

Sports

See the Sports Section at ngame.com

Robby Brown reunited with former Troy colleagues in Big 12

New West Virginia head coach Neal Brown adds former Union County QB to offensive staff

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@ngame.com

Morgantown, WV - Blairsville's Robby Brown is back in the college ranks following a four-year stint as an assistant coach with the National Football League's New York Jets.

In March, Brown accepted a position as an offensive assistant at the University of West Virginia, reuniting him with head coach Neal Brown, who took over the Mountaineer football program at the conclusion of the 2018 season. Robby and Neal Brown (no relation) were co-workers at Troy when Robby Brown took an offensive graduate assistant position in 2005 and Neal Brown was named Inside Receivers coach a year later.

In December of last year, the Jets went through a coaching change and incoming head coach Adam Gase, formerly of the Miami Dolphins, elected to keep Robby Brown on staff. A month later, however, Neal Brown contacted his former colleague and swayed him to the Mountain State.

"I've known Neal for a long time, we were actually neighbors when we worked together at Troy," Robby Brown said.

That wouldn't be the only familiar face greeting Robby Brown in West Virginia. The Mountaineers' current defensive line coach was a fellow graduate assistant at Troy. The offensive line coach and quarterback coach are also longtime friends, which played a huge role in his deci-



Former Union County football and basketball star Robby Brown with his wife and children in Morgantown, West Virginia.

sion to return to college.

"Having that familiarity with the staff [was really important] so it was an opportunity that I felt I needed to take," he said. "Moving back to offense wasn't necessarily the driving force, but it did help out a little bit since I coached offense most of my life. But just knowing those guys, having that familiarity with the staff and their families [factored into the decision] to make a change."

"Coach Gase was good to me and I enjoyed the month that I spent working with him, but [WVU] was just the right job at the right time. It had to be a really special situation for me to leave [New York]."

"There are good things about the NFL and good

things about the college game and I'm just happy to have received opportunities at both."

After working together at Troy, Neal and Robby Brown took different paths before ultimately arriving in Morgantown, WV earlier this year. Neal Brown remained at Troy where he was promoted to offensive coordinator in 2008. After stops at Texas Tech and Kentucky as the offensive coordinator, he returned to Troy as head coach in 2015.

At the conclusion of the 2018 season, former West Virginia head coach Dana Holgorsen departed for Houston, creating the opening for Neal Brown.

As for Robby Brown, the 1999 Union County graduate worked his way up to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS - formerly Division I-A) as the running backs coach at South Alabama when the NFL came calling prior to the 2015 season. The New York Jets had just named Todd Bowles its new head coach and he immediately tabbed former Georgia Tech coach Chan Gailey as his offensive coordinator. Gailey, who coached Robby Brown at Georgia Tech, reached out to his former quarterback for the job of offensive quality control assistant.

In 2017, Gailey retired following a 5-11 season and Robby Brown was moved to defense. On the heels of



Robby Brown and the wide receivers during his tenure with the New York Jets from 2015-2018. He spent the first two seasons an offensive quality control coach and the final two as a defensive assistant.

another disappointing season, Bowles was let go on Dec. 30, 2018, leaving his staff in limbo. Coach Gase was selected as Bowles' replacement on Jan. 11 and chose to retain Robby Brown for the 2019 season.

In March, West Virginia's new head man came calling and recruited his former Troy colleague down to Morgantown, where Robby Brown will return to the offensive side of the ball as the Special Assistant to the Head Coach/Senior Offensive Analyst.

"From an offensive perspective, my role is to work a week ahead of the head coach and prepare for the next opponent," he said.

"[Neal Brown and I] were both offensive coordinators and we run a similar offense so the main thing is just getting familiar with everything once again. I'm not having to learn a whole new system, which is exciting. It's also exciting to get back into the game-planning side of the offense, as well. But my main role is looking a week ahead and formulating game plans for the head coach to help him shorten his day."

Prior to his stop at South Alabama in 2014, where the Jaguars earned their first-ever bowl bid, Robby Brown was the offensive coordinator at Northwestern State.

From 2009-2012, he was offensive coordinator, quarterbacks coach and re-

cruiting coordinator at Valdosta State, where he won the 2010 Gulf South Conference title and made two playoff appearances. In his third-and-final season at Valdosta State, the Blazers led the conference in every major offensive category, putting up more than 40 points and 470 yards a game.

