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Freeze's First step Forward

PHILLIP WALLER | The Daily Mississippian

By AUSTIN MILLER
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After arguably the worst season in school history, new head coach Hugh Freeze won the press conference and took the first step to rebuilding the football program and uniting the fan base.

When reports started to surface, the reaction was mixed, but Freeze won over the capacity crowd at the Ford Center with his love and vision for Ole Miss, both delivered in a charismatic fashion.

"I understand the Ole Miss people and the love you have for the University, each other and the

love you have for family," Freeze said during Monday's introductory press conference. "I have that love. This is a destination place for me. This is where I want to live and retire. We understand that to accomplish what we want will take tremendous energy, passion and desire."

After a coaching search that took many twists and turns, the search committee, co-chaired by football legend Archie Manning and Mike Glenn, FedEx Vice President of Market Development and Corporate Communications, tabbed Freeze as their number one choice and made the deci-

sion to offer him the job Sunday evening. Chancellor Dan Jones said Freeze, the Rebels 37th head coach, will make approximately \$1.5 million per season over the course of a four-year contract, with athletic and academic incen-

See FREEZE, PAGE 2

BRIARCREST CHRISTIAN

- Compiled a 99-23 record as head football coach from 1995 to 2004
- Led the Saints to six straight state championships, which included state championship titles in 2002 and 2004
- Portrayed in the movie "The Blind Side."
- Coached future Ole Miss and NFL players Michael Oher and Greg Hardy

OLE MISS

- Served three years as an assistant under Ed Orgeron from 2005 to 2007
- Managed the day-to-day external affairs as Assistant Athletics Director in 2005
- Served as recruiting coordinator from 2006 to 2007
- Coached the tight ends in 2006 and the wide receivers in 2007

LAMBUTH

- Compiled a 20-5 record as head football coach from 2008 to 2009 at the Jackson, Tenn. university
- Coached the Eagles to an 8-4 mark and the first round of the NAIA playoffs in 2008
- Completed the best regular season in school history (11-0) and finished 12-1 and ranked No. 6 in NAIA

ARKANSAS STATE

- Joined the staff as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in 2010
- Named the program's 27th head coach on Dec. 2, 2010
- Became just the 14th FBS first-year head coach to win 10 regular season games
- Set a combined 21 offensive school records in 2010 and 2011

FREEZE, continued from page 1

tives that could increase his yearly salary to more than \$2.5 million.

“Coach Freeze is one of the most highly regarded young coaches in the country,” Glenn said. “He is known as an offensive genius, but he also understands that it takes great defensive to win in the SEC. Bob Beaudine made it very clear that he had placed many coaches throughout his career and that Hugh Freeze has what it takes.”

Freeze returns to Ole Miss, where he served as an assistant on the staff of former head coach Ed Orgeron.

Since that three-year stop in Oxford, from 2005 to 2007, he has been a head coach at Lambuth University, the offensive coordinator at Arkansas State and, most recently, the head coach at Arkansas State.

“I think whatever level you coach at, you think that there is a different defense or offense being run,” Freeze said. “Every single place I’ve been the kids are the same, their emotions and desire to win are the same, and their desire for someone to love and care for them is the same.”

In his one season as head coach, Freeze led Arkansas State to a 10-2 record and the program’s first Sun Belt Championship, becoming just the third school in conference history to finish undefeated in conference play with a perfect 8-0 record. The Red Wolves also carry the nation’s second-longest winning streak, now at nine games,

and were one of just four teams to finish in the top 30 in both total offense and total defense.

He called this past season “one of the greatest rides of his life,” but is ready to make things happen at Ole Miss and help the program get to a SEC Championship. He has put together both short-term and long-term plans to accomplish his goals and realize his vision.

In the short term, he talked about a 90-day plan, which includes getting a partial staff in place to hit the recruiting trails. When asked about putting his staff together, he singled out current Arkansas State assistants Chris Kiffin, Dave Wommack, Maurice Harris and Tom Allen.

