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An interview with:

MORGAN BURKE PATRICK HIGGINS

MORGAN BURKE: First of all, announcements like this are not happy announcements. I take some personal responsibility for the changes we made four and a half years ago, and I don't feel bad about them.

I think under Coach Hope's leadership, we did make improvements on every phase of the program. I think we're starting to see some of the fruits of that work. Particularly, you got to see him working from the inside working with the young men. Those kind of leadership experiences he provided to them were truly outstanding.

So I start off tonight by saying that Danny Hope is a good man, he did a great job for Purdue. I never questioned his work ethic, his character. He devoted his life to improving this program. He and I were together almost 10 years when you take both stints together.

This was obviously a day that wasn't fun, but it's also a day where we have to understand and be accountable for what our expectations were.

We came into the year feeling we would be an improved football team. I think we were. We said we wanted to reduce the variability of our play so we were more consistent against all teams in the league and we wanted to move up a rung on the ladder. We clearly did not do that.

I tell you, like many of you, I was at the game at Minnesota when we didn't play our best football. I was at the Penn State game. For these seniors and these players to come together to build what they did the last three weeks, I don't care who you play, being on the road in the Big Ten is a challenge.

To me it's a credit to Danny, to the coaching staff, that they stuck together, that they fought themselves back into contention to have a season where they had the opportunity for the seniors to go out as champions, an opportunity to qualify for another bowl.

I've asked Patrick to serve as the interim head coach. Gary Nord and I have talked a little bit about this. Gary is going to be a senior advisor. He's been a senior advisor to Patrick once before. We're hopeful that Gary's physical problems will move forward.

But Patrick will lead the team during this bowl process, which we would expect to know something probably by next weekend is probably the timeline.

While Patrick is taking care of getting the team prepared for final exams, for the bowl game, I obviously will turn my attentions to the search, a national search. I can assure you the quarterback position, the cradle, will be at the heart of our thinking. We'll continue to be aggressive offensively because I think that's part of our tradition and our experience here at Purdue.

I cannot give you a timeline as to how quickly we'll be able to go. Some of you have been around this before. These things sometimes come together very quickly and sometimes they take a little longer. I'm not going to be giving weekly updates on this situation. We'll come together as a group once we have the announcement made.

When that announcement is made, the new coach will not take over for Patrick. Patrick is going to coach the team in the bowl game. We'll have to deal with that as we get that person onboard.

I think those are my comments.

PATRICK HIGGINS: This is a great opportunity for this football team to carry on the work that Coach Hope started here four years ago, to end the year very strong academically. We're hoping to have our best academic semester since Danny has been here, and also to give these

seniors the experience that they deserve.

They worked hard the last three weeks to get ready to go to a bowl game, so we want to make sure we can do everything possible that their experience is memorable and also a life lesson for them to learn how to handle difficulties. That is our main focus for the next month.

Q. Morgan, was there a tipping point in this decision for you?

MORGAN BURKE: I don't think there was a tipping point.

Q. What message are you sending to the fan base and everybody with this decision?

MORGAN BURKE: Well, I don't know if I'm sending a message to the fan base as much as I recognize that when you're in a situation, you're not quite over the hump where you want to be, that it's hard to get back up, keep moving forward.

Football is an important program for any Division I school, but particularly at Purdue. This will be our 12th bowl game in 16 years. I think Tom and Matt put together some data. We're about fifth in the Big Ten, we're right in there. We've had a lot of success. We've had success in the last four and a half years under Danny's leadership, every phase of the program he's articulated.

I guess what I'm telling the fans is, Look, we know we haven't been as consistent in our play and performance as we expect to be and as we want to be. I felt at this point in time a change in the leadership was probably the right thing to do.

Q. Morgan, you mention the fans. Was there any kind of a factor involved in your decision regarding the attendance at the stadium in recent seasons?

MORGAN BURKE: Obviously. We've lost a third of the fan base. We've gone from about 54,000 paid attendance in 2007/8 to 37,000 this past year in paid attendance.

The hard thing as I talk to the student-athletes today, the coaches have been through this, it's not an easy occupation that these gentlemen are involved in. I explained to the young men that it's not their fault, they didn't do anything wrong, they certainly gave it their all. I'm delighted the way they ended the season.

But we can't do what we need to do resource-wise with losing a third of the fan base, okay? Everybody has all kinds of ideas and rationale on what we can do. But at the end of the

day, obviously we've got some work to do to both thank the people who have been with us and stayed with us, but also encourage those who jumped off the boat to get back in.

