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NORTHERN ILLINOIS NAMES JERRY KILL AS HUSKIES' NEW FOOTBALL COACH
Press Conference Quotes

Associate Vice President/Athletic Director Dr. Jim Phillips

Opening statement:

"I want to welcome everybody and I thank you all for coming today on a cold winter day. To say I'm excited would be a huge understatement and you will understand that here in a little bit. I want to start with the search process. We sat together nearly 16 days ago with the announcement of coach Joe Novak's retirement, and since that time we have been immediately searching for the next head football coach of Northern Illinois University. We cast the net as wide as possible. We went through 1,261 bios. I know coach Novak is exhausted and I am exhausted, but we certainly cast that net very wide to every level of football, college and pro and everywhere in between. We felt like we were extremely thorough and acted swiftly and strategically throughout. We needed to be professional and sensitive to the coaches who were still playing because the college football season continues to get longer. It was a challenge, but it was paramount in our thoughts as we went through. It was fast and furious. A lot of jobs opened up in college football with probably not enough good coaches to go around, but that's somebody else's problem now, that's not our problem. The goal was to find the best institutional fit and I know we did that. We absolutely did that. I want to thank some folks personally. My senior staff continues to amaze me while I'm away for periods of time like that. They run the department better than when I'm around so I should take that hint seriously. Tim McMurray, Ed Pasque, Glen Krupica, Ken Davidson, Steve Cunningham and Dan Parker, specifically, were folks who were terrific throughout the whole process. In addition, our executive vice president Dr. Eddie Williams, who I see is seated before us this morning, he was invaluable throughout the entire process as we met continually on a daily basis. Finally, I want to thank our tremendous leader and chief Dr. John Peters, who was just incredible and fantastic and was a person with major influences. I do want to take a little time to thank somebody who is extremely important, and words will not do it justice, and that is coach Joe Novak. I think we spent more time together in the past 16 days than I can ever remember spending time with anybody and that includes my family. He was amazing and sat through every one of the bio reviews and interviews that we had. There were several nights where we finished at 1:00 or 1:30 in the morning and got up the next morning at six. Coach told me, 'boy, this administrative stuff stinks, I'm going back to coaching.' Thank-you so much Joe. Without your impact and your input I know we would not have gotten to where we are today and the announcement we are having today. So, I do sincerely thank you for your help all throughout."

On the profile of the next NIU coach:

"I will tell you quickly about our profile. When you are searching for anything, you have to come up with a strategic and sound profile. I visited with our team on two occasions and with our captains and I just listened to them and what they were looking for, along with what coach Novak, the President and I thought were important. We wanted a person with high character, a winner. Someone who was proven and extremely passionate about college athletics and college football. We wanted a leader, motivator, somebody who had had tremendous experience and successful experience. Somebody who put an emphasis on academics and social behavior. Someone who had unmatched work ethic and who could fulfill the gigantic shoes of coach Joe Novak, which is no easy task. We wanted a role model, someone family oriented, community oriented and in the end, as I said earlier, the right institutional fit. In my view, we absolutely did that, without question, with a coach who reflects each of those characteristics. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year in his career, a person who has resurrected multiple programs at different levels, has won at every place he's ever been, a guy that has won in the classroom with his student-athletes, and has also won in the game of life."

NIU Head Coach Jerry Kill

Opening statement:

"I'm very, very thankful for the opportunity. As a young man growing up in a small town of 2,000 people, being raised by a

