

Baseball Eagles hire assistant coach

SOUTHERN MISS SPORTS The Clarion-Ledger, TCL 3:10 a.m. CST January 28, 2015

Here's the full release from the university:

Southern Miss baseball coach Scott Berry announced Tuesday the addition of Damon Lessler as an assistant coach/coordinator of camps for the program.

"We are happy to have Damon join us on our staff for this season," said Berry. "He is no stranger to Southern Miss baseball having worked with us at many of our camps during his time as a graduate student here. Damon brings a lot of enthusiasm and energy and will be a strong asset on our coaching staff."

Lessler comes to Southern Miss after spending the last two years at Chico State in California. At Chico State, he served as infield and defensive coach, while also focusing on hitting and base running instruction. In addition, he acted as the program's recruitment coordinator.

Last season, Lessler helped guide Chico State to a 43-15 record and the NCAA Division II College World Series as the team ranked first in Division II in overall fielding percentage at .977. He coached and mentored Cody Slader, who was named the Rawlings Division II Defensive Player of the Year.

During his first season at Chico State, the Wildcats compiled a 37-18 record in 2013 and reached the NCAA Championship Tournament West Region finals.

"I am thrilled to join Coach Berry and his staff here," said Lessler. "I have always had a ton of admiration for the Southern Miss program and I am excited to be a part of something special."

Prior to joining the Chico State, Lessler spent a year as assistant coach at Oakland (Mich.) University. Serving as the Golden Grizzlies' catching coach and assistant recruiting coordinator in 2012 while contributing hitting, infield and base running instructor, he helped Oakland University set a school record for winning percentage (.714). Lessler also served as associate head coach of the Bellingham (Wash.) Bells of the summer collegiate West Coast League.

Lessler has logged considerable time serving as a head baseball coach for various teams in the Bay Area of California. While working on his master's degree at Southern Miss, he was a graduate assistant for the school's Human Performance Department and assisted with camps under then Golden Eagle coaches Corky Palmer and Lane Burroughs, as well as current head coach Scott Berry.

As a player, Lessler was a star infielder at Castro Valley High School before going on to play collegiately at Mesa (Ariz.) Community College, Sonoma State and Mississippi Valley State. He played several years of professional baseball, including stints with the Sioux Falls Canaries, Fargo-Moorhead Redhawks and the Winnipeg Goldeyes of the American Association and the Frontier League's Traverse City Beach Bums. Lessler also played abroad in Germany, Sweden and Australia as an imported American professional player.

Lessler received his bachelor's degree in mass communications from Mississippi Valley State in 2006, earning valedictorian honors, before obtaining a master's degree in sports administration from Southern Miss in 2008.

Lessler replaced Clint Brown, who recently took a scouting job with the Cleveland Indians.

"I appreciate Clint's time here with Southern Miss baseball in the last year and a half," said Berry. "This was a great opportunity for him and his career and we wish him nothing but the best."

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