Gran and Coach Fisher,” Wilder said. “I already trusted Coach Dawsey and he told me I could trust them, so with me trusting Coach Dawsey, I definitely trusted them.

“We definitely all got a bond, we trust one another. I am just very excited.”

The tide officially turned to the Seminoles following a three-day Tallahassee visit in late July - the same weekend as Florida’s prestigious Friday Night Lights football camp.

Georgia was also a major contender largely due to the Dawgs’ tradition of producing elite running backs and Wilder’s friendship with former Plant teammates Orson Charles and Aaron Murray, both of whom play for UGA.

Even though many project that the 6-foot-2, 220-pound athlete will play linebacker in college, Wilder insists he will bring to a program.

As a junior, Wilder racked up nearly 1,000 yards rushing and 14 touchdowns. On defense, he accumulated over 100 tackles and had 17 sacks.

Fisher, of course, is forbidden from talking about specific recruits before they arrive on campus for their freshman year, but the first-year head coach did speak in general terms about the kind of momentum that a high-profile commitment can bring to a program.

“It brings momentum and it makes people take notice of what’s going on,” Fisher said. “And like I say, good players all want to play with other good players. If they’re true champions…”

Rivals.com ranks Wilder as the No. 3 overall player in the country and No. 2 in the state of Florida. FlaVarsity.com ranks Wilder as the No. 1 overall player in Florida.

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<td>Lamarcus Brutus</td>
<td>DB, 6-1/185</td>
<td>Port St. Lucie, Treasure Coast</td>
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<td>James Wilder Jr.</td>
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Bowden finds himself as an in-demand speaker

By Jim Henry

Out of sight, out of mind.

That was Bobby Bowden's greatest fear when he embarked on his new career in January as full-time speaker after being elbowed into retirement by Florida State.

Bowden wasn't necessarily worried about being forgotten. Not after coaching for nearly six decades - 34 seasons at FSU - amassing 389 victories, second to Penn State's Joe Paterno, and winning over multiple generations of fans with his affable and quotable nature.

Bowden, 80, simply concerned he would no longer be considered relevant in the world of motivational speakers, that his message might not connect with people or help influence them.

Wide right. Again.

"I felt like once I got out of coaching, it would be like you are a has-been, who wants to hear you anymore?" Bowden said.

"But my retiring had no effect on what people wanted to hear. I always felt once you retired, you lose your standing in that regard. Honestly, it hasn't happened."

After making his living coaching football, these days Bowden has been zipping around the world and speaking at different venues. The list includes corporations, churches, prayer breakfasts and charity events. He has traveled near (Florida, Georgia, Alabama) and far (Brazil, Hawaii, Jerusalem, California).

Bowden's theme features his Christian testimony.

"I tell them the only thing I am qualified to do is stand here and tell you what I believe and what has happened to me in my life. That's the advantage I have being 80, and coaching for 57 years. I can tell them the way it is because I've been there. Most of the people I talk to haven't been there yet."

Bowden needs a daily planner to help keep his travel schedule in order.

For instance, he was the featured speaker for the 2010 Clinic Bowl Kickoff Classic dinner in Nashville, Tenn., last Thursday night. He followed that with a Friday night speech in Birmingham, Ala., to help raise funds at his alma mater, Samford University, which opens its football season at FSU.

Bowden was in Arkansas over the weekend, in New York City on Monday and is scheduled to be in Connecticut on Thursday. Bowden and wife, Ann, split their time between homes in Tallahassee and Panama City Beach.

Of course, it's not a surprise to hear Bowden say he misses being around his players. Yet, he stresses he does not miss coaching and its pressures. And Bowden remains adamant about giving new FSU coach Jimbo Fisher his space.

Bowden will sign copies of his new book, "Called to Coach," co-written by ESPN's Mark Schlabach, at a Tallahassee bookstore the night before FSU's season opener on Sept. 4 before he retreats to Panama City Beach to watch the game with his family. He also believes Fisher will return the Seminoles to prominence.

"I have a good feeling about Jimbo. I really do. I was around him enough to know that he's an excellent coach," Bowden said.

Son Terry Bowden, the coach at North Alabama, admits it will be strange not to see his father on the football sidelines.

