

Forums held by USF Dining had students crawling for answers



Hannah Halili

STAFF WRITER

With over 7,000 students with meal plans and serving over one million meals a year, USF Dining's made it a priority to hear student concerns and take direct action after its controversial bug issue.

After Saturday's post on Facebook from freshman Morgan Jehlen of an unidentified bug in her brussel sprouts, USF Dining

responded to the incident by posting a written letter in the Family and Friends Facebook group and hosting two public forum discussions, on Tuesday and Wednesday from 6-8 p.m.

"Our team is aware and working diligently on actions moving forward," USF Dining said in the letter. "There is nothing more important than the safety of our products we serve and the environment we serve them in."

USF Dining said in the letter there are multiple factors that could have created the unwanted outcome. The letter said all produce undergoes a precise washing procedure. Management is also expected to

retrain the entire culinary team on the specific procedure for handling brussel sprouts.

In addition to the two forums hosted, USF Dining has plans for forums multiple times a month. Exact times and locations are yet to be decided.

About 20 students attended the two first forums. Students have been very vocal about their concerns with campus dining. Some topics discussed included more dining options late at night, dietary restrictions and comments on the allegedly contaminated and undercooked food.

Representatives from USF Dining were present, including

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Days after an unidentified bug was found in a student's brussel sprouts, USF Dining held public forums to address concerns from the USF students. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE**

Coronavirus concerns halt USF travel to China



Alyssa Stewart

EDITOR IN CHIEF

As coronavirus cases rise and flights to and from China fall, college campuses around the globe are opting to limit their travel to the country. USF is no different.

As of Feb. 5, there have been 12

positive cases for the coronavirus in the U.S. The number of confirmed cases worldwide has reached 28,018 with a death toll of 563, according to the New York Times.

American Airlines, United and other airlines have announced that they are limiting and temporarily delaying flights to that area.

USF President Steven Currall announced in an email last Friday that "USF is temporarily suspending all university-related travel to China for students and faculty."

This suspension includes faculty research-related projects as well as spring and summer study abroad programs to China.

Vice President of USF World Dr. Roger Brindley said over 2,000 USF students participate in year-round study abroad programs.

The concern for study abroad travel to China is low, considering there aren't any active programs as of right now. However, there are a few students that are in China for graduate accommodations.

Two Chinese students are

completing internships for their master's degrees but they are expected to be there for the entirety of the spring semester.

Another student is completing a semester in an at-sea program but the organization who runs the program chose to remove its Chinese portion from their schedule.

A couple of travelers for research, USF faculty and staff, have also canceled their trips to China, which were scheduled for the next couple of weeks.

Given the uncertainty of the coronavirus, Brindley said USF

World is encouraging students to rethink any study abroad plans to China until more details about the outbreak come out.

"I don't think anybody quite knows whether or not the coronavirus has peaked or if it will continue to grow or if it will spread beyond China or not," Brindley said.

It's a waiting game at this point as to when the suspension period will be lifted.

Some of the study abroad programs are led by faculty, but others are run through off-

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The Oracle

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA'S
STUDENT NEWSPAPER
SINCE 1966

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The Oracle is published Monday and Thursday during the fall and spring semesters, and once weekly, Wednesday, during the summer.

The Oracle allocates one free issue to each student. Additional copies are \$.50 each and available at the Oracle office (SVC 0002).

BY PHONE

Editor 974-5190

News 974-1888

Advertising 974-2620

Classified 974-2620

CORRECTIONS

The Oracle will correct or clarify factual errors. Contact Editor in Chief Alyssa Stewart at 974-5190.



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VIRUS

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campus affiliations such as International Studies Abroad (ISA), so it will be up to those programs to choose how they want to proceed.

Other than the study abroad ambiguities, USF World is also accountable for overseeing the international student population.

Out of the 46,216 students registered in the USF system, over 4,600 students have an F1 visa — a nonimmigrant visa used to study in the U.S., according to Brindley.

