



WEST VIRGINIA

FOOTBALL

TAKE ME HOME:

THE RETURN OF
RICH RODRIGUEZ
TO WVU FOOTBALL

SPECIAL EDITION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

The **Dominion Post**

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WVU athletic director Wren Baker (left) introduced Rich Rodriguez as the school's 36th head football coach on Dec. 13, 2024.

Home and back again

The Rich Rodriguez timeline at WVU

Nov. 26, 2000: WVU announces it is hiring Clemson offensive coordinator Rich Rodriguez to replace longtime coach Don Nehlen. Rodriguez, a former WVU player from 1982-84, signed a 5-year deal worth \$402,600 annually.

June 24, 2006: Rodriguez receives a contract extension that will run through the end of the 2012 season. The extension makes Rodriguez the first-ever \$1 million coach at WVU, and he would earn annual \$50,000 increases each season. The extension also included a \$2 million buyout clause.

Sept. 7, 2007: After turning down an offer to become the coach at

Alabama, Rodriguez receives another contract extension that runs through the end of the 2013 season. It increases his pay to \$1.4 million annually, but also doubles his buyout clause to \$4 million if he were to leave the school before August 2008.

Dec. 16, 2007: After a 13-9 loss against Pitt that cost WVU a shot at the BCS national championship game, Rodriguez informs WVU officials he is leaving the school to become the next head coach at Michigan. He is introduced as the Wolverines' coach the next day.

Dec. 27, 2007: WVU files a motion in Monongalia County Circuit Court, asking the court

to find Rodriguez's contract as valid, forcing him to pay the school the entirety of the \$4 million in his buyout. Rodriguez counter-sued, stating he had been misled by then-WVU President Mike Garrison to sign the extension, as well as the school had broken the contract by not honoring promises it had made to him on upgrades to the program.

July 9, 2008: WVU and Rodriguez agree to settle both lawsuits. Michigan agrees to pay \$2.5 million of Rodriguez's buyout. Rodriguez pays the additional \$1.5 million.

2008-2020: Rodriguez

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Rodriguez's return to WVU a journey that reads like a movie

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK
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The movie *Forrest Gump* is about a man's journey through life in the 80s, traveling the world, learning more and more at each stop. He went from Alabama to Washington, D.C., to China, to Vietnam, pretty much all over the world.

In some ways, Rich Rodriguez's journey after leaving West Virginia is similar to *Forrest Gump*. Since leaving in 2007, Rodriguez spent time at six different places, including as far as Hawaii, as an analyst, searching to find his place.

"I was in the bayou, out in the desert, in the hills of Alabama, all over the place," Rodriguez said.

Like *Gump*, Rodriguez had his ups and downs, but his story came full circle in the end, coming



AP file photos

Besides West Virginia, Rich Rodriguez has also been the head coach at Michigan (left photo), Arizona and Jacksonville State.

back home to West Virginia.

The betrayal

Forrest Gump and Jenny's relationship was one of a kind, but flawed. In the middle, Jenny broke things off with Forrest, and there wasn't a strong belief that the two would get together in the end.

Rodriguez was born and raised in Grant Town, graduating high school from North Marion. Rodriguez was an all-state football and basketball player, but he didn't have many options to pursue a career in athletics.

Rodriguez decided to walk-on to the West Virginia football team. De-

spite living an hour away from the stadium, growing up, Rodriguez never went to a game.

"The first game I went to was the first game when I walked on to West Virginia," Rodriguez said. "45 minutes away, I might as well have been an hour and 45 minutes away... My dad figured out that they tailgate

pretty good here. He could sneak a little flask in there with a little extra juice in the stands and have a good old time."

After a couple of years, Rodriguez moved up to get some reps. However, his playing career shifted into a coaching career. While studying at WVU, Rodriguez became a student assistant under Don

Nehlan, starting his coaching career.

Rodriguez completed his education and then coached at Salem, where he received his first head coaching gig, eventually becoming the linebackers coach at WVU as a volunteer assistant, not making any money.

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TIMELINE

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coaches at Michigan for three seasons. In 2010, the NCAA accused Michigan of five major rules violations and found the coaching staff had failed to comply with practice time rules under Rodri-

guez, and used several graduate assistants in coaching positions. Michigan self-imposed a two-year probation period for the football program. The NCAA added an additional year.

After spending a year as a college football analyst for CBS, Rodriguez was hired as the head

coach at Arizona on Nov. 21, 2011.

He coaches the Wildcats for six seasons, but is fired on Jan. 2, 2018, after a three-month investigation by the school stemming from a sexual harassment allegation from a former administrative assistant at the school. Rodriguez admits

to an extramarital affair, but denied all allegations of other sexual misconduct.

The lawsuit from the administrative assistant was dismissed in 2019.

Nov. 30, 2021: After spending previous seasons as an assistant at Ole Miss, Hawaii and Louisiana-Monroe, Ro-

driguez is hired at Jacksonville State, which was transitioning from the FBS-level to becoming a member of Conference USA. On May 3, 2024, Rodriguez signed an extension that would run through the 2030 season.

Dec. 1, 2024: WVU fires football coach Neal Brown after six seasons.

Brown went 37-35 with the Mountaineers. Rodriguez is almost immediately considered a candidate for the job on social media circles.

Dec. 12, 2024: Rodriguez is hired as WVU's 36th football coach. He is introduced publicly at a press conference the next day.



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JOURNEY

FROM PAGE 4

So, Rodriguez had to make money somewhere, leading him to his hardest job ever: Teaching driver's ed at North Marion High School, and bus duty. Rodriguez left bus duty at 1:30 and made it just in time for practice if the three lights in his path all turned green.

"I was a volunteer assistant in 1989, teaching driver's ed at a high school," Rodriguez said. "That's the hardest job I've ever had in my life. Teaching driver's ed in West Virginia.

From there, Rodriguez earned another head coaching job at Glenville State, and then some bigger offensive coordinator jobs until finally getting the head coaching job at West Virginia in 2001.

Rodriguez became a household name and brought the Mountaineers into the 21st century. In his second season, Rodriguez went 9-4, had a bowl appearance, and was ranked a high of 15 in the AP Poll. Rodriguez had WVU as a top team in the nation in the following years, leading his squad to five straight bowl games. In 2006, Rodriguez led WVU to a win in the Gator Bowl, the second-straight year with a big bowl win.



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Rich Rodriguez interacts with fans at the Gold-Blue Showcase.