Coaching is what made Papa Bowden a legend in college football. He guided the Seminoles to two national championships, 12 ACC championships and, in 2006, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

"The closer it gets to the season, the more it begins to hit you that he's not going to be out there coaching," Terry said.

"Football has been our whole family, so there's always been a game somewhere, so not having him on the sideline is going to be different, it's going to be unusual."

Regardless of the unceremonious ending to his 34 years at FSU, Bobby Bowden said he has no regrets or hard feelings.

Terry believes his father's busy speaking schedule has helped him cope. Bobby Bowden repeatedly said there was only one big event following retirement -- and he wasn't ready to be eulogized.

"The fact he left a year early was something that shocked everyone in the immediate family - and him," Terry said.

"I think all of us were disappointed in Dad's final days at FSU, but you go forward and move on. It's part of the business. Dad might have been planning it (retirement) one year later, but he had a plan. He said, 'I am not stopping, I am not stopping.'"

"I am telling you, he has been on the road non-stop since January. I am kind of glad. It's kind of like you really don't know what to do unless you have something to do. Well, Dad will be so busy, so hectic this fall, it will seem like football season in a lot of ways."

"He doesn't just sit around and twiddle his thumbs."

Bowden says he feels reinvigorated in many ways. He doesn't ever remember playing golf this late in the year (he's close to breaking 80 from the senior tees). He's in excellent health.

While Bowden hasn't chatted with many folks from FSU, including dear friend and long-time defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews, he often thinks of them.

Still, the best part of retirement has been Bowden's connection with people, young and old, through his motivational speeches. Upcoming stops in Hawaii and on a cruise line, prompting Bowden to quip, "I have it tough."

Out of sight, out of mind? Not a chance.

"I always look ahead instead of back," Bowden said.

"When I go to speak, people will remind me of the good things. The memories come back. Since I am no longer coaching, since I can't talk to my boys about their life, I hope people who hear me speak or read that book can get something meaningful out of it."

Former FSU coach Bobby Bowden has worked a heavy schedule as a public speaker.
OSCEOLA PRE-SEASON CAMP ROUNDTABLE

The Roundtable consists of The Osceola’s Tim Linafelt, Bob Ferrante, and Paul Thomas, and Warchant.com’s Gene Williams

1) What’s the most encouraging thing that has happened in practice so far? Most disappointing?
   **Tim:** Most encouraging has been the defense’s apparent progress. Nearly everyone associated with the program is quick to say that the defense still has a way to go, but Jimbo Fisher especially seems to be pleasantly surprised with what he has seen so far.

   Most discouraging would be the apparent lack of a reliable ball-carrier. Florida State’s RBs have had trouble hanging onto the ball in the past - a weakness that doomed the Seminoles more than once in 2009 - and whoever eventually earns the starting job will have to be able to extremely limit his fumbles or the job won’t be his for long.

   **Bob:** The most encouraging thing to me has been the defense’s performance in the first scrimmage. The defense totally dominated the scrimmage and afterwards offensive players like Christian Ponder looked as if they’d just lost a game. Now the offensive struggles might seem like a negative thing but from all reports they bounced back in this week’s scrimmage. Last year the defense was never able to hold their own against the offense and they have really given the offense fits this preseason.

   The most disappointing is easily the dismissal of wide receiver Jarmon Fortson. If you give Christian Ponder an experienced offensive line and three top-notch receivers in Bert Reed, Taiwan Easterling and Fortson, defenses are in trouble. No college defense in the country has three corners good enough to cover that trio. But now without Fortson you have to wonder if Rodney Smith or Willie Haulstead can fill Fortson’s role.

   **Paul:** The most encouraging thing to me has been the defense’s performance. We have more than embraced the changes under coordinator Mark Stoops. The attitude is positive and the confidence is back. Every linebacker or defensive back feels that playing zone suits their abilities. And it gives them a chance to deliver the big hit — something every defensive player wants to do.

   The most disappointing is easily the dismissal of wide receiver Jarmon Fortson. If you give Christian Ponder an experienced offensive line and three top-notch receivers in Bert Reed, Taiwan Easterling and Fortson, defenses are in trouble. No college defense in the country has three corners good enough to cover that trio. But now without Fortson you have to wonder if Rodney Smith or Willie Haulstead can fill Fortson’s role.