After two seasons at Troy, Robby Brown became the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Southwest Baptist (2007) and Henderson State (2008). While at Henderson State, his offenses set 12 school records and ranked third nationally in passing yards and 18th in total offense. His offenses at SBU set 29 school records, six conference records and two national records.

"You have to enjoy [coaching at the college level] otherwise you won't be able to do it," Robby Brown said. "In my current role, I won't be recruiting off-campus, just on-campus only. But at the college level, it doesn't matter what your position is, you have to be able to recruit."

"I also think my family is going to enjoy being at college. My daughters are really excited about the bands. Another thing that's nice, all of the coaching staff is about the same age and there's about four or five of us that got started together at Troy, so the wives all know each other. We were there when they had their children, and they were there when we had ours."

"What's funny is, the offensive line coach's daughters took art classes from my wife when they were young. Now they are in high school and college so they babysit our kids for us."

When asked about the most important lesson he learned during his four seasons in the NFL and what advice he would give to his younger self, Robby Brown answered that he would likely tell himself to keep soaking up as much knowledge as possible.

"You take a piece from (every coach) that you work with," he said. "I learned a ton from Coach Gailey, and when I moved to defense, I learned a ton about the run-game. I didn't know near as much about the run-game as

I thought I did.

"You don't know what you don't know, and as you get older, you realize that you can't know everything. You're never going to be perfect or call a perfect game, but at the same time, you always want to continue working towards that and learn everything that you can."

"I think [my time in New York] was good for me because it allowed me to take a step back and not be as involved in all the decisions. That allowed me to sit back and watch some really good coaches. If you ask anybody, they'll tell you that Gailey and Bowles are two pretty good play callers, so it was nice to be around those guys."

Robby Brown also stays in touch with his high school coach Brian Allison. As a senior quarterback in 1998, Robby Brown led Union County to a 7-3 season -- its first winning season in a decade and the program's first seven-win season in 12 years. With Robby Brown under center, the Panthers' averaged 26.4 points-per-game in 1998 -- the highest Union County scoring mark since 1988.

"I talk to Coach Allison about twice a month, even more during the season," he said. "We talk and text a lot during the season. I definitely keep in touch with him a lot."

Robby Brown is the son of Danny and Pat Brown and the brother of Becky Brown Dyer.

"I come back to Blairsville about twice a year to see Becky, my parents and everybody," he said. "I always make it a point to come back for a week or two, at least two times a year."

After graduating from UCHS in 1999, Robby Brown graduated from Georgia Tech in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in history, technology and society. As a backup-quarterback with the Yellow Jackets, he was part of two bowl-winning teams -- the 2003 Humanitarian Bowl (in which he appeared) and the 2004 Champs Sports Bowl.

Later, he earned his master's degree in sports and fitness management from Troy in 2007.

Robby Brown and his wife, Rachel, have two daugh-

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS
2019 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE
GO MOUNTAINEERS!

Week	Date	Opponent	Score
1	Sat. Aug. 31	James Madison	_____
2	Sat. Sept. 7	at Missouri	_____
3	Sat. Sept. 14	NC State	_____
4	Sat. Sept. 21	at Kansas	_____
5	Sat. Sept. 28	Bye	_____
6	Sat. Oct. 5	Texas	_____
7	Sat. Oct. 12	Iowa State	_____
8	Sat. Oct. 19	at Oklahoma	_____
9	Sat. Oct. 26	Bye	_____
10	Thu. Oct. 31	at Baylor	_____
11	Sat. Nov. 9	Texas Tech	_____
12	Sat. Nov. 16	at Kansas State	_____
13	Sat. Nov. 23	Oklahoma State	_____
14	Sat. Nov. 30	at TCU	_____

Union County 2019 Football schedule		
Game info	Opponent	
Regular season		
08/30 A	East Hall	
09/06 H	Townns County	
09/13 A	Fannin County	
09/20 H	* Monticello	
09/27 A	* Putnam County	
10/04 H	* Elbert County	
10/18 A	* Banks County	
10/25 H	* Oglethorpe County	
11/01 A	* Social Circle	
11/08 H	* Rabun County	