Q. Morgan, can you talk about what involvement President-Elect Daniels will have in this process and have you consulted with him?

MORGAN BURKE: No, I have not. The acting president of the university is Tim Sands. He may have talked to Governor Daniels, but I don't foresee Governor Daniels taking an active role in this. The Board of Trustees and President Sands have been and will be involved.

Q. How will you go about the search committee?

MORGAN BURKE: I was hoping all of you would help me. By tomorrow morning there will be candidates all over the Internet (laughter).

Q. They're already up.

MORGAN BURKE: Okay (laughter).

No, part of this job, you should always have an idea in the marketplace of coaching talent because when these kind of circumstances occur, you don't have much time. You're always in the situation of trying to understand where the candidates are, what would be the best fit.

My reference to the cradle of quarterbacks was not a trite saying. We are an offensive-minded program. That's where we've made our mark over the years. I don't see that under the circumstances changing. We're not going to move into a coach that has a dramatically different scheme because we've built this team to play a certain kind of football. We've seen other institutions who made a coaching change, then they changed their style of play, it took two or three years to adjust. We're not going to do that.

We've got talent in this program, we know we have talent in this program. We want it to be nurtured.

There are an awful lot of people who have advice. There's three people in particular. I've told the parents of all the student-athletes, who got a letter from me personally this afternoon electronically, three people will continue to serve as advisors. Ryan Grigson with the Colts, Rich Smith with the Houston Texans, and Bill Polian. I think all three have a good feeling for what the

football world, both they collegiate and professional level, are. They're helping provide that football screen for the search process.

Q. In terms of monetarily, what are you looking at with the coach's salary?

MORGAN BURKE: We're prepared to compete. We know in the Big Ten and nationally what you have to do to compete. We're prepared to do that.

Q. Patrick, this is not your first coaching job. I guess it's a question from a fan's perspective. You watched your boss lose his job. You've been in the coaching profession. If you had to explain to a fan how hard that is on a coach and their family, how would you describe that?

PATRICK HIGGINS: It's traumatic. If you have a family and you create friendships in the community and your kids have friends at school, it's the nature of the beast. But then you have to take them and say, Hey, daddy has to find a new job. You may not know where you end up. You may end up in a different part of the country.

Just from my personal experience, I've had 10 different jobs. I've been East Coast, West Coast, North, South. I thank God that my wife has been very supportive and she moves with me. It takes a very special family structure and a very special wife to put up with this type of constant stress and moving.

We know that when we get into the profession. It's never really about the coaches. It's about their families. Sometimes we really do a disjustice [sic] to them because their life lessons and learning processes are stunted because we move them around so much.

Q. Just assume we're all candidates. How would you sell Purdue to us and potential candidates? What do you believe the strengths of this program are that can attract a high-level coach?

MORGAN BURKE: I think Purdue University is a brand in and of itself. I think it's something that Danny and the staff have done a good job. Joe Tiller and his staff have done a good job. We play an offensive brand of football. We have a strong representation in the National Football League. Our graduation, academic performance of the young men is good and getting better. I think the caliber of the kids we turn out,

whether they play professional sports or not, are a testimony to themselves.

I'm excited to have a new president joining us. I think he likes the fact that we're self-supporting. He likes the fact we take real courses. He likes the fact we have student-athletes socially for the most part who make very good choices, and fourth he likes to win.

I have a supportive board I think that understands that football is strategic. It's certainly a game and represents a livelihood for the coaches, an opportunity for the student-athletes to get a world-class education, and at the same time play at the very highest level to compete for championships.

Make no bones about it, we want to go back to Pasadena. That's what it's about. We've got to put ourselves in a position to do that. The infrastructure that has been built I think will be very attractive.

We went through a situation when Coach Colletto stepped down and Joe Tiller came in. One of the reasons Joe told me he came was he said he could tell the cupboard isn't bare. It's not going to take me a long time to make an impact. I think a new coach coming in will have the same view.

We have an excellent coaching staff. My hope is that person will take a good hard look at the staff as they come in. I think you've got some talent here that you can be successful with.

Whether he'll have the same lightening in a bottle when Coach Tiller came in, I can't promise that. We had a couple games this year, Ohio State, Notre Dame, if they went different, we would be sitting here at 8-4.

Q. Morgan, do you think head coaching experience is a must going into this search?

MORGAN BURKE: I think it's certainly a plus. I think it's very, very challenging for a coordinator at this level not so much to handle the X's and O's, I think they can do that, I think it's all the stuff you have to do in the corner office. To simulate at this level, it's hard.