2) Is there reason to be concerned about the offense considering how sloppy they were in the scrimmage?
   **Bob:** The only concern I see is depth on the offensive line. FSU has the best line in the ACC, but there have been some nagging injuries that have kept linemen out of practices. And Blake Snider has been walking around in crutches.

   So does FSU have to use a lineman out of position or insert a walk-on here and there? It sounds like that may be the case.

   **Paul:** I think there is a legitimate reason to be concerned with the receivers. Only Bert Reed and Taiwan Easterling have ever played and caught passes during meaningful games. Rodney Smith looks poised to have a breakout year but last year he had more special teams tackles (four) than receptions (one for seven yards).

   He had a breakout spring and Willie Haulstead has been stepping up in practice but the lack of experience is a real concern to me.

   **Gene:** I don’t think so. You have to keep in mind that Friday was the first time since last spring that the offense was involved in “full contact”. So it’s not surprising that the offensive skill athletes had a little difficulty holding onto the football. Also, two offensive linemen - Andrew Datko and David Spurlock - were out with injuries (reportedly minor).

   There is simply too much talent, experience and leadership (Christian Ponder and Rodney Hudson) for the offense to falter this season. Also, I can’t see any way Jimbo Fisher won’t have this group on top of their game by the time the Samford game rolls around in crutches.

   **Bob:** The key to success will be the running backs. Sophomore running back Chris Thompson has pushed for a starting job.

   **Paul:** The most disappointing is easily the dismissal of wide receiver Jarmon Fortson. If you give Christian Ponder an experienced offensive line and three top-notch receivers in Bert Reed, Taiwan Easterling and Fortson, defenses are in trouble. No college defense in the country has three corners good enough to cover that trio. But now without Fortson you have to wonder if Rodney Smith or Willie Haulstead can fill Fortson’s role.

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Colin Hackley-Osceola

Sophomore Xavier Rhodes (27) is expected to start opposite of Greg Reid at cornerback.

ROUNDTABLE, cont’d from page 10

around.

All that being said, I’m still not totally sold on the wide receivers. While Bert Reed and Taiwan Easterling are solid, the rest of the group has been a bit inconsistent. A couple more receivers need to show consistency on an everyday basis.

Tim: No, I really don’t think so. The offense still has plenty of time to work out the kinks before the season opener, and, realistically, they can probably afford to tighten things up in the Samford game as well. Christian Ponder and Co. will be fine.

3) How much better does the defense look compared to this time last year?

Gene: It’s night and day. You could see signs that it was going to be a long season for the defense last August - the offense was continually slicing and dicing without much resistance. That simply hasn’t been the case so far in practice.

It’s true that the offense has been a bit sluggish, but much of that is because the defense is doing a lot of different things to cause confusion. Also, as a whole, the entire defense is bigger and more athletic.

Tim: It’s been my opinion that if the defense could just get out of its own way, to speak, and quit tripping over itself, then there would be some immediate and obvious improvement. I think that having a unified and cohesive defensive coaching staff has paid off huge dividends. Time will tell just how good the defense will be, but the early indicators are that it will at the very least be competent, which is about all that FSU fans were asking for by the end of last season.

Paul: I mentioned this in question one that the defense has really been holding their own this preseason as opposed to last year. The biggest difference I actually see is the confidence in the players. Their eyes light up when describing Coach Stoops’ new system. They just seem much more comfortable and confident in their ability to get opposing offenses off the field this year.

Bob: A complete 180. They are confusing the offense in practice. Each scrimmage has been punctuated with big hits, especially from cornerback Xavier Rhodes. The linebackers as a group are impressive. And the defensive line appears to be putting more pressure on the quarterback.

4) Name the three most impressive rookies so far

Tim: It’s hard to say without getting to watch them in practice, but from what I’ve gathered, Lamarcus Joyner, Jared Haggins, and Greg Dent have really stood out. Mark Stoops, who has coached his share of fine DBs, has said that Joyner has skills and abilities that don’t come around too often. And both Dent and Haggins have been impressive both with their physical style of play and their athleticism, which allows for impressive plays on the ball.

Gene: The former five-star signees are living up to the hype so far, as are four-star recruits Mike Harris and Telvin Smith, but to me that was somewhat expected.

