

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Monday, March 15, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Scott Dolson

Press Conference



SCOTT DOLSON: It's been a tough day. I'm confident in my decision but it doesn't make it any easier. I was with Fred Glass from the beginning when we met with Archie in California. Obviously worked very, very closely with Archie the last four years. Got the utmost respect for Archie. Just really developed a very close relationship with him over the years.

Again, it doesn't obviously make situations -- situations like this are never easy. But the fact that it's close and the respect that I have for Archie made it that much more difficult.

I met with Archie this morning, and in the Final analysis, it's a results-oriented business and I really felt that ultimately we had not made enough progress to continue the program and under Archie's leadership. I really felt like we need a new voice and a new direction. I really want to thank Archie and Morgan for the commitment to the program, and again, just a tough day.

I also met with the players following my meeting with Archie. I met with them via Zoom. Change is hard. Uncertainty is hard. I wanted to assure them, I wanted them to hear directly from me, our commitment and my commitment to maximizing their opportunity here within IU Athletics and IU Basketball; it was really important to me. I really appreciate their attention and their participation in the meeting.

I also met with Logan Duncomb. I met we and his father via Zoom following the meeting with the players, and again wanted him to hear directly from me and his father, and just to be available to answer any questions that they had.

I'll talk a little about the process just to get to this decision. As I mentioned earlier, very close to the program. I've attended -- I try to attend at least the last part of one practice every week, really since Archie arrived. Went on several road trips. Just spent a great deal of time around the program and I think I have a good feel for the program.

You know, subsequently, I think I had an ability to have a

pretty good assessment just by that participation. Once the season ended this past Thursday night, I spent a great deal of time in a deep analysis. Talked to several people that I trust completely just to bounce things off of, people within the program in terms of maybe former players, people around basketball. And at the end of the day, ended up with my ultimate conclusion that we needed a change in leadership.

I recommended that change this weekend to President McRobbie and discussed it with him and I do want to mention just a special mention how much I appreciate President McRobbie's support and how collaborative he has been, really, since I took over but just how supportive that he's been.

But as a part of that recommendation, I also recommended that given the financial consequences of a decision like, this I felt it was very important that we come up with an avenue to make certain there are no financial consequences as a result of the decision to either the athletic department or the university. You know, it's something I really want to be clear with on that because it's really, really important to me for multiple reasons.

Prior to my conclusion that we needed to move forward in a new direction, I had zero conversations with any donors about their thoughts on where we are as a program, any conversations about what I was thinking. I didn't take their temperature at all. I felt like it was really important that I do all my due diligence in advance of any of that. Of course you hear things out there, so forth and so on, but that had zero impact on my recommendation, zero.

Subsequently when I met with the president and let him know what my recommendation was, we both on concluded and he gave me the authority to try to seek funding to fulfill my recommendation.

As a result of that, I had two separate meetings, a meeting this weekend with an anonymous donor who committed ultimately to help funding the part of the process in terms of the buyout in Coach Miller's contract. And then following that, a subsequent meeting with another donor who will remain anonymous who made a commitment to help fund



the remainder of the transition cost.

Getting back with President McRobbie, we had an opportunity to as part of my recommendation to then move forward not only with the recommendation I made but then with no financial impact on the department and the university; and as all of you know, as a result of COVID, we've got challenges there, so that was a big thing.

Again I just want to underscore because it really, really important to me. I've grown up in the fund-raising world. I was not approached by any donors. It was not a donor-driven decision, as all, zero. It was not an anti-Archie effort, the people who came at me, no. And there was no discussion of future candidates at these meetings I had.

Also, the final decision when I met with the donors was not 100 percent at that point. So I just want to make sure that was crystal clear and again, that, was important to me.

Moving forward we'll start an immediate search to recruit the next coach that we want to partner with, and for me to reestablish our identity and brand of IU Basketball, and I look forward to that process.

This will be the last time you hear from me. I hope you respect that, until the process is complete, until the next time you see me, we'll be naming a head coach. I just want to be certain you can appreciate the sensitivity of the process in going through that.

So with that, those are just some general opening comments, but I'd be happy to answer any questions that any of you may have.