Another assistant from that staff, Darren Hiller, is another possible staff edition. It remains to be seen if Gunter Brewer, who led Ole Miss’ transition team from Nutt to Freeze, will be retained.

Another name to watch is Frank Wilson, the running backs coach and recruiting coordinator at LSU, who is a candidate for the

offensive coordinator position.

In the long-term, Freeze talked about a 12-month plan for recruiting he learned under Orgeron, accountability groups for team discipline and an offensive philosophy he called “basketball on grass.”

I think it is an advantage for teams that may play in a league like this that don’t see that kind of offense all the time,” Freeze said. “I know that it limits exactly what a defense can call.

“I am not suggesting that defenses can defend it, but it has been very successful for us. We will go very fast. We have three speeds and we like to go the fastest a lot.”

He also spoke in more general terms, talking about F.A.M.I.L.Y. and how each letter represents a different aspect of his coaching values, as well as actions matching goals and the phrase, “Win the Day,” to improve the football program.

Freeze simply won the press conference and took a first step to rebuilding the football program and uniting the fan base.



GRAPHIC BY JOSH HOLLINGSHEAD | The Daily Mississippian

School Records set while at Arkansas State

2010 - Offensive Coordinator

Passing Touchdowns (23)

2011 - Head Coach

Total Offense (5,441 yards)

Total Offense Per Game (453.4 ypg)

Total Plays (929)

First Downs (284)

Most Passing First Downs (153)

Most Pass Attempts (442)

Most Completions (296)

Highest Completion Percentage (67.0)

Most Passing Yards (3,464)

Most Passing Yards Per Game (288.7)

Field Goal Attempts (32)

Field Goals Made (22)

GRAPHIC BY PETRE THOMAS | The Daily Mississippian



PHOTO COURTESY ARKANSAS STATE SPORTS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

Years	Team (Position)	Record (Sun Belt)	Total Offense	Passing Offense	Rushing Offense	Scoring Offense
2010	Arkansas State (OC)	4-8 (4-4)	40th (403.4 ypg)	31st (254.3 ypg)	68th (149.1 ypg)	42nd (30.0 ppg)
2011	Arkansas State (HC)	10-2 (8-0)	25th (453.4)	17th (288.7)	55th (164.8)	28th (33.5)

Freeze’s future staff: Potential additions?



FRANK WILSON

- LSU Running Backs Coach and Recruiting Coordinator (2010-Present)



DAVE WOMMACK

- Arkansas State Defensive Coordinator and Safeties Coach (2011-Present)



GUNTER BREWER

- Ole Miss Associate Head Coach, Passing Game Coordinator and Wide Receivers Coach (2011-Present)



TOM ALLEN

- Arkansas State Assistant Head Coach and Linebackers Coach (2011-Present)



MAURICE HARRIS

- Arkansas State Tight Ends Coach (2008-Present) and Recruiting Coordinator (2011-Present)



DARREN HILLER

- Arkansas State Offensive Line Coach (2002-Present) and Run Game Coordinator (2011-Present)



CHRIS KIFFIN

- Arkansas State Defensive Line Coach (2011-Present)



Freeze introduced as Head Coach: Ole Miss Community Reacts

@HughFreeze_ASU

"Long Tweet: Wow, Thank You to the #RedWolfNation. Thank you for everything you've done for my family. Jonesboro is truly a wonderful place. This has been given an opportunity I can not turn down. It is not with out a lot of prayer, and thought. I asked for a word from God, I found Jeremiah 29:11-14. I have taken the Head Coaching Job at Ole Miss, but it's not without a heavy heart. To the players at Arkansas State. I LOVE EACH and EVERYONE of you. I'm sorry, i truly am. I hope that in time you will forgive me. If there is anything that any of you need, just let me know. I Love you guys. Arkansas State will always be a place dear to me, Thank You"

@peteboone

"Hugh Freeze is perfect for Ole Miss. He will bring an immediate positive impact."

