

Arkansas State hires Tom Bowen as vice chancellor for intercollegiate athletics

On March 10 Tom Bowen was announced to be Arkansas State's 12th official director of athletics

REBECCA ROBINSON
SPORTS EDITOR

Arkansas State hired Tom Bowen as the new vice chancellor for intercollegiate athletics. Bowen, former Memphis athletic director, is now the 12th official director of athletics at Arkansas State. Bowen was announced to be A-State's new AD on Wednesday and introduced to the public at an official press conference on Thursday.

"When Dr. Damphousse asked me if I would assist him in this process and work through it, we both agreed that at the beginning we wanted to take our time," Arkansas State University System President Dr. Charles Welch said. "We wanted to be methodical. We wanted to make sure we got the right fit for where our program is at this particular point in time and where we want it to be."

Bowen has almost 15 years of experience as a Football Bowl Subdivision athletics director. Bowen was a director of athletics at San Jose State University for over seven years before he went to the University of Memphis where he worked as director of athletics for another seven years. Bowen also worked as an executive with the NFL's San Francisco 49ers. He spent his last two years as the founder and president of Bellwether Athletic Leadership Strategies,

a company for national consulting for Division I, II and III collegiate programs and private educational institutions.

"We had an extraordinary number of applicants and individuals who were interested in the position that we talked to but Tom kept coming back to our conversations because of his experience, his transformative work that he did both at San Jose State and Memphis as an athletic director," Welch said. "The fact there are four sitting AD's at the G5 and P5 levels that worked for Tom in their career that he helped mentor and develop. He had a true vision of what this athletics program could be."

Bowen has been hired after former Athletic Director Terry Mohajir's departure from A-State. Mohajir worked at Arkansas State from 2012-2021. Under Mohajir, A-State claimed 25 conference championships, hired eight different coaches and increased the athletics budget by 181%. During Mohajir's reign as athletic director, A-State won four football conference championships.

"The first call I got was from Terry Mohajir who told me he was going to University of Central Florida, and said 'you've got to come look at this, this is great, you'll love it there.' I have been on this campus many times and have seen the amazing and unbelievable trajectory changes that have taken place at Arkan-

sas State University under Terry Mohajir," Bowen said. "I am honored to follow him as the vice chancellor of athletics at Arkansas State."

Bowen has a lot of visions for Arkansas State with a couple he said that are already in motion. A lot of goals stem from dealing with post-pandemic reopening and reconfiguration both in the spring and fall of 2021.

"I'll meet with every head coach and allow them one-on-one and sit down and get through strengths and weaknesses and things they want to have addressed," Bowen said. "Chancellor Kelly has already given me some great priorities that I'll be able to deal with and formulate a cohesiveness of what we are going to do."

Before the press conference on Thursday Bowen met with the faculty athletic representative Karen McDaniel. Bowen also met with the head coaches as well to get to know them better. Bowen discussed building a culture of champions by competing well and performing well in the classroom. At the last institution that Bowen worked at over the last three years there was a 100% graduation rate of student athletes.

"My most proudest moments happen when our student athletes graduate from our university. At Arkansas State our priority will be for student athletes to graduate. To understand that they're there everyday to excel in

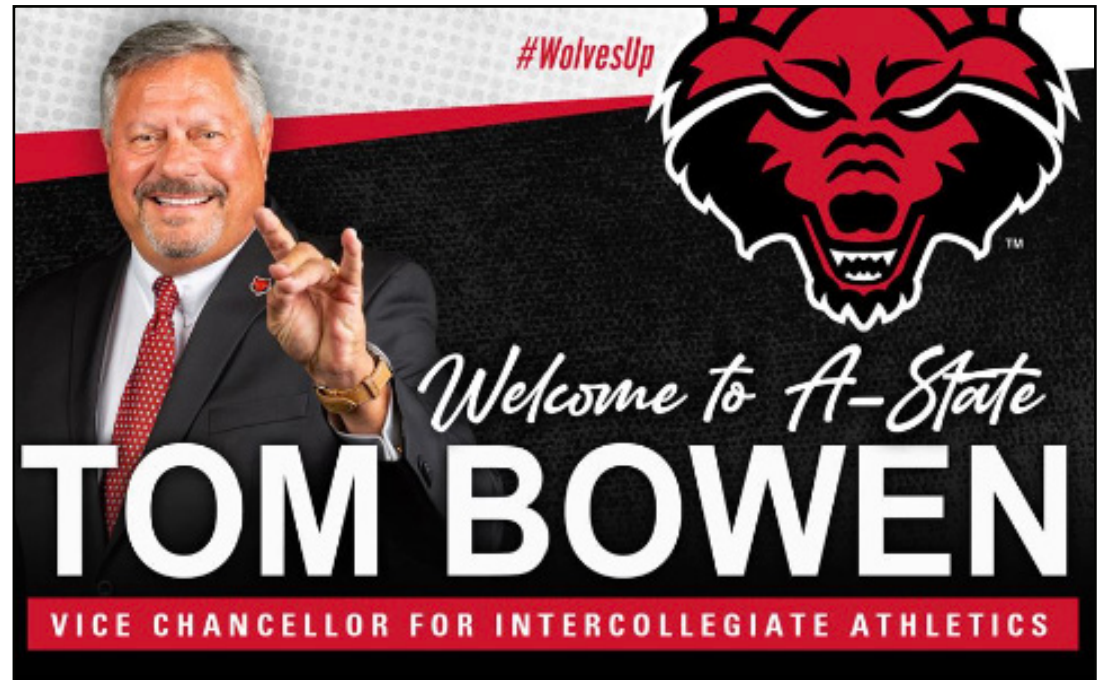


PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

Tom Bowen has worked previously at San Jose University and University of Memphis.

the classroom," Bowen said. Bowen has a focus on making sure student-athletes aren't just succeeding in athletics but also in academics. In the academic year, 2019-2020, Arkansas State's all-department GPA rose to 3.211, which was the best in the Sun Belt Conference at the time.

