

## Pro football: Florida Tarpons name UIFL co-founder as first head coach

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ESTERO — The Florida Tarpons, Southwest Florida's newest indoor football team, named Michael Taylor as head coach for the team's inaugural season Wednesday. Taylor, who was one of the co-founders of the Ultimate Indoor Football League, is also co-owner of the Tarpons.

"My passion has always been about the on-field stuff," said Taylor, who sold his stake in the UIFL and moved to Florida earlier this year. "This gives me the opportunity to be hands-on with the team."

Joining Taylor on his staff as an assistant coach and director of player personnel is former Florida Firecats star Brent Burnside. The 2004 Arena Cup MVP played 10 years of arena football, including seven with the Firecats.

"I had heard of Brent before but didn't get a chance to meet him until after we came down here," Taylor said. "I've talked to a lot of people about him and got nothing but rave reviews, and based on our conversations, I felt comfortable that he was going to be able to help the Tarpons win games."

Taylor, who has co-owned six different indoor teams, said he didn't anticipate coaching the Tarpons, who will play in Germain Arena, when he helped establish the franchise, but when the deal to sell the league to Assured Equities was completed last month, things changed.

"When the opportunity to sell the league came along, we looked at where we wanted to go long term, and decided that Florida was the best fit," he said.

Taylor and fellow co-founder Andrew Haines are now both based in Fort Myers full time. Haines is the UIFL league president and Taylor is a consultant and a member of the Assured Equities Board of Directors.

Taylor said his role with the league shouldn't cause a conflict with his role as the team's coach.

"The two don't have anything to do with the other," Taylor said. "One is on the field of play ... and the other is helping the league. I don't foresee any problems."

Taylor's last job as a football coach was as the offensive coordinator at Bethel College in 2000.

According to Taylor, he and Burnside are already recruiting players for the upcoming season and could begin to announce player signings in the near future. He said the team has plans for an open tryout at Estero High School on July 23, with more details expected to be released soon. The team's season will start in March.



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