I’ve been most impressed with some of players who were rated as three-star prospects coming out of high school - Terrence Brooks, Jared Haggins and Bjorn Werner. Brooks looks like a totally different player from his high school days - he has added significant size, is physical and athletic. When he signed, I figured Brooks was a lock to redshirt but he is playing so well that may no longer be the case.

Playing quarterback in high school you would expect that it would take Haggins a while to catch on. He still has a lot of work to do but is picking up things quickly and is making a good number of big plays for a freshman (40-plus yard TD in the last scrimmage).

When all is said and done, I think we’ll look back and say that Bjorn Werner was the most underrated member of the 2010 recruiting class. He already has great size for a college DE and is tremendously athletic (made a leaping interception in the last scrimmage). There is no doubt that he will get into the rotation at DE this fall.

Paul: From what the coaches and players have been saying Lamarcus Joyner is the real deal. Even Coach Stoops couldn’t stop raving about Joyner on media day.

Kenny Shaw is another guy whose name has constantly been brought up so far. Shaw is apparently already one of the best route runners on the team.

Bob: Coach Fisher really likes Kenny Shaw for his route-running.

And Shaw will see playing time because of Fortson’s departure.

Coach Stoops said that cornerback Lamarcus Joyner does things that he hasn’t seen from a true freshman, and Fisher seems happy with Mike Harris, too. All of these guys will be key contributors this season.

Want a fourth? Don’t forget about linebacker Jeff Luc, who enrolled early and had an outstanding spring.

5) Who will be the starting cornerbacks and starting tailback in the opener?

Gene: At cornerback I have a good feeling it’s going to be Greg Reid and Xavier Rhodes. Reid was pretty much a given, but one of the best position battles was supposed to be at the other corner back spot between Rhodes and Ochuko Jenjie.

However, Rhodes has been seeing most of the time with the first team while Jenjie has been spending most of his time at safety (where he has done very well)

Running back is a much more difficult call. Based on what happened at the last scrimmage, I hear it’s now more of an even battle between Chris Thompson, Jermaine Thomas and Ty Jones. The starter will be ultimately determined by what happens in practice over the next two weeks. It’s anybody’s guess but I’m going to change my mind now and go with Jermaine Thomas as the guy who lines up first in the tailback spot against Samford.

Tim: Greg Reid and Xavier Rhodes will be the cornerbacks, and Chris Thompson will be the running back.

I really struggled with this question for two reasons.

1 - I genuinely believe that Ochuko Jenjie will show massive improvement from last year, and 2 - I have a hard time believing that someone as talented as Jermaine Thomas won’t be on the field. But Fisher is obviously excited about what he has with Rhodes, and for good reason. Rhodes ought to bring a physical nature that FSU hasn’t really had at the corner position in quite a while.

And while I expect Thompson to get plenty of carries this fall, I also believe Thompson has that bit of extra elusiveness that should give him the edge.

Bob: Greg Reid and Xavier Rhodes. It’s surprising to think about Reid, at 5-foot-8, having the vertical leap to handle taller receivers — but he can. And Rhodes was a wide receiver in high school but has made a seemingly smooth switch to defense. I think Reid and Rhodes will start, but expect to see plenty of Joyner and Harris.

Paul: Starting cornerbacks in my opinion will be Greg Reid and Xavier Rhodes. Reid is a big time play-maker and Rhodes has been getting rave reviews all spring. He even had what Demonte McAllister said was the biggest hit of the spring on big back Debraye Smiley.

For the starting tailback you could flip a coin. All spring long and during the first few weeks of practice it looked like it was Chris Thompson’s job. But after some ball security issues it appears that Jermaine Thomas has regained his starting spot.

For now I would say Thomas will start but with the way this battle has been going I wouldn’t be surprised if Thompson moved back into the starting spot by the middle of this week.
**Former ’Nole Choate catching on with Tampa Bay Rays**

By Jim Henry

TAMPA - Randy Choate doesn’t get back to Florida State as often as he’d like. However, his last visit to Dick Howser Stadium two years ago left quite an impression on the former Seminole pitcher.

Choate, a reliever with the Tampa Bay Rays, was wide-eyed as he toured FSU’s locker room. The facility contains a personalized wooden locker for each player, a separate locker room for the Seminole coaches and trainers, and a video area where FSU players and coaches can watch film. The stadium also features a training room and a strength and conditioning area.