mother and father in a simple life and a great life and a walk-on player and a young man who wanted to leave and became the first of the family to graduate college, I chased a dream. That dream come true today. I wanted to have the opportunity to coach division-I football and wanted to make it be a great place that fit and have a chance to be successful. I'll tell you this, I'm very thankful for the President Peters, Jim Phillips and Joe Novak. I want everybody to know that there's nobody who is going to fill coach Novak's shoes, I'm just going to try to fit in those shoes. I hope his shoes are big enough to let me slip a foot or two in. What he has done here is tremendously amazing. When I took the job at Southern Illinois, he got on me a bit and told me to stay the course. I took that advice and I will tell you that the biggest reason that attracted me to this situation is Jim Phillips and having coach Novak in the search and having his blessings to do this job. That's why Jerry Kill is here. I think it's a great opportunity and a great administration. Football is important here and I want to be where it's important. All the things that you all have worked for at Northern Illinois as a family to have this tremendous facility and the hours that Joe and his staff and the football family have put in to this program has made it a great job. That puts a lot of pressure on coach Kill to be successful with all the resources that are here. Coach Novak has passed me the torch and I have a lot of work to do and big shoes to fill. I'm just delighted to be a part of the Northern Illinois family. I will tell you that I will give you everything single thing that I have. I will work endless hours and do whatever it takes to make you all prouder of the football program and carry on the legacy that coach Novak has left here. All I'm doing is just being part of the family and I'm going to need your help because it's going to be a team effort and has been that way anywhere I have ever been. I'm not here to make drastic changes, I'm just here to carry on the torch. Coach Novak said to me, 'if I were you're age, I might stick around a little while.' I'm excited for this opportunity. We are going to do great things because we have the leadership from the top and that's what it's all about. You can always walk in to a place and tell if it's going to be successful or not. When I walked in here today and met all the people, I knew that there was a reason that Northern Illinois is special. I know in my mind that I absolutely made the right decision. I'm so excited about it. I know that there's a lot of people from Southern Illinois listening in and I appreciate Dr. Prichard and the opportunity that I was given. Paul Kwapcheck gave me an opportunity that not very many people would take a chance on, hiring a division-II football coach at Southern Illinois. They were relentless and represented Southern Illinois very well. This is just a chapter that we have to take in life and is too good of an opportunity to turn down and I'm very proud. Most importantly, I have two girls who are in school and wish they could have been here. One is playing basketball and one is practicing softball. The most important thing in my family and that I'm very, very proud of is that I've been married for 24 years, going on 25. I got married when I was 21 and she was 19. I don't recommend that to any young people out there and I certainly don't recommend that to my 20 year-old daughter. But we did it. We had to find a way. We didn't have a lot of money and were raised on old values. We loved each other and thought we might as well get married because we would get financial aid and find a way to get through school. Rebecca is my lovely wife and we got to see a few players who thought she was my daughter. I made a lot of fun about that. A lot of you don't know me, but she's the best thing that I have going for me. She raised our children and has been understanding of the athletic world with all the moving. She met Jim and coach Novak and after that she said, 'that's where we need to go.' I used it at Southern Illinois and I will use it here. If you all are trying to figure out how a bald fat guy got someone like that, I can recruit, now. I used that often when I was at Southern Illinois and I don't apologize for it. I'm a hard-hat, lunch-pail guy. I am what I am. What you see is what you get and the real reason I got hired is that coach Novak and I have the same hair style."

On the challenges that lie ahead:

"I think that the biggest thing you have to do when you come in is I need to recruit the players that are here. It's going to be important for me to turn things around as quickly as I can. I know we are on break right now, but when we get the players back in, I have to recruit them and find out their personalities. You can't treat all kids the same, but you have to treat them fairly and you have to get to know them before you know what buttons you can push with them. My goal as coach is to get every ounce out of the young men that come into the program academically and athletically and to make him a better person when he leaves the program. The only way you can do that is to get to know him and figure out what buttons to push."

On how recruiting will be different:

"When I was at Southern Illinois, we were always trying to get the best players that we could possibly get. We battled and understood our restrictions. People ask me why I wanted to go to division-I and I tell them that I have always wanted to know what I could do with about 23 more scholarships. I know what we've done with 63 and we have been pretty good, but I'd like to see what we can do with that extra amount. I don't think the recruiting is any different. Coach Novak and his staff have done a great job with finding the particular areas to go. This job has been set up well and I'm a good listener. We don't want to change a whole lot of things. We have to take a look at what our strengths and weaknesses are, but we are going to go after the very best players that we can possibly get. I'm a competitive human being. I'm going to be honest with you, I'm not a big e-mail guy. I like seeing people. I want someone else to run the office. My strength is recruiting. I'm

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a recruiting machine. I'm smart enough to know that you can cover up some coaching mistakes with great players. If you don't have great players, you aren't going to win many games. Ultimately, the game comes down to the players. You have to have great players."

On focusing on Chicago for recruiting:

"Certainly, but you have to look at the region and the culture. I have some connections. I have coached in Illinois, Michigan and Kansas. I have had strong Florida connections. I think you just look at what strengths you have as a staff and by region then dive in there and get after it. I've visited with Joe and there are some in-roads that he has done a fantastic job with and we are going to get in there. It's not Jerry Kill's football team, it's Northern Illinois' football team and we are going to do what's best. The bottom line is that you have to roll up your sleeves and work. If you work hard, eventually, good things happen."

On the coaching staff transition:

"It's really hard to tell because it's a transitional period. I'm going to be very honest, I'm a loyal person. I'm trying real hard to get one of the young men on our staff at Southern Illinois. We built a good program and worked hard, but we didn't have a facility like this. I would really like to see stability and for that program to continue to be good. I have sunk a lot of lifetime into that program and would like to see them hire somebody within our staff and see some continuity so they can win. A lot of it is up in the air and hopefully we can get it decided quickly because I'm a fast mover. Ultimately, we have to do what's best for Northern Illinois and our football team here."