Of those students, 740 are of Chinese heritage which makes up about 16 percent of the international population.

As the number of coronavirus cases increase, seemingly, so has the xenophobia worldwide. People of Asian descent reported that they are being accused of spreading the virus because of their race, according to a TIME article.

Business Insider reported that a woman working at a Costco in Washington state turned away a kid wearing a face mask because she feared he was from China and would give her the coronavirus.

Also, the French daily newspaper, Le Courrier Picard, described the virus as a “yellow alert,” prompting people of Asian descent to start the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus on social media Jan. 30 which translates to “I am not a virus.”

Brindley said USF has 27 students from the Wuhan, Hubei province in China.

“Most of [the students from Wuhan] did not travel over the holidays, but for all of them that did, they have returned from the beginning of the semester, which is now four weeks ago,” Brindley

said.

“We know that our Chinese students at USF are well and healthy.”

Some Chinese students nationally and on the USF campus have resorted to wearing face masks to avoid assumptions from their peers or uncomfortable stares.

“There’s no reason for xenophobia,” Brindley said. “Health doesn’t know national boundaries. Health doesn’t know politics.”

Even though the coronavirus is a global outbreak, Brindley advises students to still pursue study abroad plans in the future.

“There have only been [12] reported cases in the U.S. so far,” Brindley said. The flu kills 80,000 Americans a year so if we are actually worried about our health, we should be washing our hands and practicing simple good hygiene. We are far more likely to catch the flu than anything else.

“I share this not to downplay the seriousness of the coronavirus but because we need to keep everything in perspective.”

As of Wednesday, there are no reported cases in Florida and the Center for Disease Control said the virus risk is low in the U.S.

Brindley encourages students to be aware of their surroundings and to pay attention for any study abroad updates to come.

“[Students from Wuhan] are all worried about their loved ones back home,” Brindley said. “They are worried if their parents, brothers and sisters will be safe.

“We all need to be vigilant and conscious of our health and in the meantime, we need to make sure that the 740 Chinese students who study at the university are cared for and respected.”

SG elections led by ‘trial and error’



Leda Alvim

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

With election season around the corner, Student Government (SG) is filled with uncertainties on how to piece together the scattered puzzle known as the consolidated university system.

The unknown future of SG can also be reflected in the number of applications received so far for the upcoming elections, which might be “scaring people off,” according to SG Advising and Training Operations Assistant Director Jennifer Bielen.

As of Feb. 4, only one application has been received for student body president from the St. Pete campus and one governor and lieutenant governor from both Tampa and Sarasota-Manatee.

For Senate, 16 applications from Tampa, two from Sarasota-Manatee and none from St. Pete have been received so far.

Regardless of major, students from all three campuses will vote to elect 60 senators this upcoming election.

In addition, no applications have been received for campus council representatives yet. Each campus will have one council, with nine active members each.

Despite the low turnout so far in the number of applications received, Bielen said she is expecting last minute submissions by the Feb. 7 deadline.

“Just from previous experience

of working with the elections, the majority of the applications get turned in on the last day,” Bielen said. “It seems that people don’t want other people to know that they are running until the very end.”

Students interested in running for either systemwide president and vice president or governor and lieutenant governor will have to submit one single application packet count, as both positions count as one ticket each.

In case not all positions are filled by Feb. 7, the missing seats will be running uncontested. Depending on the number of remaining seats, a special election will be held to fill those positions, according to Bielen.

If the Senate falls below 70 percent, Bielen said that SG will automatically hold a special election to fill in the missing seats.

Amid changes for this year’s general body elections, students will be faced with a much longer ballot and will have to spend extra time thinking about the candidates they want to vote for due to the larger amount of candidates running.

During past elections, candidates were divided by their respective colleges. With Senate elections being held at large this year for the first time, students will have the chance to vote for all senators at their campus regardless of the college the senator represents.

For instance, students from the Tampa campus will have the choice to vote for 44 candidates, while St. Pete and Sarasota-Manatee will vote for nine and seven candidates, respectively.