@mtjrolemiss

"What a press conference! The auditorium was full of Ole Miss Rebels ready for Coach Freeze's leadership. #win-the-day #OleMiss"

@CassiusVaughn

"who remember this from ole miss...@hodge_3 @DoubleC20 @MRMarcusTillman @TruMcBride coach freeze saying you got to fit like a glove"

@hodge_3

"He a cold coach forreal offensive minded"

@MichaelOher

"Get ready for some great Football season ahead Ole Miss!!"

@BobLynchII

"Buy on Hugh Freeze because, at the very least, ASU team would have beaten our Rebels last season."

@captainmcinnis

"My impression: Freeze didn't come off like a small-program guy. Calm confidence carried the room. #FreezeRevival"

@ClayPrice15

"#Buy - Hodge, Wallace, Oher, Lewis, McCluster, Powe, Hardy, Bolden. Miss Boy w/Colonel Reb in his heart & nasty spread offense"

@gtownreb

"#buyfreeze he doesnt have much D1 experience but he knows the game, and is a great recruiter, need good coaches around him"

@HampHickman

"Buy.. He's a proven winner. Everywhere."

@IAmTheJody

"The better question is why we needed a so called search committee for this? Boone's secretary could have handled this hire"

@krush_1228

"buy, he actually has an offensive philosophy."

@paigeadoue

"24 hrs later, I think I'm finally on #TeamFreeze . #hottytoddy #gorebs . (But I'm still not happy that we didn't interview Kirby Smart)"

@SnyGuy

"Hugh Freeze didn't need to paint an endzone with a hashtag to trend on Twitter. That's a good start."

SPORTS

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Ole Miss Recruiting: The Hugh Freeze Era



GREG HARDY

Defensive End
Ole Miss Rebels
2006-2009
Carolina Panthers
2010-Present
Rivals.com 3★
Scout.com 3★



JOHN JERRY

Offensive Guard
Ole Miss Rebels
2006-2009
Miami Dolphins
2010-Present
Rivals.com 4★
Scout.com 4★



KENDRICK LEWIS

Safety
Ole Miss Rebels
2006-2009
Kansas City Chiefs
2010-Present
Rivals.com 3★
Scout.com 3★



DEXTER McCLUSTER

Running Back
Ole Miss Rebels
2006-2009
Kansas City Chiefs
2010-Present
Rivals.com 3★
Scout.com 3★



JERRELL POWE

Nose Tackle
Ole Miss Rebels
2008-2010
Kansas City Chiefs
2011-Present
Rivals.com 5★
Scout.com 5★



CASSIUS VAUGHN

Cornerback
Ole Miss Rebels
2006-2009
Denver Broncos
2010-Present
Rivals.com 3★
Scout.com 3★

2006 Ole Miss Recruiting Class

Rivals.com

15th Overall, 6th SEC

Scout.com

15th, 5th SEC

2007 Ole Miss Recruiting Class

Rivals.com

27th, 8th SEC

Scout.com

31st, 9th SEC



2011 FBS College Coaching Carousel



GRAPHIC BY PETRE THOMAS | The Daily Mississippian

School	Out	In	School	Out	In
AKRON	Rob Ianello		MEMPHIS	Larry Porter	
ARIZONA	Mike Stoops	Rich Rodriguez	NEW MEXICO	Mike Locksley	Bob Davie
ARIZONA STATE	Dennis Erickson		NORTH CAROLINA	Everett Withers	
ARKANSAS STATE	Hugh Freeze		OLE MISS	Houston Nutt	Hugh Freeze
COLORADO STATE	Steve Fairchild		OHIO STATE	Luke Fickell	Urban Meyer
FLORIDA ATLANTIC	Howard Schnellenberger	Carl Peli	PENN STATE	Tom Bradley	
FRESNO STATE	Pat Hill		TEXAS A&M	Mike Sherman	
HAWAII	Greg McMackin		TULANE	Bob Toledo	Curtis Johnson
ILLINOIS	Ron Zook		UAB	Neil Callaway	Garrick McGee
KANSAS	Turner Gill		UCLA	Rick Neuheisel	
MASSACHUSETTS	Kevin Morris		WASHINGTON STATE	Paul Wulff	Mike Leach