Before the 2007 season, Rodriguez was offered the Alabama job, but turned it down to focus on the year ahead. The job was given to another West Virginian, Nick Saban, and everyone knows how that turned out.

"Where's my trophy in Tuscaloosa?" Rodriguez told CBS's Josh Pate. "Where's my statue outside there? Because if I

had gone there, you probably wouldn't have those six national championships."

Rodriguez had WVU set up for a promising 2007. And it was. Through 11 games, WVU was 10-1 and ranked No. 2 in the AP Poll. With just one more win over Pitt, WVU had a real shot at playing in the National Championship game.

During the last couple of games, rumors surfaced of Rodriguez leaving the program for a bigger school. Most connected Rodriguez to Michigan, but it seemed far-fetched because this was home.

The rumors didn't matter. There was still one more game, the Backyard Brawl. In one of the most infamous Backyard

Brawls, the unthinkable happened. A high-powered WVU offense was held to just nine points, falling to rival Pitt 13-9, squandering any National Championship hopes.

What'd Rodriguez do? He left WVU without saying goodbye, and before the bowl game, to take the Michigan head coach job. There were definitely issues on both sides,

and lawsuits followed with disagreement over Rodriguez's buyout. It wasn't pretty. Depending on who you ask, you'd probably take their side.

But one thing is for sure: Rodriguez regrets how he handled leaving.

"There are hard feelings because I didn't have a press conference to explain why," Rodriguez said. "I should have. I was told not to, but I should have, I should have had it."

Take me home

After time in Vietnam and recovering from an injury, Forrest Gump found his calling at a couple of different stops. He was good at ping pong, even went to China, and made a ton of money shrimping. It took a while, but Gump found success.

After firings, coordinator jobs and multiple other stops around the country, Rodriguez found his place at Jacksonville State. He led the Gamecocks to back-to-back nine-win seasons and two bowl appearances. In the final weeks of 2024, Rodriguez had his squad in the Conference USA Championship game.

During the week of the game, Rodriguez was contacted by West Virginia about the head

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JOURNEY

FROM PAGE 6

coaching job. WVU didn't heckle him too much because it knew he'd be busy coaching in the Championship game.

Rodriguez wasn't affected by WVU reaching out, and Jacksonville State rolled 52-12.

The day after, Rodriguez hopped on a Zoom call for the WVU job, but he wasn't prepared because Rodriguez was happy at Jacksonville State. If Rodriguez didn't get the job, he'd still be pretty satisfied at Jacksonville State.

"I would have stayed at Jack State the rest of my career and been perfectly happy," Rodriguez said. "Love it there. Great friends, we were winning, had success. But here it is, the opportunity to go back home and finish my career at the place that I played at, coached at a couple times, and all that is, is really neat."

A week later, Rodriguez traveled up to Morgantown for the in-person interview with athletic director Wren Baker, and then, not even a week after the Conference USA Championship game, Rodriguez was named the 36th coach of WVU on Dec. 12.

"It really happened a lot



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

West Virginia head football coach Rich Rodriguez speaks to the Morgantown community and Mountaineers fans during his introductory press conference.

quicker than what most people would think," Rodriguez said. "And so I didn't have a lot of time at all to think about whatever, because I was going to be happy staying at Jack State because we were winning, but boy, I could go back home. That would be kind of a unique opportunity. It all worked out great."

The "backlash"

There was always going to be some backlash when Rodriguez was announced head coach. The last time Rodriguez was head coach, he broke up with WVU without saying goodbye.

Although seemingly a minority, because if you sit at a bar for a couple of minutes, you'd hear

people are excited about Rodriguez coming back, some don't like the idea for a couple of reasons.

The first reason is that Rodriguez is an older coach. Rodriguez is 62, which is the 11th oldest in 2025, so who knows how many more years there are to build a program. Since Rodriguez had been at WVU once,

it wasn't hard to get adjusted.

"I think typically, and this is my 8th or 7th, whatever head coaching spot, it takes you six to nine months to kind of get a lay of the land, not just your roster, but the town, the school and the community and all that kind of stuff," Rodriguez said. "Well, West

Virginia took six to nine minutes... I know where all the bodies are buried and the traps are laid, and kind of understand the environment, so to speak. That made it an easier transition."

Rodriguez talked about how some of his strategies and coaching style might be dated, but he's adjusted over the years, adapting to the new era of college football.

"I'm a smarter, better coach than I was a week ago, let alone 20 years ago," Rodriguez said. "If I'm not, then I'm not doing my program or my players or my coaches any service. So, I've got to be smarter a week from now. We're doing some of the same stuff, philosophically, what have you, from 20 years ago, but also I had to grow."

Then, there's the elephant in the room. How are fans going to react after the brutal breakup almost 20 years ago? The backlash hasn't been too vocal, and WVU tickets are hard to get, so there's a lot of anticipation for Rodriguez's return, but there have been complaints.

There were even protestors at Rodriguez's introductory press conference. Rodriguez isn't worried about the backlash. He brushed off the

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JOURNEY

FROM PAGE 7

protestors, calling them Pitt fans, and said the athletic department was a bit more worried about how fans would react.

“We’ll go around and do our little mountain or athletic club tours and talk to people and answer some questions and be up front with them,” Rodriguez said. “They’ve been great. There have been a couple times somebody says something here and there and all that, and I understand that you might be better off if they didn’t have hard feelings, maybe they didn’t miss you. Then push you away, or something like that. But it’s so in the past, and I don’t mind looking back on it.”

The new era

At 62 years old, Rodriguez is back and has a lot of work to do.

WVU’s football program finished below .500 in four of the last six seasons, including last year, where the Neal Brown-led team finished 6-7.

Rodriguez’s goal in his first year is to build culture and bring back his famous “hard edge,” which is playing tough and moving bodies each play. So far, his players have bought in.

“The one thing we wanted to make sure we

have in the first year is that we establish the environment and the culture,” Rodriguez said. “Coaches use that word all the time, but do they really adhere to it on a daily basis on everything you do? We are. We are doing that. The players have done a great job of buying into it. We’ll see what happens.”

The culture was one of the reasons Baker made the change at head coach. After the home loss to Baylor and even after the win over UCF to close the season, the life within the fandom was sucked dry. The 2024 season had so much promise, but fell well short of expectations.

It didn’t look like a hard-nose team, which is what Rodriguez is hoping to bring back to Morgantown.