This year’s debates will also suffer major changes compared to years prior. For instance, there will be two different debates, one systemwide for president and vice president

and another one for governor and lieutenant governor for each campus.

The systemwide debate will be held on Feb. 24 at the Marshall Student Center (MSC) Oval Theater at 7 p.m. and will be mandatory for all candidates running for president and vice president.

Whether SG will provide transportation to the candidates for the debate in Tampa or not has not been established yet, according to Bielen.

In order to allow students from all three campuses to watch the systemwide debate, SG is working toward live-streaming it to the other campuses.

Bielen said that SG would have to hire an outside company to provide the service, which might cost at least \$1,000 per livestream.

On the other hand, the governor, lieutenant and campus council debates will take place on Feb. 19 in the MSC Ballroom at 7 p.m. and at Sarasota-Manatee’s student center, Student Commons.

The student body will vote March 2-5 at their respective polling locations across campuses, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. and online.

The final results will be announced on March 6 at noon on the Tampa campus in MSC 4200, the Senate Chamber.

“I think one of the hardest things is that there is still a lot with the whole consolidation process that’s unknown,” Bielen said.

“We haven’t connected all of the dots and all the pieces that we might be missing and I think this year is really going to be a trial-and-error thing to see all the things that worked and the things that didn’t and how can we fix it to make it better.”

SCOTT

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Scott didn't have the luxury of time. Given his rushed recruiting window, Scott is impressed by the quality of players he signed.

"I think it exceeded my expectations as far as the quality of players and the quality of people that we were able to bring in, in a very short amount of time."

The short window of time might've been a deterrent to picking quality players. The natural response is to fill your roster with names in order to beat the clock.

Scott didn't do that. "Every single one of these young men that we signed, we put through a pretty thick filter," Scott said. "It was not just finding somebody online and signing them up because we're going late."

Scott made sure each choice was right, even with a looming

deadline.

"I would rather be slow and be right than be wrong."

Going slow means you can take the time to develop the players you want, even if they're not near the level you want.

"I tell our coaches, 'Don't complain they're not good enough,'" Scott said. "Once we start recruiting and bringing them in, they're our players and it's till graduation do we part."

Recruits are investments. It doesn't help if the roster is a revolving door due to poor recruiting, according to Scott.

"I'm not going to be the head coach that's running guys off the team because they're not good enough," Scott said.

A challenge that Scott overcame is convincing highly-rated Florida recruits to sign at USF. The Sunshine State has traditionally been the source of some of the top high-school recruits in the country, but top-

level recruits typically look at Power Five schools.

Out of the 17 players Scott signed, 10 are from Florida. All of them were located within four hours, thanks to the geographical advantage USF has.

"It kind of dawned on me. I was like, 'We've got the best location,'" Scott said. "Like to get to North Florida and South Florida, it's no longer than a three [or] three-and-a-half-hour drive, at most."

Scott's desire to build and grow the program has been the main driving force behind most recruits' decisions to sign at USF.

"There's a honeymoon phase, if you will, but also I realize what's genuine and what's not," Scott said. "There's a genuine hunger in this program doing well."

To see a full list of USF's signings, visit www.usforacle.com.

SOFTBALL

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philosophy, and if you stick to it, you've got a great chance to win."

While Moore will be in charge in 2020, the Bulls know Eriksen will always be watching, even if he's halfway across the world.

Eriksen even plans on being at the AAC regular-season championship ring ceremony Thursday before USF opens its season against Illinois State (3:30 p.m. | Radio: Bulls Unlimited), according to junior infielder

coach in USF Athletics history (975 wins).

But the Bulls have embraced Moore in her new role.

"I think she does a really good job connecting with us, especially for how short of a time she's been our head coach," junior pitcher Georgina Corrick said. "She's really, really done a phenomenal job of stepping up to the occasion and really filling some very large shoes."

