January 17, 2003

Bluffton College head football coach Carlin Carpenter announces retirement after 24 seasons and 103 wins

When the Bluffton College football team kicks off the 2003 season in a little over eight months, the Beavers will be led by a head coach other than Carlin Carpenter for the first time in the last 24 years.

Carpenter has announced his plans to retire from Bluffton College after a school-record 103 wins in 24 seasons, thus ending his reign as the Dean of Ohio collegiate football coaches. After the 2002 season Carpenter was one of just four active Ohio collegiate football coaches with over 100 victories and ends his career with a record of 103-125-1. Dayton coach Mike Kelly and Muskingum coach Jeff Heacock now share the honor of Ohio’s longest tenured collegiate head football coach with 21 years on the job at their respective schools.

“Carlin's service to Bluffton College has been extraordinary and we will greatly miss him,” said Bluffton College President Lee Snyder. “He is regarded as a wise and innovative leader among his peers and colleagues and he has always expected far more of himself than what he would have ever asked of others. Carlin has thrived on challenge, hard work and a belief that he could make a difference in the lives of student-athletes. He has gone about his work with dedication, commitment and generosity because he believes in students and their potential.”

Carpenter led Bluffton from the NAIA to membership into the NCAA Division III in 1991 and then into the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference in 1998. As a member of the HCAC over the last four seasons, Bluffton has compiled an 18-15 league record, which is the second-most wins of current HCAC members. Carpenter was named the HCAC Co-coach-of-the-year following the 2000 season when he guided the Beavers to a 7-3 record and a share of the HCAC championship.

Carpenter served as President of the Hoosier-Buckeye Collegiate Athletic Conference in 1983 and was named the HBCC coach-of-the-year in 1985. He was named the NAIA District 22 coach-of-the-year in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 and earned the Association of Mideast Colleges coach-of-the-year honor in 1994 as he led BC to a co-championship of the league.

From 1985 through 1990 BC fashioned a 44-13 record and was nationally ranked in the NAIA each year. The Beavers entered the national playoffs in 1987 and repeated that accomplishment in 1988, advancing to the second round. Carpenter’s 1985 and 1988 squads are already in the BC Athletic Hall of Fame.

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In addition to his coaching duties Carpenter has served as Bluffton’s athletic director and an assistant professor of health, physical education and recreation during his tenure at BC. A native of Nelsonville, Ohio, Carpenter has been an active member in the American Football Coaches Association and was on the Association’s National Coach of the Year committee for 11 years from 1988-1999, serving as chair for three years. He has been a member of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and the Association for Physical Education in Higher Education.

Carpenter’s leadership was instrumental in the building of Salzman Stadium in 1993, which has served as the home for BC football for 10 seasons.

A graduate of Defiance College in 1964 with a degree in psychology and biology, Carpenter was inducted into the Defiance College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1988. He earned his master’s degree in physical education and special education from Ohio University in 1970. He has held coaching positions at Defiance (1970), OU (1971-74) and Marshall University (1975-78), where he served as defensive coordinator. Prior to entering Defiance as a student, Carpenter served in the U.S. Navy for four years.

In 1991 Carpenter and now Vice President for Student Life Don Schweingruber started the “MORE Than Football” program (Motivation, Organization, Responsibility, Excellence), which drew national acclaim and continued for 10 years as he introduced his football players to topics about successful living. That program led to Bluffton being named the only NCAA Division III institution to be included in the NCAA’s pilot program “Life Skills” in 1997.

Carpenter is well known as a guest speaker, humorist, folk singer, entertainer and has preached sermons.

“Carlin has been a model for students and colleagues of that special achievement of bringing together wisdom about life and learning with expertise in the field of athletics,” said Snyder. “Carlin's vision, his astonishing persistence, and his far-reaching influence on students and colleagues are tributes to what can be done through loyalty, sheer hard work and a belief in people.”

Carpenter’s retirement will be effective Sept. 1.

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