Allegations of illicit sex between students and between teachers and students. Termination of longtime employees. Lawsuits. The Florida Courier investigates the turmoil at Florida's largest private HBCU.

Compiled by the Florida Courier Staff

The surprising termination of Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) Head Basketball Coach Clifford Reed – after the most successful basketball season at the school in 30 years – is the latest of a series of personnel decisions by B-CU President Trudie Kibbe Reed that has the school lurching from management of one crisis to another.

Here's what's happened at B-CU in just the last month:

- **After terminating seven instructors in 2009, the Reed administration was placed on the**

American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) list of "censured administrations," which means that conditions for academic freedom and tenure are unsatisfactory at a college or university. B-CU is now one of only 47 institutions nationwide on the censure list.

The AAUP found that, "in many instances critical to academic freedom and tenure, the university had no published procedures, and where it did, the (Reed) administration often failed to follow them, producing a chilling effect on academic freedom."

Notably, Reed's administration had been previously censured by AAUP under similar circumstances in 2004, when she was president of Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas. There, she fired an instructor for insubordination.

B-CU responded dismissively to the AAUP report.

"This (AAUP) report, which concerns the termination of seven faculty members by B-CU in 2009, contains many errors and false assertions and presents a one-sided view of the manner in which the university handled the matters in question," said Pamela G. Browne, the school's general counsel, in a statement.

The university released its own report written by civil rights attorney David Honig that justified the terminations and cited support for its decision by the Rev. Al Sharpton, the National Council of Negro Women, and Adora Obi Nweze, president of the Florida State Conference of NAACP branches.

• **Four of the former B-CU professors of the seven Reed fired – Russell Mootry, Trebor Negron, Smart Uhakheme and John Ukawuilulu – filed a lawsuit rebutting allegations that they were having sexual relations off-campus with female students for years.** Mootry had taught at the school for some 30 years. Their lawsuit alleges that Reed and the university defamed them, breached their employment contract and tenure provisions, and wrongfully terminated them. They also claim that Reed and the school fired them in retaliation for making her aware of violations of law that were happening under her watch, including alleged embezzlement, theft, and vendor kickbacks.

B-CU was just served with the lawsuit last week and has yet to respond. In its response to AAUP, the university claims that the professors were threats to student safety and were terminated legally and accordingly.

• **Last week, B-CU lost the best baseball coach in school history and its entire coaching staff to another historically Black college or university (HBCU).** Mervyl Melendez resigned to go Alabama State University – and took his championship staff with him.

Melendez was 379-320 in 12 seasons as head coach and led the B-CU Wildcats to 11 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) titles and NCAA tournament appearances, including six straight regional games.

He also played for the Wildcats. He is the school's all-time leader in doubles and batting average. Melendez made the first HBCU All-American Team in 1996. He was an All-MEAC and All-MEAC Tournament selection in 1995 and 1996. His parting from B-CU was more amicable than the others.

"Mervyl is pound-for-pound one of the best coaches I have ever been around,""said B-CU Director of Athletics Lynn W. Thompson in a statement, "but he is a far greater husband, father, and teacher than that. It has truly been an honor to watch him bloom into a legend and I wish him well in his search for life's next challenge. We truly hate to see him leave the campus, but he can never leave our family."

Melendez said Alabama State made "an offer I couldn't refuse," including a commitment to make financial resources available to improve its baseball program. Alabama State also has a new baseball facility.

• **The Alvin Wyatt lawsuit continues and is in the fact-finding phase.** The school fired former head football coach Alvin "Shine'' Wyatt, Sr. at the end of the 2009 season immediately after B-CU lost badly to archrival Florida A&M University (FAMU) at the Florida Classic in Orlando.

Soon thereafter, Wyatt filed a wrongful termination lawsuit against B-CU. Court records indicate that Wyatt has asked the trial court to set a date for a jury trial.

He also has moved aggressively to have Reed and B-CU's top leadership answer questions under oath before a court reporter, a procedure known as a "deposition." Court records also show that on May 25, B-CU submitted an offer to Wyatt to settle the case.

Wyatt, a Jacksonville native, played for the Wildcats from 1966 to 1969, where he was an all-conference and All-American player. He has the school career records in interceptions (34) and a 100-yard kickoff return. His five interceptions in a single game is still a school record.

After earning his degree from the former Bethune-Cookman College in 1970, he was drafted by the NFL's Oakland Raiders in 1970. He spent four years in pro football before returning to B-CC in 1975 as an assistant coach under former Miami Dolphin Larry Little.

Wyatt was later named defensive coordinator and helped the Wildcats win the MEAC title in 1984. In 1988, Wyatt's defense helped B-CC gain a share of the MEAC title with FAMU and Delaware State.