That said, they obviously want Eriksen back at USF next year, so, while it was an emotional night,



Ken Eriksen and Team USA posed with USF softball for a group picture Tuesday night. Eriksen is taking a leave from USF to lead the U.S. in the 2020 Olympics. **ORACLE PHOTO/BRIAN HATTAB**

Bethaney Keen.

"He's honestly trying his best to be here when he can," Keen said, "and he's going to be our biggest supporter from afar too. And we're going to be his biggest supporter as well."

"He's going to always be watching. He's probably going to try to be a coach from afar where he's like, 'Oh, come on. You should have swung at that one.' But he really can't coach us."

Moore, who has worked with Eriksen at USF since 2015, obviously has some big shoes to fill — even if it's only temporarily. After all, Eriksen is the winningest

there wasn't a whole lot Corrick needed to hear from him after Tuesday's exhibition.

"He did his 'fly eagle fly,'" Corrick said, "so I think that was kind of his, 'Farewell my little ducklings. I'm letting you guys go.' Him passing us over to Coach Jess, I think was — I hope it was difficult for him."

"We're really excited that he's been a part of the program and that hopefully he'll return, so I think he doesn't really need to say too many parting words because he's hopefully going to find his way back to us."

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DINING

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Director of Operations Ryan McElhaney, Marketing Director Jessica Cicalese, Marketing Coordinator Sydney Kotoch, Manager of The Hub Brenda Jackson-Lee and Registered Dietician Sierra Ditto.

"There are a lot of things we want to improve on," McElhaney stated. "The focus of this [public forum] is to make sure we are improving the right things. There is no one here more important to us than [the students]."

Students were not hesitant to come prepared. Freshman Lyndsey Jeunelot arrived with a handwritten list of topics regarding dining that she wished to change, including suggestions to improve late-night dinners at The Hub.

"I am a student who works," Jeunelot said. "A lot of times, I don't get out of work until 10:30 to

11 p.m. With that, I also like to eat healthily. When I get to The Hub after work, the only things left to eat are cereal and pizza. It makes it hard for me to be healthy with that being said."

Suggestions included making food to order to prevent waste and clearer communications on the available food at certain times.

Students also complained that chicken at Argos Exchange was "pink," "rubbery" and appeared to be "undercooked."

McElhaney explained it was due to a different meat product used.

"The chicken used was dark meat," McElhaney responded. "I went through immediately and looked at a pan of chicken to see a pinkish hue to it. It did measure to be cooked to 175 degrees. But because of the comments, we have switched back to white meat."

In addition to the many

concerns, both students and staff were open and understanding to all statements. Many positive comments emerged in the conversation, including thankful regards from the students present.

"I am really thankful [USF Dining] put together this meeting," Jeunelot said. "When I had problems, I had no idea who to go to or contact."

USF Dining hopes that future forums will not only improve dining halls but also create better communication between students and staff.

"We serve a tremendous amount of students on campus every day and it would be naive to think that mistakes will not be made," McElhaney stated. "I want to make sure that the USF community knows that if there is a mistake, we take it very seriously. These forums will start with, 'Here is what we heard and this is what we changed.'"

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Coronavirus concerns are no excuse for bigotry



Nathaniel Sweet

OPINION EDITOR

As journalists and public health agencies track the spread of the coronavirus, popular narratives about the illness have taken a dark turn into anti-Asian racism.

Surrounding the now-global outbreak is the hateful myth that the coronavirus is a uniquely Chinese illness. Media outlets like Business Insider have pointed to individual accounts from Asian Americans saying that they've experienced discrimination and mistreatment as a result of these myths, while others point to viral social media posts mocking the virus's spread using hurtful anti-Chinese stereotypes.

One source of these misconceptions is the currently unconfirmed theory that the virus was first transmitted to humans at the Huanan Discount Seafood Market in Wuhan, China, based on reports from the Chinese government. Some have taken the theory as an opportunity to blame Chinese diets and ridicule their eating habits.