It's not impossible. Wisconsin took Bret and raised him up there. Pat Fitzgerald when Randy Walker passed away. It's not impossible, but it would require a unique skill set. If you had somebody that had prior head coaching experience, that would be a plus, but I wouldn't say a must.

Q. How important is it that they have ties to Purdue?

MORGAN BURKE: I think ties to Purdue are tiebreakers. They're not prerequisites.

Q. Patrick, how does your role change now? What is your approach then over this next month?

PATRICK HIGGINS: My approach is to make sure that our student-athletes, again, are students first because they have finals coming up. We have to continue the academic role we play in their daily lives. Then to try to get them to play in a quality bowl game against a quality opponent to the best of their ability and at the highest level we can get them to play.

It's been kind of a rollercoaster as we talked before. I'm unfortunate because I was unfortunate to be put in a situation of being interim offensive coordinator, now I get the unfortunate role of being an interim head coach.

We're going to do the best job possible. Our coaching staff is committed to these young men. We're going to do everything possible, like I said before, so that their bowl experience is going to be very memorable.

Q. Morgan, is this one of the hardest decisions you made in your 19-year tenure?

MORGAN BURKE: Yes. I have great admiration for Danny Hope, great respect for what he's accomplished. I've been in a lot of trenches with him. I've been virtually to every game, understand the highs and the lows. When you have to make a decision like this, it's (indiscernible).

Q. Patrick, are you still interim offensive coordinator, too?

PATRICK HIGGINS: I'm interim everything (laughter). Interim offensive coordinator, interim academic advisor, interim head coach. We're going to make sure that these young men are going to continue on a path that Danny put them on.

Q. Patrick, does it help a little bit that you've had an increased role here over the last few weeks to feel more familiar, I don't know if that's the right word, but have a bigger role with more than just the receivers?

PATRICK HIGGINS: Sure. It's always that way. Even when I was the receiver coach, we always had a bigger role. Worked with Gary

before. With our cohesiveness on the offensive staff, we always played a big part.

But sure, it helped. It helped with Danny to see that we have capable coaches on our staff that are committed to the process, yeah.

Q. Will the entire staff be staying?

MORGAN BURKE: Yeah, yeah. We need them all. We're going to be shorthanded, so everybody is going to pitch in.

Q. Morgan, I don't hire coaches, but when you hired Joe, then you hired Danny, obviously hiring Danny was about five years ago, everything I'm reading is that the dynamics are changing so much, so quickly, with hiring coaches. Have you noticed that change?

MORGAN BURKE: What do you mean by 'dynamics'?

Q. Just speeding up the process, for example. It seems like some coaches are getting shorter tenures at other schools.

MORGAN BURKE: Most of you have been around, I don't have a quick trigger finger. That's not my reputation. I don't subscribe to that philosophy.

I think we built a succession plan because we knew we had some things we had to fix. We went into the middle of last decade, did a bunch of junior college recruiting, that hurt us on the field, pushed some kids into playing earlier. Had a few positive effects for some of those young men, but it was problematic.

Danny went through a process of very methodically, with the help of his staff, putting together a solid recruiting plan.

For me one of the fortunate things this year is we didn't have to play a lot of the kids. Had to take a few redshirts off, but we were able to preserve a lot of players. Look back three years ago, I think 59% of the two-deep roster were upperclassmen, 41% were first-year players.

Danny didn't have a lot of luck. The injuries, the injury bug that hit him with all the ACLs, the like, then having to take a program that started to dip and bring it back is not easy. The attendance started to fall off when Joe was here.

You have to pay attention to the fan base. It's not the only driver, but you have to pay attention to that.

In terms of speeding it up, I don't know. I think searches in football generally occur about this time of year. I think the coaches understand the process, and I think those out in the field understand the process.

It will come together over a short period of time. That's just the way it is.

So Mike's question was a good one: What are you going to sell? Clearly we want the person that comes in to understand the Purdue brand and what we are. I think we have a lot of things to sell, academically, facility-wise we've made huge strides. But it's our job to go out and sell.

Q. Morgan, was it your decision unilaterally for Danny to not coach in the bowl game? Was that Danny's preference? Was it a mutual decision?

MORGAN BURKE: I talked to an awful lot of people about the pros and cons of doing that. The thing that was the most striking to me was the undue pressure you put under the head coach to do that. You're going to go through a month-long period of time when the focal point, instead of being on the student-athletes and on the game, is on the coach is not going to be there next year.