On his health issues:

"I was diagnosed with cancer two years ago and I'm in complete remission. I feel fantastic. A lot of people I know get concerned with it, but I will tell everybody that it's the greatest thing that has ever happened to me in my life. I have been able to start a cancer fund and been able to help a lot of people with the help of my wife and the community. I've learned to appreciate life. I don't have any bad days. I'm a positive person. Every day I get up is a great day. There are a lot of people who have a lot worse of a life than Jerry Kill. The Lord has blessed me and that's why I'm so excited about this opportunity because there have been people that weren't sure they should take a chance on me because I have had cancer, but somebody did. I will tell you that I will remember this for the rest of my life and that's why I will dig in here and work very, very hard. It's made me a better person and sometimes you have some tough things happen in life. It can make you better or worse and it has made me better and I'm proud to say that. I feel fantastic and I have just coached 13 games like a machine. I wasn't very happy about Saturday. We left some points on the board and got beat. I haven't slept a lot since then and just go the nerve to watch the tape the other day and that resulted in even less sleep. I'm in great shape and really feel good about everything."

On when NIU contacted him about the job:

"I was contacted after we played on Saturday and that was on Sunday. That was the first contact and that was very well respected. The football world is crazy and this has been a first-class operation. I've never seen something like this with the classiness of the operation."

On his style of play:

"The big thing is that there are a lot of similarities between coaches. We want to be a hard-hat, lunch-pail team. Life is what you get out of it and we are going to work hard. I told the players that I saw today that they better do something over Christmas break because when you get back we are going to get after it. I believe in hard work and the harder you work, the better your chances of success are. I will push them to the limit. I won't win a popularity contest at times, but we're not in it for a popularity contest. We're in it to make them better. We are going to work hard and challenge the youngsters. My job is to get the best out of them. Defensively, philosophies are similar to what has been here in the past. Offensively, we've expanded more and more. You have to adapt to the talent that you have. We threw the ball this year more than we ever had and led the conference, but it was because of the quarterback that we had. You still have to run the football though, or you won't have a chance. I'm a big believer in special teams. When we were struggling at Southern Illinois, we concentrated on special teams because we thought that would give us a chance to win some games. You have to have the right mind set and that is established over time. It doesn't just happen in a day or two. It's already been set up here, I just have to continue to work it and push it."

On the players that are coming back:

"It's a good thing. We played here, but I haven't had a chance to look at film or anything. When you take a job like this you have to watch film and get to know the kids and personnel. It's certainly a good situation to come in to and to have kids that are young. It gives us an advantage in recruiting because we only have 10 scholarships available. It gives us a chance to feel things out for next year because recruiting is always a year ahead. It's perfect timing. Coach Novak wanted to leave the next coach with a great situation and he did and it's very respectful of him. It puts pressure on us, but it's a great time and opportunity for somebody to take the job."

On why he chose NIU:

"I think it's everybody's dream to get as high as they possibly can in their profession. It's because of the fit. If you go off to a region or area that you don't know, it makes recruiting difficult. I was a good fit for Southern Illinois and I know this area well enough and have talked to coach Novak and I know what Northern Illinois is all about. You can only be as good as the people at the top and the administration here is great. Football is important here and I fit here like a glove. I feel comfortable because I know the standards that have been set here. Some people wouldn't want to follow a legendary like coach Novak, but I have a lot to learn from it and I hope I can coach the game just as he has. I'm looking forward to it."

On how far he can take NIU:

"I think the sky's the limit. You should never limit your goals. It's a matter of establishing work ethic and values. I don't think you should ever limit yourself. Everybody laughed at me at Southern Illinois when I told them that I felt that we could compete for a national championship someday. There's a lot of things this program can do with what you all have here and what the administration has established with recruiting tools. Kids like facilities and those sort of things. This is a dream for me and I took my dad's advice of working hard and keeping your mouth shut. Give the person that hires you everything you've got and that's what we are going to do as a football team. We are going to work hard and keep our mouths shut."

On the facilities at NIU:

"Coming here and playing here and seeing what's going on here, I think Northern Illinois is a tremendous story. And you bet it figured into my decision. I've worked in some places that didn't have great facilities and it wears you out because you have to recruit a different way. There's people out there that don't realize how good the facilities are here at Northern Illinois and I was fortunate enough to play here and see it for myself. I don't think it's a good job, but it's a great job. The administration has done a great job and we need to continue the success of the program because the resources are here now."

On his words for the people of SIU:

"We went into the community seven years ago and they were thinking about dropping the football program. We put our heart and soul into Southern Illinois. I told them that I would give them every single ounce of what I've got. I don't think anyone there will tell you that I didn't give them everything I had. It's tough leaving a place that you've sunk seven years of your life to. It's a special place. They embraced us. We love them. They treated me dearly and I wouldn't be standing here if it weren't for a lot of the people there. I love people and I will embrace people and that's just me. I will do that here. I appreciate everything they have done for me. Coach Novak did the same thing here when he retired. He embraced you all and gave you every single ounce that he had. It's not easy to walk away, but you know when it's time. When you're at a place for seven years, coach Novak and I talked about it, people get tired of hearing the same stories. They need some new stories and new juice and I have a couple of assistants who can give them that, but this is the type of juice that coach Kill needs."