He became B-CC's ninth head coach in 1996, won a MEAC title in 2002, and in 2008 became the school's all-time winningest coach, passing the legendary Rudolph "Bunky" Matthews.

Wyatt also was a girl's basketball coach for 18 years, compiling a 260-200 record and winning two MEAC titles.

School successes

During Reed's tenure, B-CU has had major and minor successes.

Bethune-Cookman College became a university in 2007 and was reaccredited in 2010, which means it meets all university academic and operational standards. New campus facilities are being built.

Students in science, math and engineering recently won first place in robotics in a regional competition. The university was approved to institute a new master's degree in integrated environmental science. It has successfully applied for modest grants – $50,000 from Home Depot for campus improvements, $64,000 to partner with the local health department to push healthy lifestyles.

But still, on-campus and courtroom drama continues.

No Hollywood ending

Coach Reed and his son, star point guard C.J. Reed, had been lauded nationwide for leading the Wildcats to their first winning season since joining Division I in 1980-81. B-CU went 21-13 overall and 13-3 in the MEAC, winning the regular season crown.

The Wildcats made their first-ever postseason appearance with a trip to the National Invitational Tournament, losing to Virginia Tech in the opening round.

Reed was MEAC Coach and National Association of Black Coaches, Coach of the Year for Region 15. C.J. was named MEAC Player of the Year, HBCU Player of the Year and HBCU First Team All-American.

It all came crashing down Monday when B-CU announced in a 51-word press release that after an internal administrative review, Coach Reed would not return, his contract would not be renewed, and his employment was terminated effective immediately.

Why the termination?

The reason depends on whom you ask. The university says it's because Coach Reed refused to cooperate with a criminal investigation surrounding a rape allegation against his players – with his son as the prime suspect. Coach Reed's defenders say that as a father, he was required to help his son avail himself of his constitutional right to retain legal counsel when the son became the focus of the criminal investigation.

The salacious facts as listed in a Daytona Beach Police Department (DBPD) report are not in dispute.

A B-CU female athlete accused C.J. Reed of getting her drunk and either raping her himself or allowing four other unknown males to rape her, and taking her to a B-CU men's locker room where an unknown male washed her off.

The allegation against C.J. Reed was made more than a month after the alleged incident and was prompted when the young woman's coach saw a passion mark – a "hickey" – on her neck. She started crying and told her coach that she had been raped some 30 days before, according to the police report.

When DBPD investigators pressed her after she made her original police report, the young woman admitted she had a months-long consensual sexual relationship with C.J. as well as with one of his teammates, and that she was also having sex with her hometown boyfriend when she returned to South Florida. C.J. and his teammate each knew they were having sex with the young woman.

The young woman asked police to terminate their investigation and no criminal charges were ever filed.

No comment

When asked about the termination, Coach Reed told the Florida Courier, “I have no comment. I was terminated. I thank God for the support that I had and the school for the opportunity.”

The coach added, “It’s time to move on. God will bless me. My life doesn’t stop. I will continue to work hard and be a man of character and discipline. I put mine up against anyone that I have worked for or with.”

Player and coach

Like Wyatt, Coach Reed has deep roots at Bethune-Cookman.

A junior college transfer, Clifford Reed played two seasons for the Wildcats (1990-1991), averaging 21 points per game for his career. He led the Wildcats in scoring in both seasons and made a single-game school record eight three-point field goals and is 17th on the school’s career scoring list. He earned his bachelor’s degree in physical education in 1991.

Reed spent 14 seasons coaching the Wildcats. He was an assistant coach before taking over with 11 games remaining in the 2000-2001 season, going 6-5. In nine-plus seasons as head coach, Reed went 125-166, including three straight winning seasons dating back to 2008-2009.

His son, C.J, is now sixth on the school’s all-time career scoring list.

B-CU responses limited

When contacted by the Florida Courier, B-CU President Reed said, “I’m on vacation and I’m away and out of operation right now and I really ask you to help me and respect my vacation. I am really out of commission for doing university business right now. I won’t be back until the 20th.

“Just to let you know, I’ve had some upper respiratory problems, came here and got another infection and so I’m just on bed rest. You can call Meredith Rodriguez. She will be glad to help you or my vice president Hiram Powell. Just call my office and ask them to transfer you to Dr. Powell or Meredith. Meredith is our P.R. person.”

The representative answering the phone at Powell’s office said he is out of the country. Athletic Director Thompson did not return the Florida Courier’s phone calls or voicemail messages.

Rodriguez said that the Clifford Reed incident is an internal personnel matter and is under investigation and that therefore the university cannot comment at this time.