

# Newsroom

September 3, 2012

Georgia Southern University

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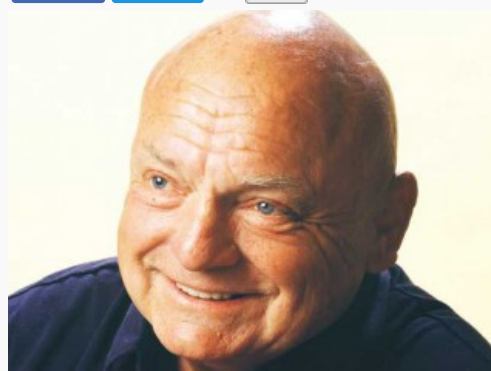
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# Georgia Southern Alumni to Produce Film on Legendary Coach Erk Russell

SEPTEMBER 3, 2012

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Two Georgia Southern alumni will begin production on a major motion picture entitled *Erk* in Summer 2013. The film is a biopic about the life of legendary Georgia Southern football coach Erk Russell.

Georgia Southern alumnus Beau Turpin will serve as producer while alumnus James Kicklighter will be directing the film.

Jay and Rusty, the sons of the late Erk Russell, said in a joint statement, "We are excited about the prospects of this film. We totally embrace the project and feel honored that his miraculous accomplishments will be presented in this form. His story is unique and he was a 'one of a kind' individual. Our family looks forward to seeing his humble yet iconic character portrayed on screen."

When told about the project, U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, a friend of Erk Russell's stated, "Within a few years of Erk Russell's arrival at Georgia Southern University to establish their football program, Georgia Southern went from just having a program to being a national champion. And he repeated that national championship again. But more importantly, all through his life, Erskine Russell did what only he could do: he led by example, not by lecture, what was right about America, what was right about living by the rules, what was right about playing by the rules, and what was right about moral character. I think a movie celebrating Erk's lifetime of service to young people will be a fitting tribute to his memory."

"Football is the reason why I'm in the film industry," said *Erk* producer Beau Turpin. "The first three projects I worked on were all football movies, and I consider it an honor to be able to help tell the inspiring story of Coach Russell and forever immortalize his legacy on the silver screen."

Working with Coach Russell during the infancy of Georgia Southern's football program, later winning national titles as the head coach, current Georgia Tech head coach Paul Johnson fondly remembers his years with Russell, "He is a very successful and innovative football coach, but he was an even better and more interesting person. We enjoyed some great seasons together on the football field and I'll always be appreciative of his support of my coaching career."

"Between our time at Auburn and Georgia, we were together some 20 years. His incredible record as a coach speaks for itself," said legendary former UGA head coach Vince Dooley. "Equally as important is his splendid reputation as a great human being. I am pleased to learn of a film about the late, one and only Erk Russell. It is a fitting tribute to a long time friend and coaching associate."

"Growing up 20 miles from Statesboro, I heard about the stories of Coach Russell all throughout my childhood," said *Erk* director James Kicklighter. "Being a small town boy myself, I am excited to tackle his inspirational all-American story with the support of the Russell family and his closest friends and athletes."

"The university is excited and proud to take part in this film," said Georgia Southern President Dr. Brooks A. Keel. "Coach Russell's unique approach to coaching football is an integral part of Georgia Southern's rich history and culture in athletics. Filming part of this story here in Statesboro will not only draw great attention to our community and university, but will also allow our students a rare opportunity to observe, and in some cases, participate in the making of a major motion picture. The Eagle Nation is delighted to help tell the Erk Russell story "One More Time!"

Turpin and Kicklighter added, "We are thrilled to be making this movie in our home state and filming at our Alma Mater in Statesboro and also in Athens. The support of the Georgia Film Commission, the University of Georgia, and Georgia Southern University is going help make this film extremely special."

Turpin just finished filming *Devil's Knot* starring Colin Firth & Reese Witherspoon, a true story about the unexplained murders of the 'West Memphis 3.' In 2013, Lionsgate will be distributing his last film, *Counterpunch*, a Miami-based boxing film starring Latino stars Danny Trejo & Steven Bauer.

Kicklighter is currently directing *Desires of the Heart*, a film for the international market from producer/executive producer Solila Parida (*Vishkanya*), starring Val Lauren (*Sa*) and Alicia Minshew ("All My Children"). It recently wrapped American photography in Savannah, GA and moves to Rajasthan, India in October 2012. The film will be released in late 2013.

For further inquiries, contact [erkthemovie@gmail.com](mailto:erkthemovie@gmail.com).

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