

LEE COMES OFF BENCH

Cyprien fired after error on résumé

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July 17, 2004

LAFAYETTE — Robert Lee has been a UL Lafayette basketball assistant through nine years and three head coaches. Now, the success of the program probably will be in his hands.



P.C. Piazza/The Lafayette Daily Advertiser

UL Lafayette's newly named basketball coach, Robert Lee, tells reporters Friday he could not talk until after he talked with UL Lafayette's Athletic Director Nelson Schexnayder. Lee had an interview with Advertiser reporters later in the day Friday.

Pending approval by the UL System Board, Lee was named by Athletic Director Nelson Schexnayder as the successor to head coach Glynn Cyprien. The university fired Cyprien on Friday because his résumé listed a bachelor's degree he didn't earn. The university hired Cyprien on May 5.

Cyprien, who was to be paid \$170,000 annually, closed on the purchase of a Lafayette home within the last two weeks.

UL Lafayette requires all employees of the Athletic Department to have degrees from accredited, four-year institutions. Cyprien received a bachelor's degree in educational counseling in 2000 and a master's degree in physical education in 2002 from LaCrosse University, an online school based in Bay St. Louis, Miss.

LaCrosse isn't accredited by an agency recognized by UL Lafayette. Cyprien's résumé listed a bachelor's degree in physical education from the University of Texas-San Antonio. Officials there said he didn't finish his degree, a statement verified by the National Student Clearinghouse.

"It's my responsibility," Schexnayder said. "I will obviously make that point specifically before we announce that anyone is joining our Athletic Department.

In a TV interview Friday, Cyprien said, "My paperwork was presented up front. Whether he did or didn't do a background on it, that's not my problem."

"In the future, when we receive résumés, we could send a form letter to the institution in question, providing the degree and date listed, and for them to confirm, yes or no. That's one way of dealing with that."

UL System President Sally Clausen has another.

"We're not going to be in that position in the future," Clausen said. "The rules have already been modified" to require that all academic credentials are certified before anyone is brought to the board for hiring.

"The board assumes that presidents of universities check," she said. "They certainly do that for all academic positions. I assure you that will be done before we approve anyone in the future. We don't have to tell Dr. (Ray) Authement twice."

Clausen said Authement, UL Lafayette's president, "refused to sign his contract until he had all the credentials. He was wise enough that he didn't sign. ...

"The right thing was done," Clausen said. "The system caught it, but it caught it later than we'd like. ... It was an embarrassing shock to us."

Some students and faculty members expressed the same sentiment Friday.

"Assuming that he did give false credentials," said Honors Program Director Patricia Rickels, "I am very embarrassed, and it makes the university look very bad."

(Mike Hasten of the Advertiser Capital Bureau and staff writer Sebreana Domingue contributed to this story.)



File Photo/The Lafayette Daily Advertiser

Glynn Cyprien speaks at a news conference May 5 at the Cajundome.

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