“You could sit in the stands and maybe not understand X’s and O’s, but you could tell if guys are playing hard,” Rodriguez said. “I didn’t do a lot of reviews last year, because last year was last year. But I’ve talked to our guys about a couple of games I’ve watched, and I said we did not play as hard as we could play. There’s never an excuse for that. I don’t care if you’re home on the road, ahead or behind, fourth quarter, first quarter, you’re



AP photo

Rich Rodriguez listens to a question during Big 12 Media Day this summer.

going to play as hard as you can on every snap, or you won’t play. We didn’t do that at times, and that’s got to change immediately.”

However, most of Rodriguez’s squad is brand new. He’s completely overhauled the roster, bringing in 70-plus transfers on a roster that holds 105-115. Rodriguez has completely taken advantage of the portal, but despite using it within the restrictions, he has issues with the NCAA.

“I mean, how ridiculous is that?” Rodriguez said in March. “There’s another

portal thing coming up in a couple of weeks... I wasted all my time coaching this guy, getting him ready, and then he’s getting a paycheck to go somewhere else.”

Rodriguez is very vocal about what he wants the future of college football to look like, and he and new North Carolina head coach Bill Belichick want a professional model, where the transfer portal is free agency, recruiting is the draft, and players are contractually tied into a school.

How does Rodriguez feel about the new ru-

mored College Football Playoff formats, whether it’s 16 teams with five conference champions and 11 at-large teams, or the Big Ten and SEC getting four automatic bids each, or keeping the same 12-team playoff?

“I don’t give a sh*t,” Rodriguez said. “I mean, my give a sh*t meter is a lot less than a lot of stuff. If you win the league, you’re going to be in. Just win the league, like 5-11, all that stuff, whatever. I’m worried about just winning. Let’s win the league. I ain’t worried about, well, this team’s going to vote here, what’s this team going to vote there? If you’re good enough, people will know you’re in the top 12 or whatever. It’s good. We win all of our games. I guarantee we’re in the playoffs.”

The current state of college athletics has pushed legendary coaches away, like West Virginia-born Nick Saban, but it hasn’t pushed away Rodriguez. Rodriguez keeps coming back for more.

Coaching football is a lot better than the other things Rodriguez could be doing with his time.

“Hell, it’s a lot easier than working in a coal mine or digging a ditch,” Rodriguez said. “You know what I mean? I just love, I’ve always loved

coaching. I started off at the Division II level, and you’re not taking a job for money or fame or anything like that. You’re taking a job because you love coaching, you love being around athletics, and I still love it.”

The box of chocolates

For WVU fans, it’s nice to have Rodriguez back. Rodriguez is here to do one thing: Make WVU football a competitive program once again. With the current state of college athletics and a complete roster turnover, it’ll be interesting to see if Rodriguez can bring WVU back to where he left it over a decade ago.

Forrest Gump said, “Life was like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get.”

For Rodriguez’s second stint at WVU, you could say the same thing. There’s no telling what you’ll get.

“I’m blessed,” Rodriguez said. “I’m fortunate. It doesn’t happen very often that you get a chance to, I guess, come full circle and come back. There are so many things that had to take place for that to happen, and thankfully for myself, I’ve been blessed with the opportunity that happened.”



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Rodriguez helped to expand horizons at Jacksonville State

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK

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Midway through the summer, Rich Rodriguez was down in Jacksonville, Ala., at lunch. Across from Rodriguez was Jacksonville State athletic director Greg Seitz, who just six months earlier, Rodriguez had told he was leaving to take the West Virginia head coach job.

“I just want to thank you because you helped me navigate FBS,” Seitz told Rodriguez. “You did as much for us as we did for you.”

In 2021, Seitz received an invitation for Jacksonville State to join Conference USA, bringing the Gamecocks from FCS to FBS. Seitz got the in-

vite on a Wednesday, and nine days later on Friday, Jacksonville State announced it would be in the FBS.

“Once we got that invitation, we knew we had to get moving,” Seitz said.

It’s a big jump from FCS to FBS, and Seitz needed a big-time coach to navigate this new space. Head coach John Grass’ contract was expiring soon, so Seitz informed him, a week before the season ended, that they weren’t renewing his contract, allowing for enough time to find a new coach. After the final home game, Grass announced it was his last game.

Seitz and his president went searching. One of the candidates was Louisiana-Monroe offensive coordinator Rich Rodri-

guez. Seitz reached out to Rodriguez’s agent, who was a mutual friend, about interviewing Rodriguez for their head coaching job. Rodriguez hopped on a couple of Zoom calls with Seitz, and Seitz already liked him. Seitz, the president of Jacksonville State, and the chair of the athletic committee, flew down to meet with him, and on the way back, they decided that Rodriguez was the guy to lead Jacksonville State to the FBS.

“This man would be perfect for us,” Seitz said on the plane. “Honestly, within the first 10 minutes, I was like, ‘oh, man, this guy.’”

What did Rodriguez tell Seitz to land the job?

“I feel like I still got some gas left in the tank,

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Jacksonville State athletics

Jacksonville State athletic director Greg Seitz hired Rich Rodriguez in 2021.

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HORIZONS

FROM PAGE 12

Greg,” Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez wanted to remain quiet about his new job offer because his son, Rhett Rodriguez, was playing in his final game at Louisiana-Monroe, but after, Rodriguez was announced as the head coach.

“When you looked at [Rodriguez], I think he’s been named Coach of the Year at every place he’s ever coached, and I think he’s had the Offensive Player of the Year,” Seitz said. “There was no doubt. His offense, he’s kind of the grandfather, kind of invented the spread offense. Just for me, to have the opportunity to hire a guy of his caliber at Jacksonville State really took us from a regional university to a national team. I mean, it gave us instant credibility at the FBS level.”

Instantly, Rodriguez got to work. Like what he’s doing at WVU now, Rodriguez first started off implementing his hard-nose culture into the system. Unlike most schools, like Appalachian State, Coastal Carolina or Georgia State, Rodriguez and Jacksonville State had immediate success.

In 2023, Jacksonville State went 9-4, and in the following season, the first year in FBS, Rodriguez led the Gamecocks to a 9-4 regular season and a bowl appearance. Jacksonville State gained national attention with games on ESPN and ESPN+ at times.

“All he does is win,” Seitz said. “He is one of the most competitive people that I’ve ever been around or worked around. I think that resonates with it. He gets so much out of all of his guys that all he’s ever known is winning

and stuff. He’s not a fun guy to be around when he loses. He’ll be the first to admit that, too. At some point, he’s gonna lose a game in West Virginia and stuff, and that’s going to be miserable because he replays the game so much in his head.”

The national attention also caught the eyes of other schools, like West Virginia, which was looking for another head coach.

