Robert Kraft Receives Highest NCAA Award

At the annual convention of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) held on Jan. 7, Robert Kraft, CC ’63, received the association’s highest honor, the Theodore Roosevelt Award.

He accepted the award via video conference from his former campus without getting lost. It has been a long, but productive, week.

How would you describe the staff you have hired?

I have picked some guys who have recruited in the Ivy League or the Patriot League before and understand the type of student-athlete we have at Columbia.

Do you hope to find more prospects, or are you looking to evaluate the current prospects, and what does that mean to you, especially as you embark on your first head coaching position?

I have a lot to prove, not just for myself, but to give other young African American coach-try to show them an opportunity to be head coaches in college football. There are other young African American who are coordinators and position coaches and who are very successful as head coaches. For example, Ramon Flanagan at North Texas has been the conference championship four years in a row, and two years in a row he was the leading rusher in the country with two different guys. Maybe someone will look at this and want to do this. Can’t be one-dimensional. We’re going to put you on offense. We’re going to put you on defense. We’re going to put you on special teams.

The ‘Teddy’ has been awarded to one of the former collegiate athletes who went on to a distinguished career of national significance.

Kraft, who played on the lightweight football team at Columbia, today coaches the New England Patriots, considered to be a model sports organization.

Kraft, who was awarded by the honor said he appreciated the NCAA’s gracious understanding of his choice to be at his team’s game.

Ficken Retires as Men’s Soccer Coach

An era of Columbia men’s soccer drew to a close when head men’s soccer coach Dieter Ficken announced his retirement after 27 years as the Lions’ coach. Ficken, who led the Lions to the NCAA Tournament 11 times and the NCAA Final Four twice, made the announcement in early January.

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As a Coach Award recipient, Bierbaum was automatically nominated for the College Woman Athlete of the Year, as the recipient of the Honda Award, given annually to the top women athletes in 12 NCAA-sanctioned sports.

Norries Wilson on Revitalizing CU’s Football Program

Norries Wilson became Columbia’s 11th head coach in December of 2005. Before coming to Columbia, Wilson served as offensive coordinator at the University of Connecticut for the past four seasons, during which he distinguished himself as one of the top assistant coaches in the nation. He was one of five finalists for the Frank Broyles Award in 2004—a season in which the UConn Huskies led the Big East in both total and scoring offense. In 2003, he guided the team to a 9-3 record with a 6-2 mark in conference play, while finishing the season in sixth place in the Big East. Wilson’s total offense ranked 10th nationally, averaging 381.9 yards per contest.

Wilson’s first team at UConn was the 1996 class, which was ranked No. 19 in the nation. He left UConn after the 2000 season to become the head coach at Columbia.

Wilson has stated clearly that his focus is to develop a winning football program in the Ivy League, not seeing it as just the offensive part of the football program, not seeing it just as the offensive part of the team. In the end, we took a program thought wouldn’t be very successful all the way to a bowl game.

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