

Thursday, February 14, 2008

## **Recruiting loss minimal with GCU in football picture**

*By George Witkowski*

The 15,000-student Division-II Grand Canyon University will host football beginning in 2009, and Glendale Community College football coach Mickey Bell is not too concerned about a big drop in recruits.

Grand Canyon's Chief Executive Officer Brent Richardson said the go-ahead plan was necessary.

"Based on the reaction we've had from local high schools and the community, we're confident that there's support for us to move forward, Richardson said. It's a program that builds community camaraderie and student enthusiasm, and it would really complete our roster of athletic programs on campus."

Late last fall, Grand Canyon hosted an exploratory meeting with high school athletic directors and coaches to discuss the potential of introducing a football program. The response was overwhelmingly positive of the nearly 80 in attendance.

Grand Canyon Athletic Director Keith Baker believes the program would attract 80 to 100 new students and 24 scholarships would be available.

A football coach would be named in late February or early March, according to school sources.

"We're in the fortunate position of having visionary leadership at this school," Baker said. "They realize an investment in programs to enhance the on-ground student experience helps our reputation as a well-rounded educational institution."

Bell, who heard of the move during the middle of last football season, said there may be a little change in recruiting numbers.

"It will affect it a little bit, but I don't think a whole lot," Bell said. "I think players (wanting to go Division II), will look at other Division-II schools in Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska. We'll lose a few to the fact that some kids

will go to a D II school, but most kids we get still want a chance to play D I football.”

Bell said there are parents who would prefer their son play Division II football rather than a community college, but the quality of academic and playing experience is invaluable, said Bell, who played football at GCC.

Bell said the GCC tradition of bowl appearances and national championships help when it comes to recruiting, but there will still be the underlying current of attending a four-year university.

“Some want their sons to go to a Division-II school and that’s where the advantage of Grand Canyon University will come in,” Bell said. “There are a lot of Division-I caliber players in the Valley and if GCU does it (recruit those players), probably they can do a great job.”

Glendale Community College running back Jordan Scott, who attended North Canyon High School, hopes to make the moves to a Division-I team. The GCC experience has been a helpful one, he said.

“There are a lot of different people from a lot of different places ,” Scott said. “It (having Division II football in the Valley) doesn’t concern me at all. Division II will always be there (if he chooses) and Grand Canyon is another option.

Paradise Valley High School and GCC running back Mike Williams said what he has learned has been valuable.

“Basically, the coaches are into certain (playing) positions, which is another step you have to take to get to another level,” Williams said. “I could have taken the step to go to a Division II, but I chose to go to a community college to better myself.”

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