In some ways, this scenario played out a decade ago when Rodriguez brought WVU back into national relevance, and Michigan and Alabama were looking for a new coach. Rodriguez left WVU for the Michigan job after a nasty breakup, so would Rodriguez’s leaving Jacksonville State be a repeat of that?

Not this time around. Rodriguez notified Seitz and Jacksonville State

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Jacksonville State athletics

Rich Rodriguez went 27-10 in three seasons at Jacksonville State and won the 2024 Conference USA championship.



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A new generation learns Rodriguez's demanding style at WVU



AP file photo

Rich Rodriguez went 60-26 over his first seven seasons at WVU from 2001-07.

Associated Press

Rich Rodriguez won four Big East championships in seven seasons during his first stint at West Virginia, coming one haunting loss short of reaching college football's national championship game.

Fans who endured mediocrity for the past six seasons under previous coach Neal Brown are counting on Rodriguez to resurrect the magic that produced double-digit wins in his final three seasons with the Mountaineers from 2005-07.

That could take some time. If nothing else since Rodriguez was hired from Jacksonville State last December, they've had Sept. 13 circled, when West Virginia hosts archrival Pittsburgh, whose 13-9 win

as a heavy underdog in Rodriguez's final game at WVU still stings. Two weeks later, Rodriguez left for Michigan.

A huge roster turnover will make it challenging for Rodriguez to compete right away for a Big 12 championship. West Virginia hasn't won a title since joining the league in 2012 and hasn't been ranked since 2018, the last time it had back-to-back winning seasons.

Soft play not tolerated
So far, Rodriguez isn't happy about the depth at any position.

"I like my team, I just don't feel better about where we're at," he said. "We've got time."

Rodriguez has always used a no-huddle, up-tempo offense and is no less demanding now than when he first arrived at his alma mater in 2001. He has no tolerance for

a lack of hard, physical play. Angered by such at a preseason practice, he stopped the drills and made his players run as punishment.

"Way too many moments of softness," Rodriguez said. "It can't ever be allowed. Up front, the O-line and D-line sometimes look like they're tango dancing instead of playing football. People say, 'You like to yell.' No, I like to win."

Offense potential

Among the few returning players are the heart of the offense.

Running back Jahiem White ran for 845 yards and seven scores as a sophomore in Brown's platoon system and could see his carries balloon behind a new offensive line in Rodriguez's run-

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HORIZONS

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and Jacksonville State immediately after West Virginia reached out. WVU athletic director Wren Baker called Seitz about the job, and the conversation went "great."

"If we have a Power Four program coming af-

ter him, that means we've had success, and I'm okay with that," Seitz said. "It's better when a coach leaves you when it's on their terms, instead of me having to say, 'Hey, coach, it's not going well.' When I have to make the change, typically, you're not having winning records or success on the field. I un-

derstand where we are at Jacksonville State, for those coaches. If they can better their staff and get an opportunity to go somewhere else, that means we both had success, and I may be okay with that."

Rodriguez took the WVU job, but his relationship with Seitz remained. Rodriguez still

has his house in Alabama and visits frequently.

This time around, Rodriguez handled leaving a job differently. Whether that was because he realized what he did at WVU was wrong the first time, or his relationship and love for Jacksonville were too strong to just walk away from.

It'd make sense that he finally learned after the decade-long journey through almost every coaching position imaginable, but who knows?

What's known is that Rodriguez has another fan and supporter of his second tenure at WVU—Seitz, and Jacksonville State.

"I wish him nothing

but the best," Seitz said. "I'm just so happy for him and his family that he had an opportunity to go back home. Because a lot of people never get that chance, right? I think he's going to win. I'll be pulling for him every week. I hope he has tons of success up there."



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STYLE

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based attack.

The starting quarterback won't be revealed until the Aug. 30 season opener against Robert Morris. Nicco Marchiol won both of his 2024 starts and has played in 19 career games. He's competing with Texas A&M transfer Jaylen Henderson, who did not play last season, and Charlotte transfer Max Brown.

"We want to be the fastest team in America," Marchiol said. "This offense, I feel, fits me so well."

There are no returning receivers who had more than 300 yards a year ago. Sophomore Cam Vaughn had 48 catches for 803 yards and five TDs for Rodriguez at Jacksonville State.

Legends return

Rodriguez brought a pair of his most accomplished players back as assistant coaches.

Pat White, who went 35-8 as a starting quarterback and won

four bowl games from 2005-09, is an assistant under Rodriguez's son, quarterbacks coach Rhett Rodriguez.

Noel Devine, second in school history with 5,761 all-purpose yards, is an offensive analyst and assistant running backs coach.

Defense needs help

West Virginia was among the Big 12's worst defenses last season. Defensive coordinator Zac Alley, who arrived from Oklahoma, has one returning player with limited starting experience: linebacker Reid Carrico.

The schedule

The Pitt game will be the last in the series until 2029. The Panthers have won two of three meetings since the rivalry resumed in 2022.

West Virginia's league opener is Sept. 20 at Kansas. Among ranked teams, West Virginia plays No. 11 Arizona State and No. 23 Texas Tech to end the regular season but does not face No. 17 Kansas State or No. 22 Iowa State.



AP file photo

Rich Rodriguez led WVU to four Big East titles in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007.



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What they're saying about Rich Rodriguez ...



KIRK HERBSTREIT, ESPN ANALYST

We know what Rich Rod is going to do. He's going to be a lot of fun. And, boy, they got a huge game in Week 3. They need to beat Ohio early, but Week 3, the Backyard Brawl against Pitt at home — I can only imagine what that scene will be like. I'm just so just fired up. It would have been easy to pick Bill Belichick, obviously, but I think just throwing some attention to what they did in West Virginia is very, very deserving.

ESPN's Kirk Herbstreit when he gave Rich Rodriguez his award for hire of the offseason

"RICH IS GREAT. I'VE HAD A LOT OF RESPECT FOR HIM FOR A LONG TIME. I THINK HE WAS AN INNOVATOR. I'M EXCITED FOR HIM TO GET ANOTHER CHANCE. HE HAD A LOT OF SUCCESS. I WAS TALKING WITH ALEX GRINCH (DC AT UCF), WENT TO A PLACE, AND IT DIDN'T GO WELL, AND PEOPLE WERE HARD ON HIM. I'M SURE IT WASN'T ALL HIS FAULT. SOMETIMES YOU LAND IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU CAN'T GET IT DONE, AND THAT'S COACHING. A LOT OF TIMES IT CAN GET PERSONAL. I'VE LIVED THROUGH THAT. I'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF A LOT OF THINGS. I THINK HE'S HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE. THE WORLD LOVES A GOOD REDEMPTION STORY, AND RICH ROD WINNING AT WEST VIRGINIA AGAIN, IT'LL BE A GREAT REDEMPTION. I'M ROOTING FOR HIM."

