USF Excited About Trip To El Paso

Contributed by Trenten Hilburn

USF coach says team
excited by Brut Sun Bowl

By Bret Bloomquist

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BRIAN KANOF PHOTO

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti and USF head coach Jim Leavitt came to El Paso to promote the 74th Annual Brut Sun Bowl.

EL PASO, Texas (December 6, 2007) — There was a time this year when a Brut Sun Bowl trip might have disappointed South Florida.

In mid-October the Bulls were 6-0, ranked No. 2 in the
country and held serve to make the national championship game.

When USF arrives in El
Paso on Dec. 26, however, their coach Jim Leavitt
knows how pumped up his team will be about its Sun Bowl trip.

"When I got off the plane, I called my wife and said,
'There's mountains here,'" Leavitt said at a luncheon today in advance of
his program's third-ever bowl game. "Our guys are going to get off the
plane with big eyes.

"We are so excited to come here," Leavitt said.
"We're a young program, we haven't been around a lot of years, and for the opportunity to get invited here, you'll see great humility."

The important fact to consider is that this is just the 11th year the Tampa school has fielded football.

The Bulls' two previous bowl berths were the Meineke Car Care Bowl in 2005 and the Papajohns.com Bowl in '06, so the opportunity to play in a New Year's Eve bowl with a 74-year history behind it and an actual name behind the sponsor, represents a new peak.

"I don't think there's any question," Leavitt said when asked if this was the best bowl trip in the program's brief history. "To play in one of the traditional bowl games that's been around a long time, it's a great honor.

"It's buzzing all over Tampa, it really is."

South Florida created a buzz of its own this year in just its second season in the Big East.

Without much history to point to, the program is now known for its meteoric ascent.

"I've seen their rise over time," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "I watched them eagerly this year because we were both in the top 10 a big part of the season. "I was impressed with their competitiveness, with their athleticism. I'll look at them a lot more now and I hope I'm not too impressed, but I probably will be."

Leavitt's first exposure to the Sun Bowl came when he arrived as a freshman football player at Missouri in 1974, which was still buzzing over a Sun Bowl victory against Auburn the season before.

"I remember hearing about how big it is to be part of this game," said Leavitt, who is the only coach in South Florida history. "There's a lot of history there.

"A chance to play Oregon, a Pac-10 team, there is a lot of excitement."

He knows it will all hit home on Dec. 31.

"We started (in 1997) with an abandoned trailer," Leavitt said of the program's humble beginnings. "Then we had two trailers, then three trailers. "We built offices three years ago, then we started selling out our stadium."

"This is pretty neat."

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