Stockstill completes staff with Cauthen, Faulkner

Both have coordinator experience

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Middle Tennessee Head Coach Rick Stockstill filled out his coaching staff today by announcing Joe Cauthen and Buster Faulkner as the newest members. Cauthen will coach the linebackers and serve as the special team's coordinator while Faulkner will handle the quarterbacks and hold the passing game coordinator title.

Both were coordinators a year ago and bring a lot of experience and energy to the program.

Cauthen, 46, comes to Middle Tennessee after spending the past four seasons at Valdosta State as the Blazers defensive coordinator.

"Joe has been a very successful defensive coordinator with some very strong defenses at Valdosta State," Stockstill added. "Along with being a very good coach, he also brings to our program valuable recruiting connections. We are very excited to have him on our staff."

In 2010, Cauthen helped lead Valdosta State to a Gulf South Conference Championship after his defense finished ranked 23rd nationally in total defense and 18th in scoring defense. His unit came away with seven touchdowns and led the nation in touchdowns scored by interceptions.

Cauthen molded a solid group in 2009 despite losing seven starters off the 2008 squad and seeing two more suffer season-ending injuries over the course of the first three games. Under his direction, the Blazers still managed to register 68 TFLs, 18 sacks, and force 19 turnovers while giving up just 112.9 yards per game on the ground.

Cauthen's defense was dominant during the 2008 season as it finished 31st nationally in total defense and 24th in scoring defense. The Blazers allowed opponents just 304.6 yards per game

during his second season with the school while surrendering just 18.6 points per outing. On the rushing side, the Blazers only allowed 108.3 yards per game to rank 31st in the nation while opponents found throwing the ball even tougher as they were held to a 104.91 efficiency rating, a number that ranked VSU 20th nationally.

In 2007, Cauthen directed a unit that finished 14th in the nation in scoring defense at 17.6 points per game as VSU won its second national title. Cauthen's knowledge of the defensive side of the ball was no more evident than in the 2007 NCAA Championship game, where his scheme held Northwest Missouri State running back Xavier Omon, who had averaged 236 yards a game in three previous playoff contests, to just 63 yards on 27 carries, an average of 2.3 yards per carry.

Cauthen joined the Blazers after eight seasons with Texas A&M-Commerce, during which the Lions consistently ranked among the top defenses in the nation. A&M-Commerce led the Lone Star Conference and was ranked 23rd nationally in total defense in 2006 and was 47th in 2005.

Additionally, under Cauthen's leadership, Lion linebacker J.D. Hearn led the nation in tackles in 2005 and earned eight national post-season awards.

During his seven seasons with the Lions, Cauthen coached six All-Americans, four Lone Star Conference linebackers of the year, three defensive lineman of the year, a defensive back of the year and 34 defensive players that earned All-Lone Star Conference at least once during their career.

Cauthen spent little time in establishing his mark on the Texas A&M-Commerce defense as in just his third year he directed a defense that ranked second in the league in total defense, first against the run, second against the pass and third in scoring defense. Two years later, his 2003 defense was fourth in the 15-team league and 41st nationally in total defense.

Cauthen joined the Lion staff in 1999 after two seasons at I-AA Stephen F. Austin. He began his tenure with SFA as a restricted earnings coach in 1997 before becoming full-time in 1998.

Prior to Stephen F. Austin, Cauthen spent a season as defensive line coach at Trinity Valley Community College in Athens, Texas.

He began his coaching career at Sherman High School in Sherman, Texas during the 1990 season and worked with the school for five seasons.

Cauthen earned his Bachelor's in Health and Kinesiology with a minor in Biology from Stephen F. Austin in 1990. He also obtained a Master's in Sports Administration from the University of Texas-Tyler in 1997.

Cauthen is married to the former Karen Belson of Houston, Texas. The couple has three children, Brooklyn, Dakota and Jackson.

Faulkner, 29, makes his way to Murfreesboro after serving the 2010 season as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Murray State.

"Buster's philosophical background is similar to ours which makes this a good fit for Middle Tennessee," said Stockstill. "He engineered one of the top offenses in the country this past season.

Along with being a bright young coach, Buster is also a relentless recruiter."

In his lone season at MSU, Faulkner's offense broke 27 school records and finished first in the FCS in total plays, pass completions, and completion percentage. The Racer offense racked up nearly 5,000 yards and produced the first 500-yard passer, 200-yard rusher, and 200-yard receiver in the same game in FCS history. The Racers ranked fifth in total offense nationally in 2010 and the year prior to Faulkner's arrival MSU had a ranking of 115.

Prior to joining the Racers staff, Faulkner spent the 2009 season as the quarterbacks coach at Central Arkansas. UCA's offense averaged 26.2 points a game and 215.8 yards a game through the air and ranked in the Top 25 nationally in every offensive statistic.

Senior quarterback Robbie Park finished the year going 217-for-358 for 2,434 yards and 12 touchdowns. The yardage total was seventh on the school's all-time single-season list.

Faulkner's coaching career began at Valdosta State, where he served as a student assistant helping with the quarterbacks in 2005.

After one season with the Blazers, he served as an offensive graduate assistant at Georgia, working with the offensive line and quarterbacks.

Faulkner returned to Valdosta State in 2007 and served as the quarterbacks coach for two seasons.

In his first season, the Blazers went 13-1 and captured the Division II National Championship as quarterback Willie Copeland passed for 2,903 yards and 27 touchdowns.

Faulkner took over as the offensive coordinator for the Blazers in 2008. VSU averaged 380.8 yards a game in advancing to the quarterfinals.

As a player, Faulkner starred as a quarterback for Valdosta State from 2000 to 2003. In three years with the Blazers, he passed for 7,100 yards and 64 touchdowns while registering a 47-6 record.

As a sophomore, Faulkner earned first-team all-Gulf South Conference honors and honorable mention All-American accolades after going 327-for-503 for 3,941 yards and 44 touchdowns in leading the Blazers to a 14-1 record and a spot in the National Championship game.

He played his senior season at Texas A&M-Commerce, where he passed for 2,861 and 16 touchdowns, while setting 10 school records.

During his prep career, Faulkner started at quarterback as a sophomore and led Parkview High School to the 1997 Georgia state championship.

A native of Lilburn, Ga., Faulkner earned his bachelor's degree in history from Valdosta State in 2005.

Faulkner, and his wife, Tia, have one son, Harrison, and one daughter, Hadley.

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