UCF head coach Scott Frost



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What they're saying about Rich Rodriguez ...

I'm excited for Rich Rodriguez. Known him for a while. He's had great success at West Virginia, had great success as a college coach, and deserved the opportunity to get back into the Power Four. We don't play him this year, but big fan of Rich.

"IT'S RICH RODRIGUEZ. THAT'S A GUY WHO COULD GO INTO THE HALL OF FAME. HE CHANGED THE ENTIRE GAME OF HOW TO PLAY OFFENSIVE FOOTBALL FOR AN ERA."

Arizona State head coach Kenny Dillingham

"COACH RICH ROD, IT'S AWESOME TO HAVE HIM IN THE CONFERENCE. I THINK HE'S CERTAINLY A CHARACTER IN A LOT OF WAYS. GOOD FOOTBALL COACH, THOUGH, HARD-NOSE APPROACH. YOU KNOW THEY'RE GOING TO RUN THE FOOTBALL, THEY'RE GOING TO PLAY PHYSICAL FOOTBALL. THEY'RE GOING TO BE NASTY AND TOUGH. IT'S FUN. THAT'S FUN FOR ME TO GO AND COMPETE AGAINST THAT. HE'S BEEN IN THE GAME FOR A LONG TIME, BUT I THINK FOR HIM, HE'S KIND OF REJUVENATED NOW. COMING BACK TO WEST VIRGINIA TO BE ABLE TO GET HIS THING GOING. I THINK HE HAS AS MUCH JUICE AS EVER. I'M EXCITED FOR HIM TO BE ABLE TO COME BACK AND BRING THAT IN BECAUSE I KNOW HE'LL BRING SOME INTENSITY INTO THE LEAGUE."

Cincinnati head coach Scott Satterfield



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Former players excited about Rod's return to WVU

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK

SRipchik@DominionPost.com

Rich Rodriguez coached against Rutgers multiple times when West Virginia was part of the Big East in the early 2000s. One year, an article came out that Rutgers' personnel were talking trash about West Virginia ahead of their matchup.

Rodriguez got the article and showed it to his team before the matchup. He yelled this to his team.

"Rutgers talking sh*t? Are you sh*tting me?"

Rodriguez repeated it throughout the week leading up to the game. In Rodriguez's tenure, West Virginia never lost to the Scarlet Knights in seven meetings, even beating them 80-7 one year.

"He kept saying it, and it was cracking us up," former linebacker Jeff Noechel said. "That's a saying we said forever and still say."

Players receive a snack each day after training camp before going to the hotel at night. The linemen were last; by the time they received their snack bag, there were no cookies in there. They were upset, missing out on dessert.

Rodriguez found out, SEE **PLAYERS**, 19



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Former WVU kicker Pat McAfee hosted his ESPN talkshow at the WVU Coliseum when Rich Rodriguez was introduced as the Mountaineers' head coach.



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PLAYERS

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and there was hell to pay. Rodriguez went off on his team for stealing their brother’s cookies. He made the team run because of it.

“Until this day, it pops up once or twice a year on Facebook, somebody is talking about stealing your brother’s cookies,” former defensive back Anthony Mims said. “Coach Rod is full of gems, man. He always had something going on that was hilarious or eye-opening.”

In the seven seasons Rodriguez was at WVU the first time, there were endless stories to come. He made an impact on restaurants, fans, regular West Virginia folk, and most importantly, the hundreds of players that donned the gold and blue for him.

Since Rodriguez left, his former players scattered. Some went into coaching, others pursued different careers, but they hadn’t really returned to West Virginia since Rodriguez went to Michigan.

“Since then, we’ve been back some,” Noechel said. “We’d go to some game, but they didn’t really have much alumni stuff going on. They tried. It just wasn’t the same.”

Some former players had some investment in the program, whether that’s a former player who was on the staff, or a coach who was still there, but since Rodriguez left, WVU didn’t feel the same. It wasn’t just former players, either. Fans thought WVU lost that blue-collar feel when Rodriguez left.

Two of the coaches that followed Rodriguez, Dana Holgorsen and Neal Brown, didn’t have the WVU roots like Rodriguez had, and that was felt with the on-the-field product.

Noechel played for Rodriguez when he walked onto the team in 2001 and played four years. He helped in WVU’s 2006 Sugar Bowl win over Georgia. He said that the team played with a hard edge, was blue-collar and tough, which mirrored the people of West Virginia. He hadn’t felt that way watching WVU games over the past decade.

“I feel like that’s kind of been missing since coach Rod’s been gone,” Noechel said. “Those guys and those guys on the staff, we were a group that played well together. We just wanted to win. We played physical, and we took a lot of pride. Especially as a defense, we took pride in being phys-

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AP file photo

Former WVU quarterback Pat White, who played for Rodriguez from 2005-07, is now part of Rodriguez’s coaching staff with the Mountaineers.

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PLAYERS

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ical and just physically beating them. I think that West Virginia connections, I think that's a big part of West Virginia football. Nothing against the coaches, Holgorsen and Brown, I think they were good coaches, and there were some good players. We just haven't been the same team."

It all changed once Rodriguez was announced to return for 2025. Once Rodriguez was named head coach, the text messages started flying between the former players, getting excited that WVU might be "all the way back" as former WVU kicker and ESPN personality Pat McAfee said.

"I was excited because I knew what he brought to the program," former linebacker Mortty Ivy said. "I knew how he made sure everybody, at the time for us, it was hold the rope. He made all of us play together as a team. It was a good fit. He should never have left in the first place."

Now that Rodriguez is back, all three players said they have more interest in going to games this season. Noechel said he's already been back twice since Rodriguez took back over, and the season hadn't even started yet.

