

Keith LeClair, Former ECU Baseball Coach, Dies After Extended Illness

Former Pirate Skipper Battled ALS For Five Years

• [Keith LeClair Tribute](#)

[July 17, 2006](#)

[GREENVILLE, N.C.](#) - [Keith LeClair](#), [East Carolina University's](#) head baseball coach from 1997 to 2002, died at his home Monday following an extended illness.

[LeClair, 40, had been battling amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly referred to as ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease, for the past five years.](#)

[During his collegiate baseball career as a player, assistant coach and head coach at Western Carolina University and East Carolina, LeClair was a part of 13 NCAA Tournament teams and earned five conference coach-of-the-year awards.](#)

[He officially relinquished his coaching duties June 19, 2002, two weeks after leading the Pirates to their fourth consecutive NCAA Regional appearance before finishing with a 43-20-1 record. LeClair remained with the ECU Department of Athletics as a special assistant to the director of athletics until the time of his death.](#)

[The funeral service will be held Friday, July 21 at 2:00 p.m. at Oakmont Baptist Church. The family will receive friends Thursday evening between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. at S.G. Wilkerson and Sons Funeral Home.](#)

["Keith LeClair and his approach to life touched so many people in this community while providing inspiration for all who had the good fortune to meet and know him," ECU Director of Athletics Terry Holland said. "His legacy in Pirate Athletics is unmatched and his good counsel will be sorely missed in our daily lives.](#)

["His dignified approach to whatever life brought him provides a model for every human being and particularly those of us who work with the young men and women who are this nation's future. He has enriched ECU Athletics in many significant ways but most importantly by bringing Lynn, J.D. and Audrey into the Pirate Family."](#)

[LeClair became the second-winningest baseball coach in school history in just five seasons at East Carolina, compiling a 212-96-1 \(.688\) record. He also led the Pirates to four straight NCAA Regional appearances, three Colonial Athletic Association championships and one Conference USA title. His 2001 club advanced to the NCAA Super Regionals and finished with a No. 11 national ranking after registering a 47-13 mark. His final squad was ranked in the Top 25 polls for much of the season, swept through the C-USA Tournament and won a pair of games at the Clemson Regional. He won the American Baseball Coaches Association's East Region Coach-of-the-Year award in both 1999 and 2001.](#)

[In addition, LeClair played an integral role for fundraising efforts and eventual construction of a new, state-of-the-art baseball stadium on the ECU campus. His dreams were realized in the spring of 2005 when 3,000-seat Clark-LeClair Stadium opened March 4 and the Pirates capped off the ceremony by defeating Michigan 2-1.](#)

["Keith represents the true spirit of ECU athletics," ECU Chancellor Dr. Steve Ballard said. "He taught us all to dream big dreams and make them come true. He was a close friend and trusted adviser, and he was the best possible model of someone who puts ECU first."](#)

[LeClair arrived at East Carolina in the summer of 1997 after six seasons at the helm of his alma mater, Western Carolina University. At WCU, he compiled a 229-135-2 \(.628\) record while winning four Southern Conference championships and advancing to NCAA Regional play on four occasions.](#)

[As a player at Western Carolina under current Clemson head coach Jack Leggett, LeClair was an All-Southern Conference selection in 1988 while earning SoCon Tournament MVP honors the same season. The former walk-on also established Catamount records for hits and total bases in a season.](#)

[LeClair signed with the Atlanta Braves after completing his collegiate career and spent the summer of 1988 as an outfielder for Idaho Falls in the Pioneer League. After a spring training stint with the San Francisco Giants in 1989, he was offered a student assistant coaching position at Western Carolina, which led to full-time responsibilities shortly thereafter.](#)

[He was inducted into both the East Carolina University and Western Carolina University Athletics Hall of Fame in the fall of 2002 and was honored as the first recipient of the Conference USA Student-Athlete Advisory Committee's \(SAAC\) Coaches Choice Award. In](#)



Keith LeClair

addition, the Conference USA Baseball Coach-of-the-Year Award was named in honor of LeClair.

"Coach LeClair is special to East Carolina baseball," head baseball coach Billy Godwin said. "He was a winner on and off the field, which is evident by the many lives he touched. His legacy in ECU baseball history will live forever. The LeClair family is in my prayers. We are all better people for having known Keith LeClair"

LeClair is survived by his wife, Lynn, and two children, Audrey and J.D., and his father and mother, Andy and Doris LeClair from Walpole, N.H.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to the ALS Association (Jim "Catfish" Hunter Chapter, 120-101 Penmarc Drive, Raleigh, NC 27603), Oakmont Baptist Church (1100 Red Banks Road, Greenville, NC 27858), SPORTworks Ministry (P.O. Box 8031, Greenville, NC 27835) and ECU Educational Foundation (The Pirate Club, 304 Ward Sports Medicine Building, Greenville, NC 27858-4353).