Ford Center 'Freeze' Frames



AUSTIN MCAFEE | The Daily Mississippian



PETRE THOMAS | The Daily Mississippian



PETRE THOMAS | The Daily Mississippian



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PHILLIP WALLER | The Daily Mississippian



AUSTIN MCAFEE | The Daily Mississippian

TOP: Ole Miss fans listen as new Head Coach Hugh Freeze speaks after being announced as the 37th head coach. TOP MIDDLE LEFT: Ole Miss Alumnus Sean Tuohy among those in attendance. TOP MIDDLE RIGHT: Freeze speaks to crowd. BOTTOM MIDDLE LEFT: Chancellor introduces search committee co-chair Mike Glenn. BOTTOM MIDDLE RIGHT: Members of the search committee. BOTTOM: Freeze speaks as his family looks on.

Freeze 'has it'

By DAVID COLLIER
dlcollie@olemiss.edu

Former Rebel quarterback Archie Manning and FedEx Vice President of Market Development and Corporate Communications Mike Glenn co-chaired the search committee responsible for hiring Hugh Freeze as the next head football coach at Ole Miss.

The rest of the committee included Richard Noble, who is the President of the Alumni Association and serves on the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, Ronald Rychlak, who is the Chair of the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee, and Ethel Young-Minor, an English and African-American Studies professor as well as the Senior Faculty Fellow of the Lucky Day Residential College.

This committee interviewed candidates from both the college and professional ranks to find the right guy to lead the football program.

Glenn said Manning and himself laid down the mold they were looking for going into the search. That mold included a man of character and integrity, who would focus on winning the state of Mississippi in recruiting.

They were looking for "a disciplinarian and someone with their personal skill that can unite and galvanize (the) fan base."

After gathering the mold of who would take the rein of the Ole Miss football program, Manning and Glenn hired the search firm Eastman & Beaudine to help gather a list of potential candidates.

While he would not get into specifics about who all was interviewed for the position, Glenn noted the interest in the job was "broad and deep."

The committee took each candidate into consideration, but according to Glenn, no one matched up with Freeze.

"Once we completed our interviews, our number one

choice was crystal clear," he said. "Our number one (choice) was coach Hugh Freeze. Coach Freeze is one of the most highly regarded young coaches in the country. He is known as an offensive genius, but he also understands it takes great defense to win in the Southeastern Conference."

The committee's decision was further solidified when a member of the search firm told Glenn his thoughts.

"Bob Beaudine of Eastman & Beaudine came back into the room and said 'You know, I've worked to place over 40 coaches around the country, and I know when some folks have it and some folks just don't. And let me tell you now, this guy (Freeze) has it.'"

Glenn and Manning fell in love with the passion and love Freeze has for both the game of football and Ole Miss as a whole, but one thing that made Freeze stand out above the rest was the preparation he showed during his interview.

"I have never seen a candidate come into an interview more prepared with greater passion, greater energy and regardless of the topic, whether it was offensive philosophy, defensive philosophy, thoughts on strength and conditioning or how to deal with different social issues the kids might have," Glenn said. "(Freeze has) a passion and energy for the job. I have just never seen anything like that."

Freeze also showed great leadership, and he has goal set and a plan in place, both short-term and long-term, for the football program's success on and off the field.

"I know leadership when I see it," he said. "I have had the opportunity to hire a bunch of people in my career. Success starts with great leadership and he's got great leadership skills. He outlined a plan called 'Ole Miss - The Journey to the SEC Championship.' That journey starts today."

Hugh Freeze Coaching Guide

The Daily Mississippian

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PHOTO COURTESY ARKANSAS STATE SPORTS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

'Regaining the momentum'

By BENNETT HIPPI
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Speaking out in front of the podium at the Ford Center Monday afternoon, new Ole Miss head football coach Hugh Freeze preached accountability as a major part of what he wants to install in the team.

