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Collen declines offer to coach Vandy women

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- A day after being hired, Tom Collen quit as women's basketball coach at Vanderbilt on Thursday because of inaccuracies on his 1997 resume.

Vanderbilt gave the former Colorado State coach a choice -- resign or be fired -- after a newspaper published a portion of the old resume that incorrectly claimed he earned two master's degrees.

"It was a deal breaker," Vanderbilt athletic director Todd Turner said.

The case comes five months after George O'Leary, the former football coach at Georgia Tech, lost his job at Notre Dame within a week of his hiring. He falsely claimed on his resume that he had a master's degree in education and had earned three letters as a New Hampshire football player. He attended New Hampshire only two years and didn't play in any games.

On Monday, Vanderbilt checked Collen's bio on Colorado State's Web site, which credited him with master's degrees in health education and recreational programming from Miami of Ohio.

When the university asked for verification, Collen gave officials transcripts, diplomas and a resume correctly showing one master's degree in physical education and health education.

Despite the discrepancy, Vanderbilt hired him Wednesday. When it became clear Thursday that the mistake was on the 1997 resume Collen gave Colorado State -- not just on the Web site -- Vanderbilt changed its mind.

"He portrayed it in such a way here that his resume had always been accurate," Turner said. "That really was a difficult thing for us to deal with."

Reached at the Nashville airport before flying home to Colorado, the 48-year-old Collen said he believed for 17 years that he had earned two degrees.

"There was never any intention to deceive anybody. It was just a mistake that was never caught," Collen said.

A portion of the resume he gave to Colorado State in 1997 was published in The Tennessean on Thursday.

Turner said Vanderbilt believed in Collen's abilities, but the school's reputation was at risk.

"I know this decision was difficult for him to make, but it was the right one," Turner said.

Turner, a close friend of Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White, said he wanted to talk to White about problems with coaches.

"We can do better. There's no question about that. We can be more efficient. We can be smarter. I don't think we can try any harder. But I think we can learn from these kinds of things," Turner said.

Colorado State is going ahead with its search for a replacement for Collen, who led the Rams to four NCAA Tournaments in the last five years and was 129-33.

Vanderbilt will continue its search for a replacement for Jim Foster, who left to become the coach at Ohio State. Foster was 256-99 in 11 seasons with the Commodores.

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