In fact, scientists have no clear idea yet about where the coronavirus originated. Some studies suggest that it was first transmitted to humans via bats, while others think it came from



Popular narratives about the coronavirus have taken a dark turn into anti-Asian racism. [WIKIMEDIA COMMONS](#)

snakes, both of which might have been sold at the Huanan market.

Other research, however, casts doubt on whether the coronavirus was transmitted at the market at all. A January study published in *The Lancet*, a peer-reviewed medical journal, found that a substantial number of early patients had no link to Huanan.

On top of being factually dubious, these narratives lack cultural self-awareness. American dietary habits that seem normal to us — like eating a basket of deep-fried factory-farmed chicken parts — likely look strange to other cultures. The mere fact that other culinary traditions eat different animals does not itself lead to illness.

Worse, they traffic in casual cruelty, pinning a dangerous and unanticipated outbreak on an entire culture. For Chinese expats and Americans with Chinese heritage, many of whom are concerned about the virus and have families abroad, such cruelty adds awful insult to injury.

More than just interpersonal bias, these racist misconceptions have already led to damaging policy choices that needlessly

disrupt millions of people's lives. The Trump administration, for instance, has banned travel to the U.S. by any foreign national who's been to China in the last 14 days.

The World Health Organization directly advises against travel bans like these. They warn that because bans disrupt travel plans and stifle economic activity, they create an incentive to hide exposure and illness. These incentives make tracking the spread of the virus more difficult, creating hidden risks that cause more damage than the ban might have prevented.

Rather than taking thoughtful steps to study and contain the coronavirus, Trump's decision instead ties the virus to Chinese nationality itself, a deeply xenophobic notion.

Far from being harmless, these reactions to the coronavirus are a serious threat to the well-being of huge numbers of people. Rather than jumping to ignorant conclusions, we should be thoughtful and informed in our approach to this global outbreak.

Nathaniel Sweet is a senior studying political science.

U.S. should ratify Equal Rights Amendment



Jared Sellick

COLUMNIST

On Jan. 27, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights for women, reaching the threshold it needs to become law.

Passing this amendment is crucial for legal gender equality. Advocates for the amendment point out that it provides a "clearer judicial standard for deciding cases of sex discrimination."

For example, the ERA would make it easier for women to file suit against employers for unequal pay and unfair treatment in the workplace.

In support of the ERA, many Democratic congresswomen showed solidarity by wearing all-white outfits and "ERA Yes" pins to Tuesday night's State of the Union address.

One might think that a 38th state joining the cause would be all that the country would need to implement this obvious addition to our founding document.

Unfortunately, when Congress first passed the ERA in 1971 they set a 1982 deadline for states to ratify.

The deadline, however, has been referred to by many as "artificial." The current House of

Representatives has argued that it has the power to remove it.

Nowhere in Article V of the Constitution, in which it outlines the process for amendment ratification, does it specify a time restriction on states' ability to ratify.

As a result, a number of state attorneys general have pushed the Trump administration to bring the amendment into effect. The case has the potential to be decided by the Supreme Court.

Florida officials can take a number of steps to help push this amendment along. State Attorney General Ashley Moody (R) can join the push advocating for this cause. She is one of nine female state attorneys general in the U.S.

Her voice would be an important addition to the success of this act. She is a Republican representing a crucial battleground state in the upcoming 2020 election and her voice would speak volumes.

In addition, Florida is one of the few remaining states that has yet to ratify the ERA. The Legislature could vote to ratify as a sign of solidarity to other states who have already ratified.

If Florida does its part in supporting the ERA, it will have helped enshrine gender equality into our founding governing documents.

Passing this amendment would help us live up to our ideals of fair treatment under the law.

Jared Sellick is a senior studying political science.

Student band finds their groove in the blues rock world

By Maddie Moure
CORRESPONDENT

Various blues and latin rock songs permeate the International Boba House every Friday night as people sit at small, round tables sipping on bubble tea. The room is dim, lit only by iridescent blue lights hanging from a corner stage.