Dick Howser Stadium, of course, has taken its place as one of the top collegiate baseball facilities in the country after a two-year, $12 million dollar project was completed earlier this decade.

There were other surprises, too.

“I just walked around and it’s like, ‘Wow,’” Choate said and smiled.

“I remember back in ’95, my freshman year, and somebody knocking on the door and giving us leftover hot dogs and hamburgers as our post-game meal. Now they get pre-game and post-game spreads and 11 (head coach Mike Martin) was telling me they also raise money in the off-season so the team can take chartered flights on road trips. I am like, ‘What?’

“It was a disappointment for me to go from that program, how it was then when I played, to the minor leagues. It was a shock. Now it’s really a shock. Their clubhouse is pretty close, if not as nice, as this one. It’s a rude awakening when you get to Triple-A and you get those 3 a.m. wake-up calls so you can fly out and play that same day or you are taking those 16-hour bus trips.”

Choate was also all smiles as he reminisced about his FSU career from 1995-97.

Choate was part of two College World Series teams and his name is sprinkled among the program’s career lists in innings pitched (305.1), career starts (40), complete games (10) and victories (29).

The travel jackets were a Rays plaid (a combination of navy blue, Columbia blue and white) with a sunburst on the breast pocket.

Choate credited Rays manager John Maddon’s creative managing style for the team’s success. The B延安ers were Maddon’s idea.

“I can compare this team a lot to those teams in the early part of the decade for the A’s,” Choate said.

“Just good, young talent, everybody’s having a good time. They just do everything they can here to make everyone comfortable. It’s real laid back, they don’t put any more pressure on you -- there’s enough out there. You worry about that stuff while you are out there, then you take care of your business and then when you are off the field you have a good time but also be respectful.

“I really think Joe has a good mix of how he does stuff.”

Choate, of course, also keeps a close eye on the Seminoles, who advanced to the CWS for the second time in the past three seasons this year. FSU and head coach Mike Martin continue to search for the program’s first national title.

“People were on them a little bit, oh, maybe don’t have the best pitching or the best defense, but they found a way to get it done and get to the CWS,” said Choate, who remains in contact with former Seminole teammates Chuck Howell, Chris Chavez and Geoff Sprague, to name a few.

“They did as much as any other (FSU) team to get there. Nobody has won it yet. It’s fun to watch but it’s kind of hard sometimes because you want them to win so bad. And when they don’t win again, it’s so disappointing and you go through the same thing you felt when you were there. But, hey, that’s a good year. Any time you can get to the College World Series it’s a very good year. I am just hoping for 11 that one of these years he can get there and get it done.”

Choate is determined to help the Rays get it done this year, too.

“I feel great and this is a great situation for me,” said Choate, who has been used in a set-up role.

“I am not a guy who punches them out and blows them away like some of these other guys. I am a come-get-you a ground ball, or a double play, with a sinker. Roll it up and get out of the inning.”

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FSU soccer tops Wazzu, Gonzaga in opening weekend

**Oscroal Staff Report**

Sixth-ranked Florida State (1-0-0) needed just one goal from senior captain Amanda DaCosta, the 14th goal of her career, as the Seminoles opened the 2010 campaign with a 1-0 road victory over No. 21 Washington State (0-1-0).

DaCosta's game-winning goal from just four yards out, delivered by a precise pass from senior midfielder Rachel Lim who was credited with the assist, the 12th of her career.

Overall I thought it was a good solid performance,” head coach Mark Krikorian. “It was a good first game against a very good opponent. I think we set up our kids a little bit to be in a challenging situation, traveling across the country and playing against a top 25 team. I think our kids passed an awful lot of tests, but there are still some areas for us to get better.”

The Seminoles have now won three straight season openers, while improving to 10-5-1 all-time on opening day. The month of August has been especially good to the Seminoles as they improved to a perfect 10-0 under Coach Mark Krikorian and to 18-5-1 all-time, including twelve straight victories. The Seminoles have outscored opponents 65-26, including ten shutouts during the opening month of August.

DaCosta, an All-ACC Second Team selection in 2009, scored her fifth career goal in her fourth career season-opening game.

**Florida State 2, Gonzaga 0**

The No. 6 ranked Florida State women’s soccer team defeated Gonzaga, 2-0, Sunday at Lower Soccer Field to claim the championship of the Washington State Soccer Invitational. The Seminoles claimed the tournament championship with victories over Washington State on Friday and Gonzaga today to finish with a perfect 2-0 record in the event.