Q. If you have a specific figure, I'd love it. But even if you don't, just how financially aggressive, particularly with that donor support, do you feel you can be in terms of just kind of maybe where, for the right candidate, Indiana can land in the national firmament of how much you can compensate your next head coach?

SCOTT DOLSON: There's not an unlimited resources for sure. But at the same time, just like what you saw happen this past weekend, the key thing in my mind is finding the right person and then making certain that if we find the right person, that he can come to an agreement that is a win/win for the both of us.

You know, I don't want to just assume that it's an unlimited open checkbook, but at the same time, if we feel it's the right person, we'll do everything we can to make it happen.

Q. You're having some audio problems on your end,

just to make you aware of that. But what qualities specifically are you looking for in the next person?

SCOTT DOLSON: You know, I'm really looking for someone that can help reestablish the identity of IU Basketball. It's really important that really we maximize the opportunity for our student athletes. I think this is really, really important. Just really has a vision of IU Basketball. It's important for me, growing up in the program as a lot of you know, it's important that we build on our incredible foundation that has been established here.

But at the same time, and it's something I've probably always been a little paranoid about; I want to make certain that we have a vision for the future and our new coach wants to partner with me and the athletic department and has that vision for the future, to not live in the past but to build on it. And that's something that's really very important.

Q. When you look at IU Basketball, give me your vision. What do you want IU Basketball to be under whoever you pick next?

SCOTT DOLSON: It's what I said earlier. It's really important to me that we have an identity, and that players around the country, around the Midwest, around Indiana, that when we look at Indiana Basketball they understand the identity and they want to be a part of it.

I'm a big process person, and for me, and I've talked about this a lot, to me it's really, really important that as we look at our recruiting philosophies, as we look at our player development, as we look at our style of play, or winning strategies, I call it, our leadership development, that we have a vision for all of those.

Again, build from the past but also are attractive to future generations of basketball players. Recruiting is so important. I think about it a lot. I think all of those areas have be to attractive and they have to give us an identity, and that's really, really important to me. I think if we have that, and we really hone in on that vision for the future, I think then the success of the program, the consistency that we all want will follow, but the process is what gets you there along the way.

Q. Forgive me if I've not heard you because you are going in and out but you're in now. I've got a compound question. So bear with me. Did you say you have a search committee? You're hiring one? Paying for one? Did you say that?

SCOTT DOLSON: No, I didn't.



Q. Did you say you're not doing -- I heard the word search something-or-other.

SCOTT DOLSON: Correct. At this moment, we will not have a search committee or a search firm.

Q. Given all this, given the way it's happened, we're all adding two and two here trying to get four. It seems like you've got somebody, but you've got somebody in mind. Are you starting from scratch or do you kind of already have an idea of where you're going? That's A. And then B, I'm done, is you're an IU guy. A lot of people want an IU guy. How important is it to you to get an IU guy?

SCOTT DOLSON: Yeah, the answer to your first question is, no, it's not a deal, I don't have anyone in mind. But what I do have a vision for the type of person we're looking for and I'm continuing to work on that.

I talked about that before, if you can hear me but it's really a combination of someone who understands and embraces our tradition and our history, but more importantly, has a vision for the future and believes in all the things that we believe in and embraces those, and so that's critical.

In terms of potential candidates, I really don't want to exclude anyone. I want to make certain it's an open process and we evaluate all the potential candidates that are out there that might be that perfect fit.

Q. You talk about not excluding anyone, so I assume is head coaching experience a prerequisite, or not?

SCOTT DOLSON: No. I want to make sure that we don't exclude -- as we evaluate and again putting together the vision that we have for the program, to combine that with -- and I don't want to micromanage the program. Don't get me wrong. I don't want to create my vision that then tells the coach what the coach ultimately needs to do from a recruiting standpoint.

Overarching, here is where we want our program to head and here is what's important to us, and ultimately then I want to make certain that we work with a coach that fits that, and it doesn't necessarily have to fit into someone who has been a head coach or someone who has head coaching experience. That's not a prerequisite.

Q. You mentioned style of play. Is there anything that you're looking for specifically within that style of play with regards to maybe something that's a little more offensive or visually appealing?