Miguel Mockabee stands at the center as he plays his electric guitar while Connor McNeely sits to Mockabee's left strumming. Ryan Walton chills in the back, maintaining the beat on drums. It's a unique, calm atmosphere for a small band.

These three members make up the Bayside Blues Band.

Mockabee and McNeely both play the electric guitar and Walton plays the drums. Aside from jamming out in their free time, Mockabee and Walton recently enrolled in USF. Mockabee is a freshman psychology major and Walton is a freshman jazz major.

The guys met in October of 2019 at the International Boba House. Only after a month's communication, the group clicked and categorized their new band as blues rock.

Blues rock combines the genres of blues and rock, employing the use of mostly electric instruments. The main melody flows from the electric guitar player, creating an upbeat tempo, which distinguishes the genre from regular blues.

The band plays rock band covers from the late '60s and early '70s, as well as blues band covers from all the way back to the '30s and '40s.



The band only has three members so far, but they have a vision of developing into a much larger group, modeling themselves on the rock band Santana, which originally had a five-member line-up. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE**

"We're all over the spectrum of rock," said McNeely.

Mockabee draws his inspiration from artists like Carlos Santana, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimi Hendrix and Paco de Lucía.

Alternatively, McNeely draws his inspiration from Freddie King, Albert King and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. One of McNeely's dreams is to someday play with Kingfish onstage.

The band chose to play blues rock because they aspire to keep the genre alive. According to Mockabee, "not many bands play

blues rock anymore," so the band hopes to revive the fading genre of music. Additionally, the less common genre helps the Bayside Blues Band stand out among other musical groups.

Most importantly, the band is passionate about blues rock.

"Blues is all about connecting with the audience because blues is all very emotional and it's something that everyone can relate to," said Mockabee. "It's about going on stage and making fun of your sadness."

McNeely chimed in. "The thing about the blues is that

when you play the blues, they go away," he joked.

The group enjoys playing at the boba house because the crowd inside is just small enough for the performance to not feel pressured, but just large enough for it to still feel exhilarating and fun.

"It's a relaxing setting. People are supportive here," said Mockabee.

However, the band has their fair share of mishaps in the boba house. According to McNeely, somebody yelled "you suck" at the end of their show, but the

guys simply laughed it off.

Unpredictable inconveniences with the instruments also posed problems for their performances.

Both Mockabee and McNeely have had experience with breaking guitar strings — and having to play in front of an audience with a defective guitar. One time, Mockabee broke a guitar string, but fortunately nobody noticed it and he played the music just like normal. The guys "play around" the problem by utilizing different chords on higher octaves.

"I handled it like caramel, it was smooth," said Mockabee about the incident.

The band has grown through having to deal with a wide range of audience feedback as well as musical issues. In only a couple of months, the guys now feel far less nervous getting up on stage.

"We're more comfortable than we were in the beginning," said Mockabee.

They only have three members so far, but they have a vision of developing into a much larger band. They hope to establish a group like the rock band Santana, with a five-member line-up.

They want to "take it big" with their music and impact more people.

The band will be performing Feb. 17 at the Marshall Student Center Amphitheater for an Australian fundraiser. They have signed up to perform at Bullstock as well.

As the guys continue to develop the band and practice their music, many opportunities await them.

InBrief

Scott: Every position is up for grabs

No job is secure right now for the Bulls, much less that under center.

Speaking to reporters on National Signing Day on Wednesday, coach Jeff Scott said that there will be a battle for the starting quarterback position — and every position for that matter.

“My overall message to the team is that every spot is up for grabs,” Scott said. “We’ve told everybody that we’re going to allow them to compete.”

The field that will battle for the starting position includes incumbent redshirt sophomore Jordan McCloud, as well as recent signees Katravis Marsh (fr. — Hialeah), Jordan Smith (fr. — Lake City) and Cade Fortin (so. — UNC).