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Rich Rodriguez's coaching record

1988 Salem	2-8
1990 Glenville St.	1-7-1
1991 Glenville St.	4-5-1
1992 Glenville St.	6-4
1993 Glenville St.	10-3
1994 Glenville St.	8-3
1995 Glenville St.	8-2
1996 Glenville St.	6-4
2001 West Virginia	3-8
2002 West Virginia	9-4
2003 West Virginia	8-5
2004 West Virginia	8-4
2005 West Virginia	11-1
2006 West Virginia	11-2
2007 West Virginia	10-2
2008 Michigan	3-9
2009 Michigan	5-7
2010 Michigan	7-6
2012 Arizona	8-5
2013 Arizona	8-5
2014 Arizona	10-4
2015 Arizona	7-6
2016 Arizona	3-9
2017 Arizona	7-6
2022 Jacksonville St.	9-2
2023 Jacksonville St.	9-4
2024 Jacksonville St.	9-4



Ron Rittenhouse/The Dominion Post

Rich Rodriguez watches over a WVU drill at fall camp.

At WVU: 60-26 .698, Big East championships in 2003-05, 2007

At Michigan: 15-22, .405

At Arizona: 43-35, .551, Pac-12 championship in 2014

At Jacksonville State: 27-10, .730, Atlantic Sun championship in 2022, Conference USA championship in 2024

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PLAYERS

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They returned with the hopes of WVU winning games again, but Rodriguez also made a big impact on their lives. Rodriguez talked about how part of McAfee’s success is his own, but part of his work ethic came from Rodriguez pushing him every day in practice to be the best version of himself.

That sentiment is true, whether the former players use what Rodriguez taught them when coaching high school teams, a job in business, or being a great husband. Rodriguez’s coaching style isn’t easy, but it’s worth the impact it’ll have later on in life.

“It was tough mentally because you’re just getting beat on every day,” Noechel said. “They’re throwing you in there to do a little bit of everything. There were times when I thought about transferring, going to a Division II or III school, and being to play right away, but I wanted to stick it out. It’s helped throughout my life and into my professional career and being a dad, being a husband. All that’s definitely impacted me for sure.”

The hype around Rodriguez is real, not only for the fans, but for former players, too. If you tune in during any weekday during the Pat McAfee Show, McAfee brings up Rodriguez being back at least once.

The former players are excited that Rodriguez can bring back the good old days of West Virginia football in the early 2000s and win games.

“You’re gonna expect a coach that demands perfection,” Ivy said. “He’s gonna demand that you play hard, play fast, you play physical. It’s not gonna change. The era of how it is today might be different, but for him to be coaching the way he needs to be successful, that’s not going to change. He’s a winner.”



The Dominion Post file photo

Former WVU linebacker Mortty Ivy played for Rodriguez from 2005-08 and finished with 53 career tackles.



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Coach Rod in the Hall? Close, but resumé needs padding



SPENCER RIPCHIK

There are many fathers of science. There's Isaac Newton, there's Albert Einstein, there's Thomas Edison, and a whole bunch more. They all shaped how we view the world today.

College football has some pioneers and inventors of the game, and most are recognized by being placed in the College Football Hall of Fame. There are 237 coaches enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame down in Atlanta. All are in for different reasons, but one standard that is set is that the head coaches must have a certain winning percentage.

In late May, the qualification was lowered from 60% to 59.5%, starting in 2027, making more coaches eligible. At first, everyone thought of the late Mississippi State head coach Mike Leach, but for those in West Vir-

ginia, their minds went to Rich Rodriguez.

Rodriguez was one of the pioneers of modern-day football as we know it. He ran the spread offense, ran a tempo faster than anyone, and was the creator of the run-pass option, or as everyone knows it, the RPO. Just for that alone, you'd think Rodriguez could be in the Hall of Fame.

But, there's that one qualification: The win percentage.

Before the 2025 season kicks off, Rodriguez's win percentage at major schools is above the 59.5% threshold at 59.9%. He almost made the last threshold. However, he's still an active head coach, and after taking a new job at WVU, there are no signs of him stopping anytime soon. He's also in a new situation, and many have WVU picked to finish last in the Big 12, so it could tarnish his win percentage.

The other thing is, Rodriguez's postseason success isn't crazy. He does have some big bowl wins like the Sugar Bowl in 2005, and the Gator Bowl in 2006, but he doesn't have a single



Photo from College Football Hall of Fame

SEE HALL, 23 The College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta.

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HALL

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national championship, and in this new era, not a single College Football Playoff appearance.

But not all 237 head coaches in the College Football Hall of Fame have won a national title. That’s not a requirement to be etched in. The only requirement is the win percentage, which Rodriguez has before starting his second tenure at WVU.

He does have some postseason accolades. Rodriguez won the Big East four out of the seven years he was at West Virginia, was named Big East Coach of the Year twice, and had some big accolades most recently at Jacksonville State, where he led the Gamecocks to a Conference USA Championship, making him the Conference USA Coach of the Year.

However, most of those accolades came in the few-year stretch at WVU, with the great quarterback Pat White, and his time at Jacksonville State. After leaving WVU, his image took quite a hit.

Rodriguez went to Michigan, where he went 15-22, and was fired. He had the Wolverines on an upward trajectory, but couldn’t



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Rich Rodriguez soaks in the atmosphere while being introduced as WVU’s football coach last December.

get it done, especially in rivalry games. Then, he was fired again from Arizona over a sexual harassment allegation. Those two stains hurt Rodriguez’s chances at making the Hall of Fame. Several coaches

and players in the Hall of Fame have allegations, so he shouldn’t be held out because of that. A stain is still hard to get out, even with Grandma’s stain-removing recipe, and Rodriguez’s recipe is having

success his second time around at WVU. West Virginia writer for the Gold and Blue News, Kevin Kinder, who has been covering the team before Rodriguez even was head coach the first time, agreed.

“I’m not saying he’s got to go 11-1 or anything for a couple of years, but can he take them to good bowl games?” Kinder said. “Not, 6-6 bowl games. But can he get them to good things? I think he’s got a little

more to do with the understanding that I am very much against the idea of the ‘Hall of Very Good.’ To me, it’s the Hall of Fame. It’s a high bar. You got to take my view on it into account. I would say, yeah, on the cusp. Would I say, no, never. Nope. Now he’s sure worthy of consideration, but I think he’s got to do a little more.”

I agree. If Rodriguez can win with WVU in this era of college football, with the transfer portal and NIL, he deserves to be a Hall of Famer. Many Hall of Fame coaches didn’t want to face this new era and retired. It’s a worthy test.

Right now, though, he’s a first-team out, even with his pioneering, the accolades, and his bowl wins. His bowl record isn’t great to begin with, at 6-7.

If Rodriguez can turn around West Virginia, win a Big 12 potentially, make a college football playoff appearance, and now that it’s getting even easier, win a game, he should definitely be in the Hall of Fame at some point.

