

Art Briles, coach fired in U.S. rape scandal, won't join Ticats after outrage



Former Baylor coach Art Briles yells from the sideline during an NCAA football game on Sept. 12, 2015.

SUBSCRIBE

LM OTERO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



RACH
5 HO

After a single day of condemnation on many fronts, Art Briles, a former Baylor University head coach who was fired in the wake of a sexual assault scandal, will not take up a position with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Earlier Monday, the Ticats said in a release that Mr. Briles would be joining the club as an assistant coach.

But by late Monday night, the Canadian Football League and the Ticats said in a statement: "Art Briles will no longer be joining the Hamilton Tiger-Cats as a coach. We came to this decision this evening following a lengthy discussion between the league and the Hamilton organization. We wish Mr. Briles all the best in his future endeavours."

STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

Earlier in the day, multiple attempts to reach CFL commissioner Randy Ambrosie to discuss the hiring were not returned. The league originally said in an e-mailed statement that it was "in continuing discussions with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats regarding the hiring of Art Briles as a coach." Nor did Ticats CEO Scott Mitchell agree to be interviewed. It remained unclear how the league and the team, which is owned by Bob Young, decided to reverse the decision to hire Mr. Briles.

John Doyle: About Art Briles: Money, not morals, is what matters in professional sports

The hiring was difficult to square with the league's desire to be viewed as progressive. Two seasons ago, it created a policy to address violence against women, working in partnership with the Ending Violence Association of Canada. More recently, it responded to the racial violence in Charlottesville, Va., with its "Diversity Is Strength" campaign.

campaign.

At least one Ticats sponsor had spoken out, and the decision was largely condemned on social media.

Mr. Briles, 61, was dismissed by Baylor in May, 2016, after an independent investigation found the Texas school's administration and football staff mishandled multiple rape allegations involving players.

It was one of the biggest sexual assault scandals in U.S. college sports history. According to one lawsuit, 31 players were allegedly involved in 52 sexual assaults and five gang rapes from 2011 to 2014.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

According to the Dallas Morning News, after he learned that a woman alleged she had been raped by several Baylor football players, Mr. Briles replied: "Those are some bad dudes. Why was she around those guys?"

The independent report resulted in the demotion of school president Ken Starr and the suspension and eventual firing of Mr. Briles. Director of athletics Ian McCaw was placed on probation.

The Ticats had planned to introduce Mr. Briles on Tuesday in a news conference in Hamilton.

On Monday, Mr. Mitchell called Mr. Briles a man who deserves a second chance. Mr. Mitchell did not grant The Globe and Mail an interview, but did talk to a football blog, 3 Down Nation, where he defended the hiring.

"As an organization we have to decide whether we're going to give people a second chance and judge them for their own character, morality and ethics," he said. "I can tell you there wasn't one single person that we spoke to who knows Art Briles that didn't think he deserved an opportunity to work in football."

The decision was greeted with widespread condemnation on social media. Many pushed CFL commissioner Randy Ambrosie to condemn or block the hire. It prompted responses from fans, advocacy groups and at least one team sponsor, Barry's Jewelers, the headlining sponsor of Huddles & Heels, the women's football clinic the Ticats planned to hold on Monday night.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

"It is with profound disappointment that we heard the news of the hiring of Art Briles. We strongly condemn and urge the team's management and ownership to immediately sever any ties they may have," Barry's Jewelers said in a statement on its website. "Mr. Briles may or may not have a valid coaching track record, but to choose the chance of winning football over the importance of values goes beyond our core values and is absolutely not acceptable."

UltraViolet, a women's rights group that has campaigned against Baylor football and the NFL over their handling of instances of sexual assault, said the Ticats were sending the wrong message with the hiring.

"The investigations that took place at Baylor show that Art Briles not only flat-out ignored survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other acts of abuse during his time there, he actively worked to cover up multiple accounts of rape. He clearly cannot be trusted as a coach or leadership figure in any capacity," said Nita Chaudhary, a co-founder of UltraViolet, in an e-mail to The Globe. "By hiring Briles, the Tiger-Cats are sending a message to all women that football is more important than their safety, and that is just unacceptable. Shame on the Tiger-Cats for allowing him to coach again."

Through a spokesperson, Baylor University declined to comment.

After the Tiger-Cats' abysmal 0-8 start, Kent Austin stepped down as head coach last week, but stayed on as vice-president of football operations and appointed June Jones as the new coach. The team announced on Monday that Mr. Briles had been hired as Mr. Jones's assistant coach. Mr. Jones and Mr. Briles have known each other for decades and coached college football in Texas at the same time – Mr. Briles at Baylor and Mr. Jones at Southern Methodist University.

Mr. Briles has more than 35 years of coaching experience, including stints as head coach at Houston (2003-07) and Baylor (2008-15). After being fired, he sued the school but later dropped the suit. He later reached an undisclosed financial settlement with Baylor, where he had posted a 65-37 record and won a share of back-to-back Big 12 titles in 2013 and 2014.

In an interview with ESPN in September, 2016, Mr. Briles said he accepted responsibility for the program's poor handling of sexual assault

"There were some bad things that happened under my watch," he told. "And for that, I'm sorry. ... I was wrong. I'm sorry. I'm going to learn. I'm going to get better."

Mr. Briles said he understood why women victimized by his players might also be upset with the coach.

"I'd tell them I'm extremely sorry," he continued. "It just appalls me that somebody could victimize another human being. And there's no place in society for it. And I've never condoned it and never will and never put up with it."

Violated, a book by ESPN reporters Paula Lavigne and Mark Schlabach about the Baylor scandal, will be released on Tuesday.



PLAY VIDEO
1:50

Video: New Tiger-Cats coach 'motivated' by team's winless record
(THE CANADIAN PRESS)

FOLLOW RACHEL BRADY ON TWITTER

@RBRADYGLOBE

REPORT AN ERROR

LICENSING OPTIONS

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED

We have closed comments on this story for legal reasons. For more information on our commenting policies and how our community-based moderation works, please read our [Community Guidelines](#) and our [Terms and Conditions](#).

MORE ON THIS STORY

Baylor to fire football coach Briles, re-assign president

June Jones replaces Kent Austin as head coach of Tiger-Cats

Alouettes fall to Blue Bombers in OT despite Nik Lewis's record night

TRENDING

1 Bombardier out of running for New York subway contract