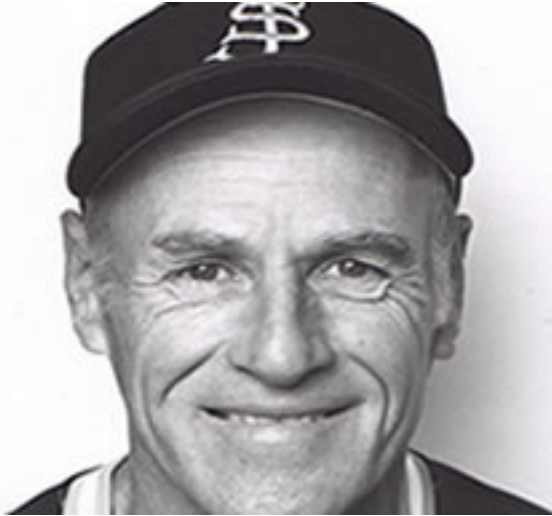


Graham signed to contract extension

Written by By Yolande Y. Lezine, Sports Editor
Tuesday, 17 July 2012 13:54



College Baseball Hall of Famer and Rice Owls head baseball coach Wayne Graham has signed a five-year contract extension.

Graham, 76, who just completed his 21st season as the leader of one of the nation's most consistent programs, had an additional five years added to his current contract which has one year remaining. The extension gives him the opportunity to continue to build on his remarkable legacy for the next six years. The Owls just completed competing in their 18th consecutive NCAA Baseball Championship, the fourth longest active streak among Division 1 programs.

"Wayne Graham is the model for what every program in the country hopes to find when searching for a head coach," Rice Director of Athletics Rick Greenspan said. "He is passionate about the game, but equally passionate about the mission of collegiate athletics. He sets high expectations for every young man who comes to Rice, both on the field and in the classroom. The men who have accepted that challenge honor him every day, be it in baseball or in the business world. He is an essential part of the mission of Rice Athletics."

Graham earned his fifth Conference USA Coach of the Year Award while guiding the Owls to a 41-19 overall record and the conference regular season championship. The Owls were a fixture in the Top 10 rankings and were as high as No. 4 in the nation. His Owls have won or shared a total of 17-straight conference titles (including the regular season and/or conference tournament) spanning Rice's membership in three different leagues. In addition to 18-straight appearances in the NCAA Tournament, he has guided Rice to 18-straight seasons with at least 40 wins.

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Earlier in the season the Owls head coach was tabbed for induction into the College Baseball Hall of Fame, which took place on June 30th in Lubbock, Texas.

Under Graham, the Owls clinched another NCAA postseason bid in 2012, extending their streak of 18 consecutive years of participating in the NCAA championships which began in 1995.

The 2003 bid culminated with the Owls first national championship. Rice played in the 1994-95-96 Southwest Conference tournaments (winning the final league title in 96), won the 1997-98-99 WAC tournaments, shared the 2000 WAC title with San Jose State before winning the 2001-02-03-04-05 titles outright. He won (or shared) C-USA regular season crowns in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011 and the WAC Coach of the Year in 1998,99,02 and the Co-Coach of the Year in 2003.

Graham's San Jacinto Gators dominated the NJCAA World Series in Grand Junction, Colorado in the 1980's, winning five national titles in six years. The Austin American-Statesman named Graham its SWC Coach of the Year in 1995 after he led the Owls to their first NCAA tournament appearance.