There's family, all kinds of personal issues. I don't want to put a guilt complex on anybody. I just don't want to put a person in a position where it would be very, very difficult. I explained that to the student-athletes tonight.

I think at the end of the day the advice that I was given was, You're better off to allow the focus to be on the kids, and the way to do that is have an interim coach.

Q. Given the attendance issues, how important is it to you to find someone who energizes the fan base?

MORGAN BURKE: I don't care whether it's Purdue or Michigan or Penn State, your fan base, this is a consumer-driven organization, we're self-supporting. Losing \$3 million in revenue opportunities, it's a big deal.

I quite frankly think Danny was making inroads, but we didn't win enough games. He said that in the press conference I thought pretty fairly last night.

Q. Morgan, yesterday Danny mentioned that he felt like some people didn't reciprocate the commitment to the program. What went through your mind when he said that? Who do you think he was talking about?



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MORGAN BURKE: I have no idea.

Q. Morgan, earlier this week coach talked about resources and funding. What type of guarantees will you be able to give to the next coach they'll have the resources to be successful?

MORGAN BURKE: I think all people have to do is look at what we've done in facilities in the last four years. New practice facilities, upgraded the indoor and outdoor facilities, offices, locker rooms. I think there's been a lot done.

I think where people are somewhat confused is they're looking at the current compensation package and saying it was an unwillingness to invest more in football. And that's not true. We based the compensation package on other people who were similarly situated: moving into a Big Ten job for the first time.

Bret Bielema, when he went up, that was a comparable compensation package. As the coach continues to have success, you would continue to move that forward. Those of you that have been around me for a while have seen me do that with other coaches in the department. The problem is we didn't have that sustained level of success we wanted to have.

I don't think there's any resource commitment question. But I can understand why people ask the question.

Q. At what point did you decide it's time to pull the plug?

MORGAN BURKE: I don't know that there was a specific day of the week when it came to mind. When it became clear to me no matter how hard one was working it was going to be difficult to reverse the image and the view of the program. I don't like people to have to continue to put 120% effort in, and Danny is a 150% guy, he gives it all, recognize there are forces beyond your control that are probably going to weigh in on that.

As the season progressed, it became increasingly clear to me that we were probably going to have to make a change.

Q. What has been most disappointing for you this year?

MORGAN BURKE: I don't like to walk in the locker room and see the faces on the young men after they lose. I don't like to see the long faces on the coaches whom I have a lot of respect

for. This is not my athletic department, this is Purdue's athletic department. I happen to be the current landlord. I know how hard they've worked and how close they've been. It's a game of inches. You always say, Football comes down to a handful of plays that make a difference every game.

We also had some games where we had wide disparity. We have to be accountable that we didn't get the results we wanted to get. I'm not going to sit here and talk about 25/85 and not walk the talk. We said we want to be consistently top 25 in each of our sports, and 85% graduation success rate. That is what we're doing. We're going to create the best atmosphere we can for these young people.

The effort, the work, the character, there are a lot of great things happening. Those things we want to build on as we go to the next coach. We don't want to lose those.

Q. Will you talk to recruits in the meantime?

MORGAN BURKE: Yeah, we talked about that with staff. We'll have a process that will go on with recruits that is consistent with NCAA rules and the like. We know it's a period of time where there's some uncertainty. My expectation is that the people we have are committed to Purdue. That's our expectation. I know they'll be eager. They got a letter from me today as well, the ones me expressed a willingness to raise their hands. We've given them a letter that when the new coach is hired, that will be at the top of his list, to make contact with them.

Q. How did the players take the news?

PATRICK HIGGINS: That's a really good question. Kids are resilient. They loved Danny. They also realize there's a task before them. They're committed to doing the best job they can for the next month.

MORGAN BURKE: When we do have a situation like this, human nature tells you you're going to go through four phases. You're going to be shocked, be in denial, anger mode, and finally you're going to acknowledge it and move forward.

I suspect every person around this football program, including the head coach and the athletic director, are going through those four phases right now. Some people move through it faster than others.

But this is traumatic because we are a tight-knit group. When we do have something like this happen, there's some pain involved.

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Q. There was the \$600,000 buyout. There were also bonuses. Do you know anything about that?

MORGAN BURKE: Not off the top of my head. Whatever bowl bonuses he would have been entitled to as coach he'll get. There's no deduct as a result of not coaching. He'll be on the payroll until December 31, get all the benefits that are entitled to him under the contract.

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