The Seminoles came out on fire against Gonzaga as junior Tori Huster scored what proved to be the game winning goal with only 1:27 elapsed in the match. Senior Janice Cayman scored Florida State’s second goal of the game less than two minutes into the second half to give the Seminoles their game winning margin.

Goalie Kelsey Wys, a redshirt during the 2009 season, earned her second consecutive shutout as she was credited with one save. She recorded six saves in gaining the first shutout of her career in Friday night’s victory over Washington State.

“It was a typical Sunday game,” Krikorian said. “Neither team probably had as much in the tank as they did on Friday night, so it was nice to come out and score a goal early, then come out in the second half and score a second goal early. It kind of gives you a little more opportunity to have a little bit of breathing room, although Gonzaga pressed us and made the game difficult for us to play. We are happy to be coming back home with two wins against two good teams.”
Clockwise from top:
Freshman cornerback Lamarcus Joyner wraps up receiver Willie Haulstead.

Christian Ponder listens intently as Jimbo Fisher gives instruction.

Ponder attempts a throw while defensive tackle Demonte McAllister gets his hand up and attempts to block it.

Greg Reid finds a seam during a return and runs past kicker Dustin Hopkins.
Poole, Morgan help FSU volleyball build on last year's success

By Tim Linafelt

The banners that hang from the Tully Gym rafters have yet to be updated. But the effects of what the Florida State volleyball team accomplished last season still can be felt throughout the building.

The 2009 Seminoles accomplished more than any team in the program’s history. There was the No. 11 final ranking and an ACC championship, the school’s first in 18 years. There was a school-record X-match winning streak, part of a 30-3 final record, which helped to seal that title. And, of course, there was a magical NCAA Tournament run, in which the Seminoles surged to an Elite Eight appearance and served notice to the nation that they were a team to be reckoned with.

It also helped that FSU did it all while playing mostly under the radar. Several years of average to decent play will do that for you. But the Seminoles won’t have that luxury in 2010.

“People are going to know Florida State. They’re going to be preparing for us in their practices for weeks in advance,” said Stephanie Neville, the team’s top returning scorer. “So it’s going to be a different way that we’re approaching the season, but it’s also a new challenge.”

Indeed, FSU won’t be underdogs anymore. The Seminoles checked into the pre-season AVCA Coaches poll at No. 15, the highest pre-season ranking in school history, and the ACC coaches tabbed FSU to win its second consecutive conference crown.

Expectations come with the winning territory. And according to coach Chris Poole, they’re welcome. But meeting those expectations won’t come without a few challenges.

The Seminoles must replace a bevy of talent from last year’s squad, including their top two players, 2009 ACC player of the year Brianna Barry and outside hitter Mira Djuric. Djuric takes with her a team-matching final ranking, which helped to seal that title.

Florida State junior Rachael Morgan prepares to serve. Morgan, a New Zealand native, will be key to the success of this year’s volleyball team.

Florida State junior Rachael Morgan prepares to serve. Morgan, a New Zealand native, will be key to the success of this year’s volleyball team.

Poole said that she’s embracing those added expectations, and that she hopes to be someone that her teammates look to when times get tough.

“Definitely try to,” she said. “I think that in sports your confidence can go down really quickly, and it spreads to the team really quickly. So it’s important to have someone on the court that can really keep spirits up.”

FSU played a pre-season game against Florida State alumni on Aug. 21, and will open the regular season with the FSU Invitational beginning Aug. 27. The Seminoles will take on New Mexico State Aug. 27, and then play a doubleheader against Florida International and South Florida the following day.

Tennis star Mirzadeh granted extra year following back injury

By Bob Ferrante

Vahid Mirzadeh had a stress fracture in his back when he was 17. He was fitted with a custom brace and endured hour after hour of physical therapy.

It was an eight-month recovery that delayed Mirzadeh’s tennis career.

So when Mirzadeh’s eligibility ran out after the 2010 tennis season, he thought he had played his final match for Florida State.

But coach Dwayne Hultquist and FSU’s compliance department appealed on Mirzadeh’s behalf for an extra year because of the injury.

And in July, after reviewing his request and talking to his doctors, NCAA officials approved the request.