"If you're not winning the day, you're not going to get there," Freeze said. "Our daily actions have to meet our spoken goals. You can't say that you want to be an honor roll student and not go to class.

"You can't say that you want to be an All-American and not practice hard every single day. You have to win the day."

Added accountability and discipline is needed for a team that saw multiple starters suspended during the season and for a program that has been rocked by attrition the past few years.

"The discipline of our football team falls on my shoulders, period," Freeze said. "I don't get caught up in what happened in the past. These kids have a clean slate with

me. What they do from this point forward is what they'll be judged upon unless there's things carrying over that we have to address."

Freeze, who was the offensive coordinator at Arkansas State in 2010 before becoming the head coach this past season, was hired by the Rebels after leading Arkansas State to a 10-2 record and the program's first Sunbelt Conference Championship.

A former assistant at Ole Miss under coach Ed Orgeron, Freeze made it known that the Ole Miss job is one that is very special to him.

"[This] is not a stop along the path," Freeze said. "It is where I want to live, it's where I want to be, it's where I want to retire. This is home to me."

In terms of what to expect on the field, Freeze is heralded as an offensive-minded head coach who uses multiple formations and runs a fast-paced, wide-open attack. He has the task of rebuilding an offense that ranked 114th in the country in total offense this past season.

Freeze said that the goal for the Rebels offense going forward is "to be a fundamentally efficient scoring machine" and likened the style to "basketball on grass.

"I think it's an advantage for teams that may play in a league like this that doesn't see that offense all the time," Freeze said. "I know that it limits exactly what a defense can call. Certainly, I'm not at all suggesting that defenses can't defend it in this league, but it's been very successful for us.

"We will go very, very, fast," A Senatobia High School graduate and a college graduate of Southern Mississippi, Freeze was asked if the Ole Miss administration had told him the importance of the Egg Bowl. The significance of the season-ending game between Ole Miss and Mississippi State isn't lost on him.

"It's not big, it's paramount" Freeze said. "Being raised here, I have a quite good understand of what that (game) means. The administration doesn't have to tell me that. They don't have to let me know that. I get

Arkansas State 2011 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Record
9/3	Illinois	15 - 33 (L)
9/10	Memphis	47 - 3 (W)
9/17	Virginia Tech	7 - 26 (L)
9/24	Central Arkansas	53 - 24 (W)
10/1	Western Kentucky*	26 - 22 (W)
10/8	Louisiana-Monroe*	24 - 19 (W)
10/18	Florida International*	34 - 16 (W)
10/29	North Texas*	37 - 14 (W)
11/5	Florida Atlantic*	39 - 21 (W)
11/12	Louisiana-Lafayette	30 - 21 (W)
11/19	Middle Tennessee State*	45 - 19 (W)
12/3	Troy*	45 - 14 (W)
1/8	Northern Illinois	____-____()

* Conference Game

it and I understand.

"It's about us regaining the momentum."

Ole Miss has a lot of momentum to regain both in terms of

the Egg Bowl and the program as a whole, but Freeze got that momentum started in the right way in his introductory press conference.

Coming Home: Freeze returns to his Mississippi roots

By DAVID COLLIER
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On Monday, Hugh Freeze was officially announced as the 37th head coach of the Ole Miss Rebel football program, but it wasn't a hire the entire fan base loved.

Not at all, actually.

Since Ole Miss made the decision to fire Houston Nutt after losing to Kentucky, Ole Miss fans were ready for a new leader. They were ready for someone to come in and take the reins of the Rebel football program and take them to places they haven't been in a long time. Those fans were anticipating a hire that

would make everyone in the college football landscape realize Ole Miss meant business.

And why wouldn't you expect that as an Ole Miss fan when you have former quarterback and legend Archie Manning and the executive vice president at FedEx Mike Glenn co-chairing the committee responsible

for making the important hire? However, Manning and Glenn found their guy to lead Ole Miss just 150 miles away in Jonesboro, Ark. That guy is Hugh Freeze.

