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Quinn juggling two jobs in taking over at Buffalo

By JOHN WAWROW (AP) – 5 days ago

AMHERST, N.Y. — It's first things first for Jeff Quinn after being formally introduced as the University at Buffalo's new head coach on Tuesday.

As much as he dressed for the part, wearing a UB lapel pin and a blue and white Bulls hat, and discussed how exciting the opportunity was to become a first-time head coach, Quinn's mind wasn't far from some unfinished business back home in Cincinnati.

After all, as interim head coach of the No. 4 Bearcats (12-0), he's got a Sugar Bowl game against Tim Tebow and No. 5 Florida (12-1) to prepare for on Jan. 1.

"I'm just trying to figure out a way to score a touchdown and stop Tebow," Quinn said, shortly after completing his first press conference.

Joking that he now has four job titles, including Cincinnati's offensive coordinator and line coach, Quinn's overseeing the Bearcats after Brian Kelly left the program to take over at Notre Dame two weeks ago.

"Yeah, it's been quite challenging," he said. "I've had very little sleep but a lot of support."

Looks as if Quinn and the Bearcats will now have a few more supporters in Buffalo.

"Absolutely, go 'Cats," Bulls athletic director Warde Manuel said.

Manuel then couldn't resist the opportunity to sell Buffalo fans on the person he chose to replace Turner Gill, who left Buffalo to take over at Kansas earlier this month.

"Tune in to the Sugar Bowl," Manuel said. "If you want to see what this offense will be like in the 2010 UB Bulls season, please watch on Jan. 1."

Manuel was referring to the Bearcats up-tempo, spread offense which Quinn played a key role in designing as Kelly's top assistant. In winning the Big East championship, Cincinnati ranked sixth in the nation in yards passing (320.3), total yards (464.3) and scoring (39.8 points).

The offense is an extension of the one Quinn and Kelly first introduced at Division II Grand Valley State earlier this decade and ran at Central Michigan, Buffalo's Mid-American Conference rival.

Quinn, who accepted the job on Saturday, will formally take over the Bulls on a full-time basis on Jan. 3. In taking the Buffalo job, Quinn noted that he turned down Kelly's offer to take over as Notre Dame's offensive coordinator.

"When Warde came in and called me to sit down and talk and map out the next step at the University at Buffalo, it really hit me at that point when I said, 'This is my time,'" said the 47-year-old Quinn, who first broke into coaching as a graduate assistant at DePauw in 1984. "And things are in place, here. We've already seen that."

Quinn inherits a Bulls program that was transformed in four seasons under Gill. It was a stretch in which Buffalo went 20-30, won the 2008 MAC championship and made its first bowl appearance, a 38-20 loss to Connecticut in the International Bowl. That's a significant turnaround for a team that, prior to Gill's arrival, went 10-69 since joining the MAC.

For Quinn, the Bulls' transformation is close to the one he experienced at Cincinnati. In going 34-6 over the past three seasons, the Bearcats won back-to-back Big East titles and two straight Bowl Championship Series berths. The Bearcats set a school record last season for victories with an 11-3 record, then topped that with a 12-0 mark this year.

"You have to have that faith and belief without evidence," Quinn said, referring to what it took to inspire the Bearcats' turnaround. "And you found that here with coach Gill's staff and winning the MAC championship. Because once you break through, nothing less is going to be acceptable."

Quinn said he'll take over offensive play-calling duties in Buffalo, though he intends to wait until after the Sugar Bowl to start putting together his staff.

Bulls offensive lineman Peter Bittner had a good first impression after he and several teammates met with Quinn earlier in the day. As difficult as it was to lose Gill, Bittner liked what he heard from his new coach.

"I'm not going to try to compare them, though, because he's his own different guy," Bittner said. "Coach Gill was a great coach. I'm definitely going to miss him. But I'm real excited to have Coach Quinn with us."

And Bittner noted he'll certainly tune in to watch the Sugar Bowl.

"Yeah, I'll be taking a couple of notes," Bittner said. "I can't wait to run that offense."

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University of Cincinnati offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Jeff Quinn speaks during a news conference Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009 in Cincinnati. Quinn will serve as Cincinnati's interim head football coach for the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1, 2010. (AP Photo/David Kohl)

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