Former NFL Standout leads UVa-Wise Athletic Development Efforts

Much has changed for The University of Virginia’s College at Wise since it first opened its doors to students in 1954. Carroll Dale was still in high school the year when the new two-year institution opened as Clinch Valley College. From the beginning Dale, who now serves as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Athletic Development for UVA-Wise, knew the college had enormous potential for providing quality education for Southwest Virginia students. “I remember thinking it was a great idea to put a college in Wise to better serve the students here, in what was then an underserved region for higher academic study,” Dale said. “Anyone who was here in Wise from the beginning of the college would be amazed to take a look at what has been accomplished over the past years,” he said.

Much can be said for Dale’s accomplishments over those years as well. From his days as a star athlete at J.J. Kelly High School, Dale went on to become a standout receiver at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. As a Hokie, he was named Southern Conference Player of the Year, Associated Press and Look Magazine All-American and the Roanoke Touchdown Club’s Outstanding Lineman in 1957, 1958 and 1959. At the conclusion of his collegiate career, Dale was selected to play in the 1959-60 Blue-Gray game and the College All-Star game.

After graduating from Virginia Tech, the Los Angeles Rams of the National Football League drafted Dale to fill their need for a talented receiver. Dale played five years for the Rams, before being traded to Green Bay to play for legendary coach Vince Lombardi and the Packers. “Being traded to a great team like Green Bay was one of the happiest moments of my life,” Dale recalled. “It was almost like Christmas,” he said.

In his first season in Green Bay, the Packers captured the NFL championship by beating the Cleveland Browns 23-12 on a snowy day at Lambeau Field. Dale made an immediate impact in the title game when he caught a 47-yard touchdown pass from Hall-of-Fame quarterback Bart Starr for the game’s first score. The next two years (1966 and 1967) Dale and the Packers were victorious in Super Bowls I and II. In addition to being a part of the first two Super Bowls—a game that has itself become an icon of American culture—Dale played in what may be the most famous single football game of all time: The 1967 Ice Bowl. That game, an NFL title bout between the Packers and the Dallas Cowboys was played on a frigid New Year’s Eve day when temperatures in the small Wisconsin city dipped to minus 13 degrees and wind chill hit minus 55. The Packers won on the famous Bart Starr goal line sneak and advanced to Super Bowl II. (ESPN Original Entertainment made a TV movie about the game which Dale served as a consultant to the movies writers).
During his pro football career, Dale was an exceptional pass catcher and remains the Packers’ all-time yards-per catch leader. His 19.7 yards per catch rates him higher than such great Packers’ receivers as Don Hutson, Boyd Dowler, Max McGee and Sterling Sharpe.

After closing a successful pro football career, Dale spent his last season with the Minnesota Vikings and made a third Super Bowl trip. He then returned home to Southwest Virginia and operated a coal mining company for the next 17 years.

In 1991, Dale returned to the sports world as the athletics director at The University of Virginia’s College at Wise. “I never set a goal to become involved in college athletics but it just happened,” he said. “I’ve always had a passion for the college and I was excited about the opportunity to help the athletics program grow and reach its full potential,” he said.

The UVa-Wise athletics program has always thrived under Dale’s leadership. He helped establish the college’s football program, which has become a success in its 20 year existence. In 1993, the gridiron squad posted a winning season in only its third year of competition. In 1996, the Cavaliers recorded an undefeated regular season and advanced to the NAIA national playoffs two consecutive years. The college has had strong programs in men’s and women’s basketball, baseball, football, cross country, men’s and women’s golf, softball, tennis and volleyball.

Dale’s time now is spent fund-raising and sustaining college community relations. “The biggest misconception about our athletics program here at UVa-Wise is that many people do not realize that state-supported colleges and universities in Virginia are not allowed to use tuition dollars to fund athletics. Part of my job is to educate people about the fact that we have to raise $250,000 to $400,000.00 a year to keep our programs operating. Our coaches have to operate on limited budgets from year to year. However, we are very fortunate to have alumni and friends of the college who are very supportive to UVA-Wise athletics,” Dale said.

Thanks in part to Dale’s fundraising diligence; progress in the UVa-Wise athletics department has become visibly obvious. Carl Smith Stadium opened in 1999 and quickly became one of the finest small college football complexes in the United States. In 2003 Smith Stadium opened the Humphreys-Thomas field house, which holds locker rooms, a weight room, a training area, concession stations and restrooms.

With all of the success Carroll has had throughout his lifetime, he places at the top his achievements in helping his hometown college grow its athletics program toward national prominence.

“I count it a privilege to return to Wise and give back to the community that supported me so well when I was growing up,” Dale said. He added, “I watched this college open over 50 years ago and I am honored to have been just a small part of its success.”