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Sports

Thomason, Sorrow, Bell Apply For Emerald Job

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The application deadline for the Emerald High School head football coach and athletic director position passed Monday and three area coaches have confirmed their interest in the position. Among the 46 applicants for the job, former Saluda coach Wayne Bell and Emerald assistant coaches Mark Sorrow and Jeff Thomason all stated Tuesday they have submitted applications.

A nine-member selection committee will soon meet to go over the applications and conduct interviews. According to Greenwood District 50 assistant superintendent Randy Vaughn, a recommendation for the board of trustees is expected to be ready by the March 16 school board meeting.

The vacancy was created Feb. 6 when Mike Clowney resigned after three seasons with the Vikings to take on an assistant head coaching position at his alma mater, Carson-Newman College, in Jefferson City, Tenn.

Bell was fired after four years as the head coach at Saluda on Jan. 27. During his coaching tenure, the Tigers went 14-27 and earned just one playoff appearance in 2006, when they fell in the opening round of the Class AA playoffs to Pelion. Saluda was 4-6 this past season after starting out the season 4-1. Saluda was Bell's first head coaching position, but he had also served as a defensive coordinator at Union from 1999-2004 and helped lead the Yellow Jackets to state titles in 1999, 2000 and 2002. Bell said that same level of success is attainable at Emerald. "I think the opportunity is there, and they have a lot of fine athletics," said Bell, who has a master's degree in sports management from the United States Sports Academy. "It's a program that I think every year could consistently win, and that's a big draw."

Thomason just completed his first season as the Vikings' quarterbacks coach after five years as an assistant coach at Class AAAAAA Pelham in Alabama. He said taking on a head coaching position wasn't something he anticipated when he returned home to South Carolina, but Thomason said he can bring about positive change at Emerald. "I see a lot of potential at Emerald," Thomason said. "There's some things that have got to change with some of the apathy within the school. We've got to change the mind-sets of the kids and not just in football."

Thomason declined to elaborate on what he would specifically do differently if hired. "I know there's a process (the school district) is going through, and they've got a committee in place," Thomason said. "(Clowney) and I got along great and hit it off from Day One. There's just some things I want to see happen within the football program as well as the athletic department that with the budget cuts we'll have to work through, but I think

athletics is a huge part of school morale.”

Thomason graduated from Greer in 1985 and played football at Clemson as a walk-on. He received his bachelor’s degree in secondary education and he’s currently in the process of earning his master’s degree in sports management from the U.S. Sports Academy. “I was looking over the next few years at taking on a head coaching position, but the timing wasn’t right,” Thomason said. “With Mike leaving and everything though, I decided to apply. “I haven’t established myself back here yet, but my wife and I prayed a lot about it. I decided to go ahead and apply and see what happens.”

Sorrow, the Vikings’ defensive line coach, has spent the past 13 years as an assistant at Emerald following a two-year stint as the head coach at Ware Shoals. During that span, the Hornets were 1-19 and endured a winless season in 1996. He has a master’s degree in sports management from the U.S. Sports Academy. “I’ve just been at Emerald for 13 years, and I love the kids and I love the school,” Sorrow said. “The big thing is I want to be in this area until I retire.”

Along with the three candidates who confirmed applying, a number of other coaches decided not to seek the position. Greenwood defensive coordinator Jimmy Towe, former college defensive coordinator Miles Aldridge and former Ninety Six coach Mike Doolittle all applied and were not hired for the same combined role at Greenwood, but said Tuesday they had not applied at Emerald. “I sent in my application for the Greenwood job and didn’t get much of a response, so I decided not to apply for the Emerald job,” Aldridge said.

In addition, Chesterfield coach and former Cambridge Academy coach Steve Taneyhill, Emerald offensive coordinator Sentell Peake, former Emerald defensive coordinator Zeke Goode, Abbeville offensive line coach Dick Williams, Greenwood offensive coordinator Brent Calvert and Dixie offensive line coach and former Emerald assistant Gary Gillion all said they did not apply for Emerald’s vacancy.