



Traditionally the Mid-American Conference has been called the “Cradle of Coaches” in football, with coaching legends like Bo Schembechler, Woody Hayes, Ara Parseghian, Nick Saban, and Urban Meyer getting their start here. And that’s just football coaches. But is the climate of MAC coaching changing?

In 2005, Ohio University lured Nebraska head coach Frank Solich (59-18) after he lead the Cornhuskers to six straight bowl games including the national championship game in 2002. Solich took a team that was 11-35 under his predecessor to a 50-40 record and four bowl appearances in the last six years. Solich appears to have found a home, recently signing a new contract with the school.

The University of Akron made the news when it replaced their beleaguered head coach with another big name in college football, Terry Bowden. The son of the all-time winningest college coach Bobby Bowden, Terry brings a 139-68-2 record to the Zips. Terry led the Tigers to an 11-0 record in his first year at Auburn. This was after inheriting a 2-5-1 Tigers program that was under probation by the NCAA. Ineligible for the conference championship or a bowl game, the team was named the national champion by the National Championship Foundation. He won multiple Coach of the Year awards that season. He went on to lead the Tigers to a 47-17-1 record over his six seasons there. He then went to Northern Alabama where he led the Lions to a 29-10 record, making the Division 2 tournament all three years.

On the basketball side, Ohio University brought in former Kent State head coach Jim Christian from Texas Christian. Christian went 137-69 at Kent State, winning 20+ games all six years there including two regular season championships and two MAC tournament titles.

And Central Michigan brings in former consensus National Coach of the Year Keno Davis from Providence. He led Drake to a 28-5 record, winning the MVC and gaining an NCAA bid in his rookie year as head coach. He moved on to Prov where he had a 19-14 record his first year (and an NIT bid), and brings a 74-55 record to the Chippewas.

The MAC isn't just bringing in high profile coaches, but is also retaining highly-sought-after coaches it has produced. Akron men's basketball coach Keith Dambrot recently turned down offers from other schools including Duquesne to sign a ten year contract extension with Akron. Dambrot has led the Zips to a 292-155 record, including two conference championships in eight years with the Zips. Keith was inducted into the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame for his contributions as a student-athlete and head coach at St. Vincent St. Mary and the University of Akron.

Another Zips coach Caleb Porter has decided to turn down offers with higher profile programs (and the pros) to stay put in Akron. Porter turned down offers from the Portland Timbers MLS team and the University of Michigan to remain with the Zips. Akron has a long tradition of being a powerhouse in college soccer, with 25 NCAA tournament appearances, and Porter has taken the Zips to the next level, winning the 2010 national championship. Akron's first in any sport. The Zips have the best record in NCAA Division I during his tenure (106-20 .944 in six seasons). He is also among the best in the recruiting business, at or near the top of the national recruiting rankings (ranked #2 behind Wake Forest this year by College Soccer News). The tradition continues.

After years of being the "Cradle of Coaches", the Mid-American conference is becoming a career destination for coaches, both "home grown", and by big name coaches from outside the conference.