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Travis Cunningham Added to Georgia Southern Coaching Roster

Veteran linebackers coach to join Lunsford's staff

Football

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STATESBORO - Veteran coach [Travis Cunningham](#) has been named an assistant coach on the defensive side of the ball at Georgia Southern by head coach [Chad Lunsford](#), as announced Friday. Cunningham spent the past 16 seasons on the Gardner-Webb coaching staff, the final two as the Bulldogs' defensive coordinator while coaching the inside linebackers in GWU's 3-4 scheme.

"I'm excited to add [Travis Cunningham](#) to the Georgia Southern Football Staff," Lunsford said. "After thorough interviews, Coach Cunningham truly exemplified the meaning of Blue Collar and fits the GS culture. He will be a great fit for the staff and our players."

One of the region's most respected young defensive minds, Cunningham excelled in his role at G-W, particularly with in-game adjustments. In 2017, two of his defensive players earned All-Big South honors. Kenyatta Dunbar played inside linebacker at a high level for the Runnin' Bulldogs in 2017, totaling 69 stops and ranking second in the Big South Conference with 13.5 tackles for loss to earn first-team honors. Josh Ramseur recorded a career-high 50 total tackles at his nose guard spot to earn second-team honors.

"I am very humbled by the opportunity to be a part of Coach Lunsford's staff and I'm excited to be able to join the Georgia Southern family and Eagle Nation," Cunningham said. "What stuck out to me during this process was Coach Lunsford's commitment to the staff, to his players and to Georgia Southern. Professionally, this is an unbelievable opportunity. While my time at Gardner-Webb has been incredible, I'm excited about a fresh start and a chance to forge new relationships with the new staff and players. It's going to be difficult to leave Gardner-Webb as it's been an incredible place for me and my family. I'm thankful for the opportunities afforded to me at Gardner-Webb and now Georgia Southern. It's going to be bittersweet leaving, but I'm excited about what lies ahead."

Cunningham's 2016 unit improved steadily as the year progressed, with linebacker Chad Geter earning FCS All-America honors and running mate Aaron Cook landing a spot on the All-Big South team. The Gardner-Webb defense produced four total All-Big South Conference performers in 2016, with Geter leading the league with 118 total tackles – earning a spot on the Buck Buchanan Award Watch List as well.

The Runnin' Bulldogs ranked in the top three among Big South program's defensively in total defense, scoring defense and rushing defense. The 'Dogs ranked second in red zone defense, an all-important stat that has become a fine tradition in Boiling Springs.

Cunningham and the GWU defense were excellent in 2015 statistically, finishing No. 13 nationally in total defense (300.5 ypg), No. 3 in third-down conversion defense (25.9 percent), No. 3 in red zone touchdowns allowed (9), No. 7 in passing defense (151.5 ypg), No. 6 in first down defense (15.0 per game), No. 19 in red zone defense (69.0 percent), No. 23 in scoring defense (20.6 ppg) and No. 24 in tackles for loss per game (7.4).

In 2013 Cunningham was part of a defensive staff that directed GWU to a No. 5 ranking in total defense (296.8 ypg) and led the Big South Conference in rushing defense (122.5 ypg), pass defense (174.2 ypg), pass efficiency defense (114.0 rating), opponent first downs, third down conversion defense (32.2 percent), sacks (27) and fourth down conversion defense (25.0 percent).

Cunningham has continually churned out excellent production from his linebacker unit. A total of 21 players earned all-conference honors under Cunningham's guidance and six were named to postseason All-America teams.

Cunningham also has experience coaching in the secondary, mentoring All-Big South Conference freshman Daniel Cooke at safety in 2005. Cooke went on to earn All-Big South honors four times on the gridiron – one of only seven student-athletes to do so in league history.

Cunningham also coached the team's linebackers in 2003 and 2004, and spent the 2001-2002 seasons as a student assistant linebackers' coach when GWU utilized a four-linebacker scheme. During his time with the Bulldog inside linebackers, Cunningham saw Keppy Baucom earn All-Big South honors three times in as many seasons, with Baucom leading the 2004 Bulldogs with 90 total tackles.

His 2003 unit, spearheaded by Baucom, Jonathan Little, Adam Wagner and J.P. Weaver, developed into one of the region's most consistent and effective groups.

Under Cunningham's guidance in 2002, Baucom earned first-team All-Big South honors and was named Big South Freshman of the Year after leading the league's rookies with 75 total tackles. Four of Cunningham's pupils – Baucom, Brown, Patterson and Williams – earned All-Big South honors three times. Brown was also named the Big South's Scholar-Athlete of the Year in 2009, in addition to earning ESPN the Magazine Academic All-District honors.

Cunningham, a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, played two seasons at Gardner-Webb, making his mark as a long snapper and as a hard-nosed special teams coverage man. Prior to enrolling at Gardner-Webb, Cunningham was a standout in football and baseball at Powell (Tenn.) High in Knoxville.

Cunningham graduated from Gardner-Webb in August 2003, with an undergraduate degree in physical education. He and his wife, Kelly, have a son, Brooks.
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