SCOTT DOLSON: What's important to us is that it's a style

of play that recruits want to play in and that recruits see that they can see themselves in, but then also is really on the cutting edge of where is basketball going, where is college basketball going, and as you can see, basketball is different than it was three years ago, four years ago, six years ago in terms of how it fits into the NBA and moving on and playing professionally. I think we have to blend all of that together to have an attractive style of play, that obviously can win consistently, but that players want to play in and see themselves in.

Playing in the Big Ten Conference is huge, you can see with the great league we had this year. You kind of want it all. You want to blend the ability to succeed in our conference, the ability to have a style of play the players want to play in, the recruits want to play in, and that ultimately prepares them for the next level, as well.

Q. I think it was when you were introduced as athletic director, you talked about Archie, liking him because he had a plan; there was a plan and it was going to go in a certain direction. I guess what's changed in the years, since, or was it just the results on the court or was it talking to former players and getting that insight? What kind of convinced you that the plan wasn't going in the right direction?

SCOTT DOLSON: You know, it's a results-oriented business and ultimately the results are what they are. And it is one of the things that attracted us to Archie and still commend him for. I think Archie has a plan, but unfortunately the results weren't at the level that I felt at the end of the day was in our best interests to move forward.

But I think consistency is a word that is really important to me. I probably overuse it but it's just important in everything we do and it's building that identity. It's building that ability to mention Indiana Basketball and people know who we are, what we stand for from a recruiting standpoint. I want to be a part of that system, and I think that to me is just something that's really, really important for a coach to come here and really establish and so that people understand what it means to be a part of our program.

But again, I absolutely embrace and love, and was a part of our history and tradition. It's an unbelievable foundation to build on, but I think that the key thing is that we build on that to have a vision for the future and where is college basketball going and what is that plan and that ability to recruit, to develop our players, to make certain we have that style of play and we're developing leaders that can lead to consistent success down the road across the board, including winning, which I think is important to state for all of our sports.

Winning is a key part of the student athlete experience. You know, I want to win for the school. I want to win for everybody because it's great to win and so many great things that happen. But our most important thing is the student athlete experience at Indiana.

And if you go back to all of our exit interviews from all of our sports, student athletes who have had a winning experience, it just adds -- is a multiplier to their experience here and that's really, really important to me that we put our student athletes in a position for success.

Q. Curious when you mentioned the branding aspect of it, how of that is how the program is presented not only on the court but off the court, do you think there is anything that needs to be changed in terms of that? Because one thing I've heard over the years, it seems to be maybe a disconnect in terms of the program connecting with the fans. Is that something that you see that needs to be improved? Also part two is there are going to be people who will say Indiana Basketball hasn't been to a Final Four in 19 years; it's been since 1987 since a National Championship. Why do you think the program can get back to those standards? Is it just because you've been a part of that and lived it, or do you think it's based on the resources that you guys are willing to commit to do that?

SCOTT DOLSON: Yeah, I guess your first question I would say that it's definitely a collaborative effort. I'm not a believer that we just hire a head coach, hand the head coach the keys to the program and say go make it happen. I believe that it's a unified effort.

So to your point about a comprehensive evaluation of what we need to do in the future, it is obviously beyond that and it's creating a -- the way I would describe it is an analogy. When we renovated Assembly Hall and made it Simon Scott Assembly Hall, Assembly Hall was an iconic building, and it still is, but it needed an ability to move forward into the future.

So what we were able to do is make certain that it still feels the same, you see the tradition when you're there but we transformed it into a facility that can handle the needs of the modern day fan and moving forward into the future.

Well, I think our basketball program, that's an analogy for we've got an incredible tradition, incredible. Love our tradition. Proud of our tradition. We embrace it. We celebrate it. But at the same time, we need to take that tradition and make certain we know what is the modern day tradition look like. How do we build on that.

And that does go beyond just what I mentioned from a

head coach what can we do as a department. There are things that I've learned over the years and that I want to make certain that our department resources, we have incredibly talented people in the department that are really excited about our Cuban Center and our vision for name image and likeness, our vision for social media and all of our branding. I think we can utilize that to help a head coach beyond, again, just giving him the key to the program and having them run on with it.