"You can't have excellence in the field of competition or the arena or the sports field if you can't have excellence in the classroom. Period," Bowen said. "We are not athlete students here, we are student athletes."

Bowen also arranged to meet with student athletes on March

10 which Bowen said was his own personal decision. Bowen spoke to the athletes that night. "I wanted them to hear from me first hand how committed I am to building a culture and what we are going to become," Bowen said. "How committed I am to give them the opportunity to do something in their families and in their lives that will forever change their trajectory in what they want to become and who they can become. That they will have a degree from Arkansas State University."

Under Bowen San Jose State made it to a bowl game for the first time in 27 years. De La Sal-

le Highschool managed to win 100 football games in a row, a vision he had for them. Bowen helped the University of Memphis set new school records in academics and fundraising. A total of 300 Memphis Tigers student athletes earned their degrees during Bowen's time as their athletic director.

"Nothings impossible. Impossible is not a fact it's an opinion and impossible is temporary. That's the ideal of everyone who works with me comes to be a part of my team and is a part of my experience and the culture we will create together. That's our ideal."

New Era of Rugby at Arkansas State

A-State hires Jacob Mizell as the new head rugby coach.



Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-In-Chief

Asa Carter kicks the ball forward in a spring 2020 match. The Arkansas State rugby team hired a new coach, Jake Mizell, after the team had been without a coach since the fall semester.

MORGAN EDWARDS
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A new Era of rugby at Arkansas State University began with the hiring of a new coach this semester.

After the departure of previous head coach, Blake White, the Red Wolves found themselves in need of another pack

leader. On their search for a new head coach, they found former Red Wolf Jacob Mizell.

Mizell played rugby for Arkansas State from 2009 to 2014, winning not one but two USA Rugby 7s National Championships in 2012 and 2013. After his rugby career at Arkansas State, Mizell went on to coach at the University of Oklahoma. He won a championship with

the Glendale Raptors before going to coach at Spring Hill College in 2016.

Mizell was named the head coach of the A-State rugby team in February after leaving his previous assistant coaching position at Iowa Central Community College. He started his duties March 1.

"I take great pride in being named the head rugby coach

for Arkansas State University Rugby," Mizell said. "When I was a player, I had a blue-collar work ethic that I brought each and every day. That mentality brought me a lot of success on the pitch and with this team. As the head coach now, I'm looking to bring that type of work ethic day in and day out. I've worked hard to get to where I am as a coach. My standards and expectations have always been high, and you can bet your bottom dollar that they are even higher here. I challenge my players, every day, that they have a chance to get better or worse than the day before, I hold myself to the same standard."

The players at Arkansas State seem to be warming up to the new leader of the pack. A-State player Paul Ige said, "He understands the game well. He is very passionate." Many players used the words passionate and driven when they were asked to describe their talented head coach. TJ Van Rensburg, the scrum half and vice captain of the A-state Rugby team, had this to say when asked about his new coach, "He has a lot of passion for the rugby game and as well for the Astate rugby program."

Dale Hartmann is an experienced player on the team and he mentioned how A-State's new coach has made an impact just a couple of weeks into the job. "Coach Jake brings a lot of structure and organization to the team, as an A-State rugby

alumni and All-American rugby player he offers a lot of experience," Hartmann said. "He has helped a lot in the past two weeks and drives the intensity of the players to be better. He values the input of the older players and that respect continues through the ranks."

Coach Mizell is a high energy guy and he wants to instill that same energy in his players.

"As a former player for Arkansas State University rugby, I'm looking to bring lots of energy and enthusiasm to the position," Mizell said. "My passion for this program runs deep. It's a team tradition that the guys that make the game lineup all wear red laces to symbolize a bloodline. This tradition was started while I was a player here. I remind the boys often that to carry the bloodline of those who started this program, those who succeeded in this program, and those who moved onto bigger and better things; it's a huge responsibility and honor. The Red Wolf Rugby bloodline runs deep. This program has produced many top tier players in the past and it's our responsibility to hold and raise the standard those players set. To say the least, I'm very passionate about this program and I bring that energy each and every day!"

Even though Mizell is starting his duties in the middle of the spring season, he does not seem overwhelmed by this task.

In a recent interview with Ar-

kansas State University Mizell said, "When opportunity knocks on your door you take it. Being thrown into the position in mid-season is not ideal; but I'm not going to let it lower expectations."

Every coach in the history of coaches has their own goals set for their team. Mizell's goals for his team are set high.

"When the players and I had our first team meeting the expectation was still the same," Mizell said. "This team is on the hunt year in and year out for a D1A National Championship. We've won a few of those in the 7s version of rugby; but never in 15s at the D1A level. The goal at the top of my list is to remedy that. For me, it's taking care of unfinished business. The long term goal is to create a team culture that will produce the best men possible. I want products of Arkansas State rugby to be the best people they can be on or off the field. If we build better people, the score will take care of itself."

Coach Mizell would like to thank his family, his wife Stephanie Mizell, His 4 year old daughter Ori and his 1 year old Son George; for letting him chase his dream job. "None of this would be possible without their continued love and support," Mizell said. "They Are pumped to join the pack!"