If he can’t, well, there are a lot of scientists who changed our way of life, and are forgotten. I don’t think Rodriguez will ever be forgotten, as long as you live in the Mountain State.

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Wren Baker: No expectations set for Rod's first season

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK

SRipchik@DominionPost.com

Fans on the Caperton Trail have high expectations for West Virginia's 2025 season, FanDuel doesn't have any faith, and experts think the same. All those expectations and goals for Rich Rodriguez's first year back don't really matter in the grand scheme of things.

Athletic director Wren Baker's expectation is really the only one that matters because he writes the checks and can fire the head coach.

Baker doesn't have an expectation for this year's team, in terms of making the Big 12 Championship, winning a bowl game, or finishing above .500.

"If you go back in my history, I don't think I've ever put an expectation out there in terms of wins and losses," Baker said. "Especially for a first-year head coach."

To credit Baker's decision, the 2025 squad is hard to place expectations on. There's no named starting quarterback, 70-plus transfers, a new staff and head coach. There are also really no set starters. No one knows how good

WVU will be in 2025.

"I wish I could sit here and say I know where we're at right now," Baker said. "With 75 new players, I don't know that anybody knows, right? I think that's probably a record number of new players. I don't know if there's ever been somebody with more new ones. I think the job of our entire coaching staff is to very quickly analyze each of their skill sets, acclimate them to the culture, fit those pieces together in a way that allows you to have success. That's been an awfully big job. I think they've worked really, really hard at it."

However, Baker does have a metric to decide whether the season was successful. WVU could get off to a rough start, but he wants the program to finish strong, building towards 2026 and beyond.

"I think what you're looking for is for the coach to come in and establish a culture, come in and build a foundation, and then when you get to the end of year one, you feel like you got momentum going into year two," Baker said.

With the return of Ro-



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

SEE FIRST, 25 WVU athletic director Wren Baker speaks at Rich Rodriguez's introductory press conference.



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FIRST
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driguez, there’s always going to be expectations from fans, who expect him to bring the program back to greatness. Especially since Rodriguez already left a bad taste in the fandom’s mouth when he abruptly left in 2007.

The sourness was something Baker considered when he hired Rodriguez. The backlash was always going to be there, and Rodriguez said the athletic department was a little concerned about how it would go over. It was off to a rough start when protestors made a small scene at Rodriguez’s introductory presser, but he shook it off.

Baker’s not concerned about what happened almost 20 years ago. Over his career, Baker received emails from fans wanting him to fire a coach, and then the next week, the coach beats a ranked opponent. Then, the fans want to extend the coach. It’s always all over the place.

Baker thought Rodriguez was the best hire to create a successful program.

“My job is to focus on the here and now in the future,” Baker said. “Regardless of it being the coach’s second tenure here, or how the first tenure ended and how people feel about it, the evaluation for me is still the same. Do we feel like we’re laying a foundation, that the coach is building a culture, and that we have something to build on for the future? I’m pretty good about shutting out the outside noise, because I always know that that’s temporary.”

In the morning, when Baker drives over to the parking lot of the Milan Puskar practice facility, the lot is filled with cars. Baker once again drives over at dark, and the cars are still there. In the eight months since Rodriguez was hired, Baker feels pretty good about the trajectory of the program, without seeing the team actually play, yet.

“It’s been fun to work with Coach Rodriguez,” Baker said. “It’s been fun to watch him. He’s very calculated in just about everything that he does when he’s with his team. I’m confident where we are going.”



The Dominion Postfile photo
WVU running back Jahiem White will be a key player in Rich Rodriguez’s first season with the Mountaineers.

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Rodriguez demands toughness, says his players are ‘soft’

This story originally appeared in the Aug. 3, 2025 edition of The Dominion Post.

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK
SRipchik@DominionPost.com

When Rich Rodriguez was a kid, he went out to his yard to the garden in Grant Town, West Virginia. He went out to pick weeds.

“I hated pulling weeds,” Rodriguez said. “I’d rather do anything else than pull weeds... It’s miserable. Absolutely miserable.”

Rodriguez told his dad that he had to go play a sport to get out of pulling weeds. What sport? Any sport to get out of pulling weeds, even if it was lacrosse, which wasn’t popular around that time.

Rodriguez took the podium frustrated after practice No. 2. He said his team took a step back in a couple of ways, but the reason he was most frustrated was that the team wasn’t as tough as he wanted them to be, which he said after practice No. 1, there was no excuse for.

“I thought we were a little soft at times,” Rodriguez said. “We

got some good in, but it wasn’t the step that we probably needed to take. We have to get better tomorrow.”

Soft and Rodriguez don’t mix well together. Rodriguez’s father would come home after a long day at work with black coal dust on his face from the mines, and Rodriguez spent most of his summers in the garden picking weeds, so there was no time to be soft.

He couldn’t wrap his head around why his players were soft. They had everything they needed to exceed.

“You know the people in this state, how they work,” Rodriguez said. “I mean, you’ve seen people. Whether they’re coal miners or anybody, it’s not always easy. Our guys got it pretty good. Y’all been through this building? Have you seen how we eat? You’ve seen all the services we have. They got it pretty good. They live in a fantasy world. I don’t mind telling them. We live, coaches, too, because we get

SEE **DEMANDS**, 27 WVU football coach Rich Rodriguez at practice with the Mountaineers.



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DEMANDS

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these benefits. We live in a fantasy world. We want for nothing. You want food. You want medical help. You want job help. You want financial help. I mean, we got cold tubs, hot tubs. We even got our ice cream machine.”

Rodriguez talked about how he didn’t want to get political, but from 2001, when he first started coaching at WVU, to 2025, he feels athletes have gotten “softer.”

“I don’t really necessarily blame anybody, because everything they got around is how do they make it easier for you?” Rodriguez said. “They might make it easy instead of making things harder for them.”

This is a problem for Rodriguez because his coaching style is to play with a “hard edge,” meaning playing tough, hitting hard, moving bodies, no matter the circumstance, until after the whistle. Rodriguez thought, too, that now that they are getting paid, they can be pushed harder. He even banned his players from filming TikTok dancing to remove any weakness.

Leading up to the first game, Rodriguez hopes to toughen up his players by figuratively getting them to pull weeds.

‘I MEAN, YOU’VE SEEN PEOPLE. WHETHER THEY’RE COAL MINERS OR ANYBODY, IT’S NOT ALWAYS EASY. OUR GUYS GOT IT PRETTY GOOD. Y’ALL BEEN THROUGH THIS BUILDING? HAVE YOU SEEN HOW WE EAT? YOU’VE SEEN ALL THE SERVICES WE HAVE. THEY GOT IT PRETTY GOOD.’