Scott said that “in an ideal world” he’d like to name a starter no later than two weeks before the Bulls’ season opener against Texas on Sept. 5.

The one thing that’s settled in the quarterback room is that sophomore Jah’Quez Evans will not be in it. Evans, who spent time last season both at receiver and quarterback in the wildcat formation, made the decision himself.

“I met with Jah’Quez and he ... said that he had a desire to go to receiver. He felt like he could really help us at receiver,” Scott said.

“And I supported that. ... I’m not a head coach that comes in and tells guys you’re switching positions. I’ve never been that way. If you’ve got to force a guy to play a position, he’s not going to be committed enough to be successful for you.”

Scott also hinted that, due to the fact that everyone is learning a new system anyway, some other players may be thinking about switching positions, though he did not go into further detail as to whom.

Football



Nolan Brown

STAFF WRITER

The typical college football recruiting process starts in the junior and senior years of high school.

USF coach Jeff Scott had to put together a recruiting class in under two months.

Scott was unveiled to fans and media Dec. 11. Two days later, he was on the recruiting trail — while also maintaining his duties as Clemson co-offensive

coordinator.

“My typical way to recruit a young man and their families is to start in the ninth and tenth grade and have about a two or three-year relationship with that young man and that family,” Scott said. “I found myself on a couple occasions this year to literally be on the phone with a young man, and try to convince him, his mom and his granddad to sign two days later to a place they’ve never visited.”

Now he has a signing class of 17 players, with nine of them having signed in the December early signing period.

Scott hadn’t met those who committed before his arrival, which left the question as to whether they would stay

Scott manages signing period even with odds stacked against him



Despite getting a late start, Jeff Scott was able to sign 17 players in the 2020 class. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/USF ATHLETICS**

committed. He soon found out the December class was dedicated to the vision of the program regardless.

“They just told me, ‘Coach, no offense, obviously we feel good about you, but we want to be at

USF and we’ve been coming to games and we’re excited,” Scott said. “That’s probably the biggest thing that stuck out to me. I think those guys really wanted to play here.”

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Softball



Brian Hattab

SPORTS EDITOR

It’s not exactly a surprise at this point.

Longtime USF coach Ken Eriksen is taking a leave of absence from the program in order to lead Team USA in the Summer Olympics in what will be softball’s first appearance in the Olympics in 12 years.

Actually, Eriksen has officially

been on leave since October, but he’s still been around the Lee Roy Selmon Athletics Center, offering wisdom and life advice for those who stop by — though not actually coaching, as he’s prohibited from doing that for USF while working with Team USA.

But all that is about to change. Team USA is embarking on its Stand Beside Her Tour as it tunes up for the Tokyo Games.

Perhaps it’s fitting that the tour began Tuesday night at a place Eriksen knows so well — USF, where Team USA defeated the Bulls 3-0 in front of a crowd of 1,267 at the 750-seat USF Softball Stadium.

Passing the torch

“It had to be special to do it against my alma mater,” Eriksen said. “You take a look at the last 30-how many years. I’ve never gone any place else. I played ball here.

“And then, to be here, in front of this town — Tampa — with the United States Olympic team — which, imagine I’m coaching it, which is crazy in itself. And then to have the kickoff of the tour be in Tampa, against the Bulls — I’m in heaven right now.”

Having Eriksen in the opposing dugout was also a fitting way for interim head coach Jessica Moore to kick off her season as leader of the Bulls.

“It was great having Ken on the

other side,” Moore said. “We’re obviously super tight in this program, and so it seemed pretty fitting to start this whole thing out with Ken in the other head coach’s box.”

Even as the torch was proverbially handed off Tuesday night, the message remains the same, whether it’s Eriksen or Moore in charge.

“Just stick with Jess and [assistant coach] Tommy [Santiago],” Eriksen said. “We eat breakfast, we eat lunch, we eat dinner together all the time. So it’s the same philosophy. It’s just coming from a different megaphone, but it’s the same

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