Mirzadeh thought that he would be taking classes at FSU toward his degree in Hospitality Management and helping out as a volunteer coach for Hultquist in 2010-11.

Now he could be the team’s No. 1 singles player.

“When coach called me, he said, ‘Get ready. Start training,’ ” Mirzadeh said. “I was just really excited. I was going to help out with the team (as a coach). I was already in that mode.

“I remained hopeful. I was ready to get out of bed. I had been out there watching her. Now I’m really excited to come back for one more year. I’m very fortunate.”
Baseball coaches experience a ‘Tums Day’

This is the hand you’re dealt each August: partial scholarship vs. six-figure signing bonus. Or if you’re dealt a particularly bad hand, a seven-figure signing bonus.

If you’re a college baseball coach, it’s impossible to compete.

For Florida State’s Mike Martin, Jamey Shouppe and Mike Martin Jr., August 15 was a Tums day. All they could do was wear out the carpet in their offices and work the phones.

Any hope of Gatorade player of the year Kaleb Cowart coming to Tallahassee was gone when the Angels offered a signing bonus in excess of $3 million.

The one piece of good news came just hours before the midnight deadline for draft picks to sign contracts.

FSU star outfielder/closer Mike McGee was tired of negotiating.

The Arizona Diamondbacks, who drafted the All-American in the 41st round, simply weren’t offering him enough money.

McGee called Martin Jr. and told him to go to bed. He would be back for his senior season in 2011.

Mike Martin isn’t fond of moral victories. But this one he could enjoy.

“One of the few times in my life where I for 7 ain’t too bad,” Martin said.

But 2 for 7 is even better. McGee is the big bat in the heart of the order and an outstanding left fielder. He also had a miniscule ERA until the College World Series, shutting the door in the ninth inning 13 times overall.

“Of all the guys that it would have hurt the most to lose, he would have hurt the worst because he’s two guys for us,” Shouppe said.

McGee’s return makes the plans for 2011 easier.

The big holes to fill are shortstop Stephen Cardullo, who will be replaced by Justin Gonzalez, and All-American center fielder Tyler Holt. Martin isn’t sure who will fill Holt’s shoes in center, but he will use second baseman Devon Travis in the leadoff spot.

After Travis, FSU will have a strong top of the order with Sherman Johnson, McGee and Jayce Boyd — all of whom hit at least .325.

Pitching, of course, will be a challenge with John Gast and Geoff Parker signing pro contracts. But every college baseball team faces that problem.

Every year we wonder: Does this team have enough talent coming back to make a run at Omaha?

Without McGee, you’d have to say the road to Omaha looks impossible. With McGee, you’d have to say that the Seminoles have a fighting chance.

For the moment, though, Martin can relax. The MLB deadline has passed. And he can look ahead to February.

“We’re glad that all of this is now behind us,” Martin said.

“And we can now concentrate on the future.”

Talent pipeline to North Alabama

University of North Alabama coach Terry Bowden has given out second chances to about 30 former Division I-A players, including former FSU wideout Jamin Porter.

And it’s not just FSU. Players who used to be on the roster at Miami, Florida, Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee and North Carolina are now on campus at Division II North Alabama.

This might seem like a man-in-a-dark-hat operation. It’s easy to say that Terry Bowden is building a renegade program or that he’s just looking to rebuild his coaching resume for a Division I-A job in 2011.

But that may happen if a university president or athletics director is willing to take the chance next year. But for now, Bowden is content to take chances now in hopes of seeing immediate success with a UNA program that is moving full speed ahead toward Division I-A or I-AA.

Bowden is building UNA by doling out second chances the way is dad, Bobby, did at FSU. Terry does his research, calling his coaching friends and only taking the kids who come with a strong recommendation.

He can sit down with a player, size him up and decide if he deserves a second chance. But he values more the opinion of those who once coached that player.

“Jimbo Fisher, I know him like the back of my hand. I don’t need to look the kid in the eye,” Bowden told the Birmingham News. “If it’s Nick Saban, I don’t need to look the kid in the eye. Or Joe Pendry, who coached me (at West Virginia), or Kirby Smart, who was a graduate assistant at Florida State.”

Bob Ferrante covers FSU athletics for The Lakeland Ledger. He was previously a copy editor/page designer at the Tallahassee Democrat from 1998-2006.
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