Rich Rodriguez
WVU head coach

“You throw them out in the garden and don’t let them leave until they pull it,” Rodriguez said. “That’s it. Go pull or you can’t eat any of the beans. That’s it. You guys think I’m making up stories, but my mom, if you have ever been to my mom, ask her, ‘What did Rich hate to do?’ I’ll bet you top of the list, pulling weeds.”

On the first day of practice, which Rodriguez thought was pretty good for the first day, he said some of the wide receivers were cramping up because of the volume of his offense. He said he’s not opposed to still getting players in the transfer portal.

After the second day, Rodriguez brought back up the idea of getting players who are tougher

out of the portal if the 115 he has on the roster aren’t as tough as he wants them to be.

“There are still 4,000 kids in the portal,” Rodriguez said. “I got a recruiting staff. I got a big old recruiting staff. They do a really nice job. They’re in. They’re still looking. We’re still looking.”

Rodriguez’s tone might seem harsh for the second day of the long camp, leading up to the first game, but he has a standard he wants met. Rodriguez didn’t watch much game film from the Neal Brown era, but he thought the team wasn’t tough at times, and Rodriguez wanted to change that.

Rodriguez is going to make sure his team is tough, whether that’s new players from the portal or just making his current players pick weeds.

His wife, Rita, told him after practice that he’s always like this after the second practice, and Rodriguez agreed.

“I tried not to be,” Rodriguez said. “In fact, when I woke up this morning, I’m like boy, we had a pretty good practice yesterday. I’m gonna have another good day. I’m not even going to have to yell. It’s just going to be probably a popsicle break, and another popsicle break afterwards.”



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

West Virginia head football coach Rich Rodriguez speaks to the Morgantown community and Mountaineers fans during a press conference in the WVU Coliseum.

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Glancing at the future with Rich Rodriguez at WVU

Bowls, Big 12 titles and a pay raise are in store

BY SPENCER RIPCHIK

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The first time Rich Rodriguez was at West Virginia, he brought immediate success. He won multiple Big East titles, a couple of big bowl games, and was almost in a national championship.

When Rodriguez was hired back in December, the hope for fans was that he'd bring WVU right back where he left off. It's unrealistic that it would happen immediately. Even if you look at his first season, he didn't start off hot.

Rodriguez has a couple of years to refind his footing. He signed a five-year

deal with the Mountaineers, ending in 2029, so he'll be in Morgantown for a decent amount of time, barring he doesn't get canned.

A lot has changed since he was last at WVU. There's the College Football Playoff, WVU is in the Big 12, there's NIL, revenue-sharing and a revolving door of a transfer portal. It's a completely different time period.

Rodriguez is fully embracing this new era and hopes that in his time, he can bring West Virginia back into college football prominence, which has been missing since he left.

Here's what Rodriguez's second tenure

could look like:

Bowl Games? Yes

If Rodriguez doesn't get WVU to a bowl game in his first two years, then it won't be pretty. It might not happen in his first season because of all the turnover and adjusting, but it definitely should in Year 2.

Athletic director Wren Baker said he wants to see momentum from season to season, and it would definitely be on an upward trajectory if Rodriguez gets the Mountaineers to a bowl game in Year 2.

After the first season, Rodriguez should be in

SEE **FUTURE**, 29



AP photo

WVU football coach Rich Rodriguez participates at Big 12 Media Day this summer.

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FUTURE

FROM PAGE 28

a bowl game every year, because that's the bare minimum. He's a proven winner, so it shouldn't be an issue. Deeper into his contract, the bowl game should be higher caliber, too.

College Football Playoff? Yes

With College Football Playoff expansion, it's getting easier and easier to make the playoff, especially if it moves to 16 or 20-plus teams. A playoff appearance means WVU will be ranked in the top 15 or lower, which could happen once during Rodriguez's tenure.

Rodriguez had the Mountaineers ranked in the top 15 five times and Arizona once. He also had Michigan ranked in the top 25 a couple times.

It's definitely possible, and should be a goal in his five years, or he'll stint will be looked at as a failure.

Big 12 Championship? Yes

Winning the Big 12 is harder than making the College Football Playoff. WVU has to have the best record or second-best record in the conference, and then win the extra game.

In the last five years, there have been five different conference champions. The Big 12 is usually anyone's conference to win. Arizona State was projected to finish last a season ago, and won the title. It provides hope that one year, WVU can surprise teams and sneak out a title.

National Championship? No

West Virginia doesn't

fit the recent national champion description, and it's not Rodriguez's fault. Over the past 10 years, the title has been won by a blue-blood college football program. Ohio State, Georgia, Alabama, etc. The big-name programs. The schools that have a ton of boosters and money flowing in to support the program.

WVU has boosters, and Baker announced the Mountaineers reached the \$20.5 million of revenue-sharing, but Baker said it was a lot of effort to get to that point. It might be hard to sustain every year.

Rodriguez has to work with what he's got, and it's just not fair compared to the blue-blood programs. In 2007, Rodriguez was on the cusp, but that was before the league was run by mon-



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Rich Rodriguez is signed through the end of the 2029 season at WVU.

ey, and he still never won one.

Rodriguez will make WVU competitive again,

but a national championship isn't realistic in this age of college football. Rodriguez isn't the only

one fighting an uphill battle. There are a ton of programs that are just a tier below that don't really have a shot.

Contract Extension? Yes

If all goes well, a couple of bowl games, a Big 12 title and a CFP appearance, Rodriguez should get an extension if he wants to continue to coach.

He's 62 now, and in five years, he'll be 67, so there'll be questions if he wants to keep coaching. This summer, Rodriguez stated multiple times that coaching is a lot better than working in the coal mines or picking weeds, so he'll definitely stick around.

The extension might not be long, but he could be around for 7-10 years, similar to his first time at WVU.

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Rich Rodriguez through the years in pictures



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Rich Rodriguez interacts with the crowd at the annual Gold-Blue Showcase game.



AP file photo

Michigan head coach Rich Rodriguez points out a clock discrepancy in the closing minutes against Purdue.



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

WVU football coach Rich Rodriguez hugs WVU athletic director Wren Baker during his introduction ceremony last December.



AP file photo

A West Virginia fan holds a sign referencing Rich Rodriguez during the 2008 Fiesta Bowl, after Rodriguez left WVU to coach at Michigan.



AP file photo

Rich Rodriguez won 43 games in his six seasons at Arizona.



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