

**INTRODUCTION OF BETH COMBS AS THE HEAD COACH OF
NORTHWESTERN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
PRESS CONFERENCE
APRIL 13, 2004**

Mark Murphy: Thank you for coming out today, it is my pleasure to introduce Beth Combs as the new head women's basketball coach. I know Beth a little bit, we had the good fortune to work together for five years at Colgate. I just want to talk about why I think Beth is a really good fit for Northwestern. She has real strong ties to Illinois, she grew up in Decatur, Ill., and she played at Illinois and graduated from Illinois, so we'll try not to hold that against her too much (laughs). She played in the Big Ten and she is familiar with the Big Ten. I think that is really going to help her in this position. She also began her collegiate coaching career in at Eastern Illinois where she got her Masters, and more importantly from our perspective, she recruited the Chicago area. I think establishing real ties in the Chicago area will be beneficial.

As we started this search some of the things I looked for in a candidate I thought Beth really had. She is a high energy, extremely hard worker and is a bright coach. One of the other things that I looked at was she has very high academic standards. I think where that will benefit us is in the recruiting process knowing what kind of student-athletes really value the quality education you can get at Northwestern and how to identify them. The kind of student-athletes we have here at Northwestern are very similar to what they have at Colgate. Some of the issues with which you deal with student-athletes at schools like this will really benefit her in this position.

I think in some ways, I think Bill Carmody's background at Princeton is similar to Beth's background at Colgate. If you look at Colgate in terms of academic standards, the graduation rates at Colgate are almost identical to those at Northwestern in the high 80's and low 90's. One thing I know Beth is proud of is that her team had the highest graduation rate of all 64 teams in the NCAA Tournament this year with a 100 percent rate. That's a real tribute to Colgate and to her program.

I was fortunate as I said earlier to have the privilege of working with Beth at Colgate for five years. She started at Colgate as an assistant when the head coach at the time hired her from Eastern Illinois. I could immediately see that she was an outstanding young coach who had a confidence and a maturity that is rare in assistants, particularly young assistants. She made a positive impact on the program particularly in recruiting and in working with the players on individual drills. After Beth's third year our head coach told us he had an opportunity to take a position where his wife and he were from and I thought about it and decided instead of going through a search, I think we have a good person here, I'd like to name Beth as the interim coach and go forward with that, hoping that she would get off to a good start and do well.

The first year she had a tremendous and immediate impact, I think they doubled the number of wins, but more importantly the respect in the organization that she put together and Colgate ended up having a great year in her first year on an interim basis. She was

named Patriot League Coach of the Year for her efforts. When we named her interim coach they made us go through a search at the end, and I said, she was the league coach of the year, and we still had to go through a search. We finally convinced them that let's go ahead and convince the administration to make Beth our head coach.

So she's been the head coach there for three years, and what I am very impressed with what she's done. To put it into context, Colgate's women's basketball team had not had a winning record since 1986-87. So there was no tradition, and they also had the highest academic standards in the Patriot League. The other challenge that she faced was this was all happening as the league was losing scholarships, so she was recruiting with need-based aid while everyone else had scholarships. Despite all those challenges, she was able to bring the team along and get them to the point where they had great success this year, winning the Patriot League for the first time ever, getting the team into the NCAA tournament.

So, I am really excited about the future of our program here under Beth. I think she is an outstanding young coach, and a rising star in the profession, and it is my pleasure to introduce Beth Combs as our new head women's basketball coach. Beth...

Beth Combs: Thank you. I think Mark kind of covered it all and I just want to say I think this is just a fantastic opportunity for me. Mark has shown his trust and confidence and me from the very beginning as an assistant at Colgate. I welcome this opportunity with open arms. I think Northwestern University definitely does have the best of both worlds in academics and athletics. The Big Ten Conference, in my opinion, is one of the best conferences in the country. You can not beat the academic reputation that a school like Northwestern has to offer and I truly believe working for a fantastic athletic director and the direction of the athletic department here under Mark is moving to the next level. I believe that our women's basketball program is also going to move to the next level. In just the very short time I have been here, there have been amazing people and very supportive people all the way around, from the other coaches I have met, to support staff, and it starts from the top with Mark and his efforts and the respect he has for all of you in this room.

It's a wonderful opportunity. I think that Northwestern basketball has no place to go but up. I definitely welcome the opportunity and the challenge to get it to where it needs to be. I know that when I was a player at Illinois, Northwestern was one of the top programs in the country, they were a top 25 program, and I have every intention of getting them back to where they need to be. I think that the support is there, I think the players are out there and it's a matter of a lot of work and a lot of support from all of you in this room. We are going to try to get this done. I am very much looking forward and welcoming this opportunity and challenge to be the next head coach at Northwestern basketball.

Question: Do you know what you are going to do for assistants yet?

Beth Combs: I am working on that right now. I hope to get assistants in place as soon as possible.

Question: What is her first order of business?

Beth Combs: I think the first we are going to address is really what they are doing in their off-season workouts. I've had a brief chance over the last few weeks to watch them on game tape and now I need to really get a chance to know the players personally one on one as a team. In all honesty, we are going to start fresh. As far as I'm concerned, today is their first day as well as my first day. We are going to meet with players one on one and meet with them as a team, and see what they have in the postseason for workouts and we will go forward from there.

Question: to Mark Murphy about the search for a new head coach

Mark Murphy: It was a national search. I think we had some very strong candidates, but I wanted to make sure that it was a good fit for Beth as well as Northwestern. Obviously she's had success at Colgate, she was a successful head coach there. I think ultimately from our end, she fit a lot of the criteria I was looking for. We had a number of strong candidates, but not a lot with successful Division I head coaching experience. I think ultimately that's what separated Beth.

Question (cont.): asking about criteria Mark was talking about above.

Mark Murphy: Somebody that should work with, and have respect for, and really our confidence that she can do a good job for you, that's a factor. Like I said before, I wanted to make sure it was a good fit for her, as well as Northwestern.

Question: to Beth Combs the adjustments that need to be made?

Beth Combs: I don't really know if there is any kind of adjustments that need to be made. I have been very confident and successful in what I have done so far. The bottom line is basketball is a pretty simple game, and you just hopefully have better athletes and a more competitive schedule. I still plan on doing what I know, and hopefully working with better athletes who have more commitment. I have a little more time with them here involved in summer school and some opportunities to have players on campus year round is going to be a huge benefit. We are going to take it one day at a time and hopefully take them to the next level.

Question: How would you describe yourself as a basketball coach?

Beth Combs: One of the things about my teams is that we will never get beat because we are not in shape and we're not as strong or fast and quick as we can be. I think those are some of the things you can control as a coach. My teams are known for their conditioning and that is where we will start. We are going to start in the weight room and with some sprint work and really see what some of these players have and push them a little bit beyond their initial limits and take it from there.

Question: What are your goals?

Beth Combs: That's great question. I think obviously the program has a long way to go. Do I think we can win the league in a year or two? I think that's a little bit lofty for expectations. My goal is to try to build on what we have. When I get a little better feel of our team and what we have to work with now, we'll be able to formulate what those short term goals are versus long term goals. Long term, I would expect the highest level of success we can achieve here and that will be determined as we go through the next two to three months.

Question: Are there limits for NU women's basketball?

Beth Combs: I hope not. At this stage of the game if you put a limit on yourself now, there is nowhere to go. Right now we shoot for the top, and then break it down a little bit and shoot for short term expectations and build from there.