



## Coker signs 24 to inaugural UTSA football class

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By PAUL J. WEBER / Associated Press

Larry Coker said the Miami Hurricanes seldom came up when he was trying to lure his first class of recruits to UTSA.

Sure, if a high school prospect wanted to hear stories about the famous players he once coached, Coker obliged. But he didn't brag during recruiting visits for his new school.

That's not to say the coach with a national championship ring didn't use his pedigree when trying to sway players toward a team that won't play its first game until 2011.

"Yeah. I did do that," Coker said Wednesday upon announcing an inaugural recruiting class of 24 players who will start practicing this fall.

Even though he won't take the field on game day for another 19 months, Coker was just happy to have players to coach again, three years after Miami fired him when a mediocre 2006 season was marred by violence on and off the field.

"I've been around some signing days before, but never as historic as this one," Coker said.

UTSA was thrilled to get Coker last year after he spent two years working as a television analyst and was passed over for other openings. The man who led Miami to the 2001 BCS championship has been busy raising money for football facilities on the 28,000-student UTSA campus and plotting the program's future.

That includes a blueprint to join the Football Bowl Subdivision as an independent as early as 2013. The Roadrunners don't plan to play in a conference their first two years in the lower Football Championship Subdivision, either.

Coker's class includes just one non-Texan and is heavy on recruits from San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley, which Coker believes in an untapped but fertile recruiting ground. He wants his first class to become the leaders of the program.

The most experienced player will be offensive lineman Brady Brown, a 6-foot-3, 300-pound transfer from Division II Texas A&M-Kingsville. Brown played high school football in San Antonio and is the grandson of former AFL/NFL player Bobby Maples.

Elsewhere around Texas:

\_ SMU more than doubled its number of three-star recruits from Rivals.com after going to the

school's first bowl game in 25 years and routing Nevada in the Hawaii Bowl.

Coach June Jones, who turned a losing program into a BCS buster at Hawaii, led the Mustangs to an 8-5 record after finishing 1-11 his first season.

"I think in years past when you're not winning, you lose some the guys you think you're getting," Jones said. "This year we didn't lose any."

The Mustangs already have several young quarterbacks but will add another in Stephen Kaiser of St. Louis, one of eight out-of-state recruits among SMU's 25 signees.

\_ Houston parlayed its first national ranking in 18 years and a 10-win season into a top-50 spot on the Rivals list after the Cougars weren't higher than 87th in the three years before coach Kevin Sumlin arrived.

The two biggest names for Houston are defensive lineman Matangi Tonga, a transfer from College of San Mateo, and Louisiana high school quarterback Terrance Broadway. The Cougars are a year away from needing Broadway, though, because Case Keenum decided to stay for his senior year rather than enter the NFL draft.

Keenum is one of two players in big-college history to throw for more than 5,000 yards in each of two seasons, and Sumlin said Houston's offensive success is helping in recruiting.

"The whole energy of the program has helped," Sumlin said. "We were able to get a couple of defensive players we wouldn't have been able to get a few years ago."