Many know Freeze from his depiction in the book and movie "The Blind Side" as former Ole Miss football player Mi-

chael Oher's high school football coach, but since those days at Briarcrest Christian School, Freeze has made his mark in the collegiate game first as an assistant at Ole Miss under Ed Orgeron and then as the offensive coordinator at Arkansas

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2011-2012 Bowl Schedule




































<p>Jan. 2 Pasadena, Calif.</p>  <p>presented by VIZIO</p> <p>Oregon (11-2) VS. Wisconsin (11-2)</p> <p>5 p.m. ESPN</p>	<p>Jan. 2 Glendale, Ariz.</p>  <p>Stanford (11-1) VS. Oklahoma State (11-1)</p> <p>8:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	<p>Jan. 3 New Orleans</p>  <p>Michigan (10-2) VS. Virginia Tech (11-2)</p> <p>8:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	<p>Jan. 4 Miami</p>  <p>West Virginia (9-3) VS. Clemson (10-3)</p> <p>8:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	<p>Jan. 9 New Orleans</p>  <p>Louisiana State (13-0) VS. Alabama (11-1)</p> <p>8:30 p.m. ESPN</p>
 <p>Wyoming (8-4) VS. Temple (8-4)</p> <p>Albuquerque, N.M. Dec. 17 2:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Air Force (7-5) VS. Toledo (8-4)</p> <p>Washington, D.C. Dec. 28 4:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Vanderbilt (6-6) VS. Cincinnati (9-3)</p> <p>Memphis, Tenn. Dec. 31 3:30 p.m. ABC</p>		
 <p>Ohio (9-4) VS. Utah State (7-5)</p> <p>Boise, Idaho Dec. 17 5:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Texas (7-5) VS. California (7-5)</p> <p>San Diego Dec. 28 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Illinois (6-6) VS. UCLA (6-7)</p> <p>San Francisco Dec. 31 3:30 p.m. ESPN</p>		
 <p>San Diego State (8-4) VS. Louisiana-Lafayette (8-4)</p> <p>New Orleans Dec. 17 9:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Florida State (8-4) VS. Notre Dame (8-4)</p> <p>Orlando, Fla. Dec. 29 5:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Auburn (7-5) VS. Virginia (8-4)</p> <p>Atlanta Dec. 31 7:30 p.m. ESPN</p>		
 <p>Florida International (8-4) VS. Marshall (6-6)</p> <p>St. Petersburg, Fla. Dec. 20 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Baylor (9-3) VS. Washington (7-5)</p> <p>San Antonio Dec. 29 9:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Penn State (9-3) VS. Houston (12-1)</p> <p>Dallas Jan. 2 Noon ESPNU</p>		
 <p>TCU (10-2) VS. Louisiana Tech (8-4)</p> <p>San Diego Dec. 21 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Tulsa (8-4) VS. Brigham Young (9-3)</p> <p>Dallas Dec. 30 Noon ESPN</p>	 <p>Michigan State (10-3) VS. Georgia (10-3)</p> <p>Tampa, Fla. Jan. 2 1:00 p.m. ABC</p>		
 <p>Boise State (11-1) VS. Arizona State (6-6)</p> <p>Las Vegas Dec. 22 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Rutgers (8-4) VS. Iowa State (6-6)</p> <p>Bronx, N.Y. Dec. 30 3:20 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>South Carolina (10-2) VS. Nebraska (9-3)</p> <p>Orlando, Fla. Jan. 2 1:00 p.m. ESPN</p>		
 <p>Southern Miss (11-2) VS. Nevada (7-5)</p> <p>Honolulu Dec. 24 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Wake Forest (6-6) VS. Mississippi State (6-6)</p> <p>Nashville, Tenn. Dec. 30 6:40 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Florida (6-6) VS. Ohio State (6-6)</p> <p>Jacksonville, Fla. Jan. 2 1:00 p.m. ESPN2</p>		
 <p>Missouri (7-5) VS. North Carolina (7-5)</p> <p>Shreveport, La. Dec. 26 5:00 p.m. ESPN2</p>	 <p>Iowa (7-5) VS. Oklahoma (9-3)</p> <p>Tempe, Ariz. Dec. 30 10:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Kansas State (10-2) VS. Arkansas (10-2)</p> <p>Arlington, Texas Jan. 6 8:00 p.m. FOX</p>		
 <p>Purdue (6-6) VS. Western Michigan (7-5)</p> <p>Detroit Dec. 27 4:30 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Northwestern (6-6) VS. Texas A&M (6-6)</p> <p>Houston Dec. 31 Noon ESPN</p>	 <p>SMU (7-5) VS. Pittsburgh (6-6)</p> <p>Birmingham, Ala. Jan. 7 1:00 p.m. ESPN</p>		
 <p>Louisville (7-5) VS. North Carolina State (7-5)</p> <p>Charlotte, N.C. Dec. 27 8:00 p.m. ESPN</p>	 <p>Georgia Tech (8-4) VS. Utah (7-5)</p> <p>El Paso, Texas Dec. 31 2:00 p.m. CBS</p>	 <p>Northern Illinois (10-3) VS. Arkansas State (10-2)</p> <p>Mobile, Ala. Jan. 8 9:00 p.m. ESPN</p>		



PHOTO COURTESY ARKANSAS STATE SPORTS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

Feldman weighs in on Freeze Hire

CBS Sports' Bruce Feldman wrote "Meat Market: Inside the Smash-Mouth World of College Football Recruiting," which centers on recruiting at Ole Miss leading up to National Signing Day 2007. New head coach Hugh Freeze was the recruiting coordinator on the staff of former Ed Orgeron during this recruiting season. Feldman discusses the recent hire and expectations for the football program going forward.

By AUSTIN MILLER
thedmsports@gmail.com

Austin Miller: What are your overall thoughts on Hugh Freeze being named head coach?

Bruce Feldman: (Freeze) has a lot of success at Arkansas State. It's not easy to take a program that hasn't won a winning season in 15 years, or whatever, to 10-2. I think he will bring a lot of energy to Ole Miss. His ties to Memphis will help him recruiting-wise. I think he is very familiar with the challenges you have at Ole Miss which I think is important. He's going to recruit hard. He'll be aggressive. The challenges are going to be that he has never been a head coach at that level before. Being a head coach at a Sun Belt (school) and being a head coach there (SEC school) is a big difference.

AM: What does Freeze

bring from a recruiting perspective? How involved was he as recruiting coordinator under former head coach Ed Orgeron?

BF: He was definitely involved (in the recruiting). That staff had some really good recruiters. I think Frank Wilson was probably the top guy on that staff. All those guys were really aggressive recruiters. I think Freeze learned a lot from Orgeron in terms of the organizational stuff, the things you need to do, because at Ole Miss you really need to be on players before everybody else in the SEC. If you are late, that kid is going to go to the other school and not your school. I think, in that regard, he knows that and he learned very well. That doesn't mean he is going to beat other schools for 4-star and 5-star guys, but it makes a challenge. I think that was a really good experience for him. It was a crash course in re-

cruting for a guy to be around that for three years.

AM: How does his Mississippi and Memphis background help him in recruiting?

BF: I think it is definitely an advantage because he knows what he is getting into. I think he has some of those relationships with the high school coaches and the people around the community which is big. It's a plus. I think, in terms of the boosters and the different things, Freeze has done a really good job in building those relationships. I think he is in a good spot there. It's just a matter of taking a low program that the recruiting has slipped, and I don't think there is a ton of talent. He's got to figure out a quarterback situation. It's very important for him, right off the bat, to make sure there's not a lot of attrition.

AM: What are the real expectations for next season

and the four years of his contract?

BF: You don't have the worst year in school history and go from that to winning the SEC West. I think that is really unrealistic, but I think if you can get them to four or five wins next year, I think that is a good first step. I mean to go 2-10, getting just drilled by Louisiana Tech, getting beat by Kentucky and pushed around by Vanderbilt. I mean that program was in bad shape. If he can get them to four or five wins and get them competitive. Even if you lose games, just be competitive. That, I think, has got to be the big focus. If you are a team that's not getting beat 51-10 in those games, that is a good sign. They don't have to win all those games, but I think they have to try and be competitive.

AM: What kind of regional and nation impact is the hire?

BF: I'm not sure it has a big national splash because he, honestly, is not a guy people know much about. People know the name a little bit because he was at Arkansas State, but I think he did a really nice job. I know a lot of guys who cover college football and they have no idea who he is. It's not making a splash, I don't think that is the case. I think people are saying if they had gotten Gus Malzahn, there is a big name attached to it. There is a familiar face. If they were able to land somebody bigger from a bigger program, that would have gotten headlines. You win the press conference or whatever, that's one thing. Freeze is getting \$1.5 million. It's hard to really resonate nationally if you are not spending \$3 or \$4 million dollars. I mean we are talking about an Urban Meyer, that is a big splash hire. Right now, this is where Ole Miss is at and I think Freeze will go 100 miles an hour and prove to people that he deserves this job right now.

AM: How do you grade the search committees efforts landing Freeze with some of the other names that were floating around?

BF: I don't know how many guys were seriously considered for me to answer. Between Archie Manning and (Mike Glenn), I think when people looked at it, it was still Ole Miss. I think there is a lot of people who are skeptical, coaches who were skeptical whether the place knows what it takes to compete in the SEC West. There is some real skepticism of that and that affects the coaching search. If you had told people two weeks ago Ole Miss was going to get Hugh Freeze, I think there would have been a lot of people nationally who would have gone, really, this is it? You know, we will see. There has been hires that people haven't really expected and kind shrugged their shoulders at that have turned out great. I mean a lot of people didn't know much about Gary Patterson, and he was a super hire.

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State before getting the head job a season ago. Freeze led the Red Wolves to a 10-2 record and the school's first Sunbelt Conference Championship in his first season at the helm.

But a lot of people are skeptical about the decision to hire Freeze, and it's well warranted skepticism.

Freeze has only been in the college game for a few years and a head coach at a Division I school for just one season. What has he done to prove that he is ready to be the head man of a Southeastern Conference program?

The answer is simple: not a lot.

But that isn't what is important. What is important is that everyone comes together as one. Everyone from the fan base to the players to the managers to the administration to the assistant coaches Freeze brings in. Everyone wants the same thing.

Since the moment the news of the hire had leaked across media outlets, many fans cheered the hire, while many others were disgruntled. Sure enough, Freeze would need to deliver one heck of an introductory speech to get the Rebel fan base and his new Ole Miss team behind him.

For anyone who watched it live or online, there is no doubt Freeze did just that.

He had the crowd excited as he gave his plan to get Ole Miss to the SEC Championship Game. Freeze even threw a shot back to Southern Mississippi head coach Larry Fedora who declared they were the Flagship university in Mississippi when he was hired three years ago.

"This is THE University of Mississippi," Freeze said passionately. "There a few who think they are the Flagship of the state of Mississippi, but THIS is the Flagship of the state of Mississippi."

For a fan base as torn apart as Ole Miss has been lately, they needed something to light a fire under them. They needed something to get them going.

Who knew that something would be Freeze?

Not to mention the love he has for this University. Barely two sentences into his comments to the Rebel faithful, he began to choke up.

"I've taken them all around the country to bring them back to one place," he said. "And that's the University of Mississippi."

Freeze noted that for him Ole Miss is not a stepping stone to land him a more high profile job, but he said Ole Miss is a place he has dreamed of retiring at. He kept referencing the overwhelming joy he has been given this opportunity.

So for those who are wary of the hire, I understand your logic, but give Hugh Freeze a chance. He's a man who will do whatever it takes to be successful at Ole Miss. Buy in and see what he can do with this program.