

9/11 Baylor head coach safe for now

BU Athletic Director gives Steele vote of confidence

WACO, Texas (AP) — Baylor athletic director Tom Stanton, saying he won't be swayed by Internet campaigns, rumors and angry fans, gave a passionate vote of confidence for coach Kevin Steele.

Stanton said Tuesday that Steele, whose overall record is 6-28 after a season-opening 0-22 loss at California, will remain the coach throughout at least this season.

"Kevin Steele is the leader of our football program, and that's not going to change because we went out to California and lost a football game," Stanton said. "That's not the end of the world. We're not going to go off a bridge and we're not going to go lit our wrists."

many areas, including academics, discipline and administrative and organizational skills.

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STEELE

But Stanton, who gave Steele an unspecified contract extension last year, didn't rule out a change after the season.

"When the season is over, if Kevin and I decide that we want to do something else, then Kevin Steele and I will sit down and talk about that and we'll make those decisions at the appropriate times," Stanton said.

Steele, who said the vote of confidence from Stanton was appreciated but not necessary, said he has never considered resigning.

"Quitting is not an option," Steele said. "Because when you teach players not to quit, why would you ever let that thought into your mind?"

The Bears play their home opener Saturday against Division I-AA Samford, and have two more games after that before their Big 12 opener Oct. 5 against Kansas. Baylor has a 29-game conference losing streak, 0-24 under Steele.

The Bears had a players-only meeting Sunday described as emotional.

"It got pretty heated in there," said quarterback Aaron Karas. "Not negative, but people finally stepping up and making people accountable for their actions. I think you'll see a different team out there this week."

Stanton said he was moved by the courage and emotion of players who came to him and "pledged their absolute commitment and support to their head football coach and this university."

New head coach gives ND faithful new hope

(AP) He looks nothing like his predecessors.

But in the span of a few months, and on the admittedly thin evidence of only a single game, Tyrone Willingham has given the faithful hope. He's already stirred faint echoes. He has made Notre Dame football look and feel and sound very much as it used to — big-time.

All those trophies lining the walls and the statues outside his office might have some company yet.

Expectations scared off a few of the coaches who were in line ahead of him. Not Willingham. His only fear is getting ahead of himself.

"It's like playing golf," the new coach said after the Irish made his debut Saturday night a memorable one. "A hacker will get all excited when he pars a hole. But in his excitement, he'll forget to play the next several holes. I'm not a hacker."

The last guy who held Willingham's job for more than a few days was Bob Davie. He didn't understand what made Notre Dame special when he took the job and he was just as clueless when he left. He worked plenty hard, but got trapped into thinking perspiration was the same thing as inspiration.

"I don't know if anybody is going to come in here and just have the fans jumping up and down each and every week. I don't know if that guy exists."

"If he did," Davie said just before he was fired last winter, "his name was Knute or one of those other statues outside my office."

Willingham is black, neither Irish nor Catholic. But he has embraced Notre Dame's tradition as though he was born to it, instead of a kid who was raised a Baptist in North Carolina and sneaked out of church on fall Sunday mornings to catch ND's highlights.

But he's made up for lost time in a hurry. Since Willingham took the job, he's read two books on Rockne, watched all the mushy movies

and old game films and memorized the fight song. He'll be reminded soon enough that there is no substitute for winning. In the meantime, though, Willingham has bought himself some time.

Last off-season was a rocky one for a program that hadn't contended for nearly a decade to begin with. After a messy round of job interviews to replace Davie, first-choice George O'Leary turned out to be less than advertised. The starting quarterback split and the leading rusher was shown the exit. Three more players were dismissed from school after accusations of sexual assault.

None of that has been repackaged as an excuse. There have been no complaints about a tough schedule — Florida State, Michigan, Michigan State, USC — or having to compete against players — as Davie often claimed — who would not have been admitted to Notre Dame.

Willingham, after all, came to Notre Dame from Stanford. He knew exactly what he was getting into, even if all his assistants did not.

"Everything you hear about Notre Dame is true, but even more so" defensive coordinator Kent Baer said last month. He followed Willingham to the Midwest after seven seasons at Stanford.

"It's amazing," Baer added, "how important it is to so many people."

And this was before the Irish put a 22-0 hurt on Maryland, before they revived the slumbering subway alumni, before they played defense with intensity and offense with enough imagination to attract the skill-position players Davie could never land.

And he's already learned something on his way into the office that Davie didn't figure out in a thousand similar journeys: Those statues outside were erected to honor men who took chances, who didn't let being measured by the past stop them from building an even better future.

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