Sorry I went on with that so long. What was the second part of your question.

Q. Just there's going to be people who are going to say Indiana hasn't gone to a Final Four in so long; haven't won a championship since '87. Why do you feel like it can get back to that level since it's been so long since it's been there?

SCOTT DOLSON: I think that we have an incredible opportunity, I really do, and that's not just the company line, me saying that because it's my job.

I think, again, given the fact that the tradition that we do have, I think the investments we've made in the program, I think where we are as a department, I think that this is an opportunity for someone to come in and really have some wind behind their back to really create that consistency.

Again I'm big into the process, all those things along the way, including start from me and the rest of our staff, to provide the support, to have the vision for what should Indiana basketball be like moving forward and if we do all those things, I believe that the winning, competing at the highest levels in the Big Ten and having the opportunity to compete at the NCAA level comes along with that. It's a comprehensive effort.

Q. I wanted to ask about Archie's reaction to your meeting. Was it one of surprise? Had you talked to him in the days following the Rutgers loss, and what was his general feelings when you talked to him about this decision?

SCOTT DOLSON: You know, I'd rather keep that between he and I. But I do want to reiterate just what an absolute incredible opportunity that I had to work with him, and I learned from working with him and just what the -- the way he approached things; he, from me -- I have not worked with a coach that has been more collaborative with me and more open with me.

And really, if you ask my wife, in talking to her, she would tell you how many times I said that I just never worked with a coach I've enjoyed working with as much as Archie, and I



mean that in multiple ways. Again, which makes a day like this challenging.

But at the same time, you know, my job is to make the decisions I feel are best for the program moving forward and I'm confident in that decision. It just doesn't make it any -- any easier when you have so much respect for the person that you're affecting with that decision.

Q. You mentioned earlier wanting a style of play more on the cutting edge. To nail that down, is it important to you that this team be able to score more than it has? Be able to shoot better than it has? Is it particularly important that this team has more of an offensive identity than it has in recent years?

SCOTT DOLSON: You know, what's important to me is that I can work closely with the head coach to provide the head coach the resources that they can put together a staff to ultimately have a style of play that fits the recruiting philosophy.

It all kind of works hand-in-hand with our player development, and ultimately leads to the success and the consistent success we want on the court.

So I'm really not -- again I don't want to micromanage the program and say it's important to me we have this style of play of style or that type. But I'd rather meet with the head coach and then ultimately if the head coach that we decide on, really have him share that vision with me that I feel, given all the priorities we have in our program; that we feel we can have the consistent success we want and that it fits in with the overall vision that I have in terms of our identity for our program; things that are important to us, I hope and ultimately will make certain are important to him, as well.

Q. Is there any sort of communication plan in place in regards to keeping the current place on the roster informed as to what's going on? Have you had any conversation with them? And secondly, is there anything that you don't have available to you that stops Indiana from succeeding in any way from a program standpoint that you think you need to change, or no?

SCOTT DOLSON: Yes, first of all, the transition plan we have, we put in a transition team, and it started with the meeting today with the players. Lorian Price, who is a key member of my senior administrative team, she's our senior associate athletic director over academics, has worked closely with basketball and does a tremendous job, she's heading up the transition team. I informed the team of that today.

And then she'll be working with -- there are four members of the staff that will work closely that are staying on, at least on an interim basis to help with the transition and that could be assistant coach Mike Roberts, assistant coach Kenya Hunter, administrator Ben Sander mand then strength coach Cliff Marshall. So they will work closely, also, with a few other members of our department, Mattie White, she's our deputy athletic director who is over Excellence Academy.

It was really critical and it was part of the meeting today that I wanted our players to feel completely supported, to make certain that they make all the right decisions moving forward in terms of making certain to take care of what they need to take care of, and I'm confident with the transition plan we have in place, that they understand that that's such a priority for us. So that's the transition team.

In terms of is there anything we don't have right now that we need, I feel like we are in a position that with the investments we've made, that we've got a really unique opportunity for someone to come in and really, again, have some wind behind their back. We've got elite facilities. We have elite level fan support. We've got elite tradition and I think it's really a tremendous opportunity to really take this program to the level that we all want to.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports