

## Q & A with Morgan Burke - Updated



*Please note: This is the complete interview, whereas the Gold & Black Illustrated Year End Edition was a draft copy.*

*With the conclusion of his 15th season as the head of Purdue Collegiate Athletics, Morgan Burke reflects on the past year and and*

*looks forward to what appears to be a bright and constructive 2008-2009 campaign.*

### **Q: How would you rate the performance of Purdue Athletics this year?**

We certainly are proud of the 21 consecutive semesters that our student-athletes have finished with a higher grade-point average than the general student population. This continues a longstanding string that we have every expectation will continue once we get the final numbers through the spring semester. That is a good sign that we are not losing sight of the primary mission of our student-athletes, which is the pursuit of their academic degrees. Although the year is not complete, I feel that we have had a successful year athletically, as well. Through the winter sports, we had 10 of 12 teams position themselves to compete in postseason play. It is the first time that we have ever had that kind of showing. As we finished up with the winter sports, we ranked 24th in the Directors' Cup, compared with last year at the same time when we were 33rd. I believe that we have shown some improvement across the board, which has helped us achieve our highest ranking so far through the conclusion of the winter sports. If I were to look at it chronologically, we certainly were excited with soccer's Big Ten Tournament championship, their first and a huge step for Rob Klatt and his program. It was thrilling to see such a great victory we had in our 10th bowl game in 11 years under Joe Tiller. Dave Shondell and the volleyball program finished the season with the best record since 1990 and continued its string of NCAA appearances with its fourth trip. Matt Painter's basketball team continued to capture the hearts and minds of not only Boilermaker fans but also the rest of the country as the media dubbed them the "Baby Boilers" while they finished second in the league and advanced to postseason play for the second straight year. This really shows that the program is continuing to move in the right direction and people are noticing. It is certainly a great honor that Matt received Big Ten Coach of the Year by his peers. I think that if the voting for the Women's Big Ten Coach of the Year had occurred after the Big Ten Tournament, Sharon Versyp would have received that award because that performance was absolutely stunning down the

stretch in the Big Ten Tournament and allowed them to continue their streak of 15 consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances. Both swimming teams had solid performances, led by truly outstanding showings from our divers under the tutelage of Adam Soldati. Wrestling found its way back into the top 30 in the country during Scott Hinkel's first year. A lot of newcomers to the squad were named All-Americans or close to it, which definitely is a great precursor as we look to the future of that program. As we look at the spring sports, obviously we are not done yet but there are a number of noteworthy things happening. Kim Maher, in her third season as head coach of the softball program, directed her team to its first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance. Doug Schreiber's baseball program finished in second place in the Big Ten regular-season standings, earned the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament and is challenging for an NCAA Tournament berth. This year's team has recorded the best home winning percentage (.783) in the 10 seasons that Doug has been at the helm of the program. Women's golf, under Devon Brouse's leadership, is probably our strongest national contender with a runner-up finish in the NCAA Regional and now will progress to the NCAA Championships with a legitimate shot at a national title. The track and field team, under the tutelage of fourth-year head coach Jack Warner, has been traveling full steam ahead after posting a great indoor season that saw the men finish second and the women finish seventh at the Big Ten Indoor Championships, followed by 22nd- and 44th-place showings at the NCAA's. As they prepare for the Big Ten Outdoor Championships, they have already amassed a school-record 33 NCAA Championship Regional Qualifiers, eight of which are double qualifiers. All in all, we have seen a lot of bright spots, but I don't think any of us are completely satisfied. Our target coming into the year after we sat with each of the coaches during their annual program review was to finish in the top 30 nationally, which given the current state of the programs in the department, we thought was absolutely feasible. As we wrap up the spring sports season, we really do have a shot at getting that top 30 finish with strong showings from golf, softball, track and field, and baseball. It would be our best finish after finishing 33rd last and the current high of 31st from earlier in the decade. It was a good year and certainly one that we can build upon, and we are very excited about next year.

### **Q: How will the eventual change of the 25/75 Club to 25/85 affect Purdue Athletics?**

I certainly do not see it affecting us in a negative way, and I will explain why. When the NCAA started using the federal higher education calculation snapshot in the mid 1980s to determine the graduation rate in a six-year window, it did not account for the many issues dealing with the entry and/or exit of student-athletes. In fact, by this calculation, a student who left the university academically eligible within that six years still

counted against the graduation rate, whereas one who transferred in and graduated within the window did not count for us. It tended to understate what actually was happening in higher education by about 10 percentage points. So a university that had a 75 percent graduation rate under the federal calculation would in effect have an 85 percent rate once the ins and outs of transfers were accounted for. The new metric, known as the Graduation Success Rate, was developed to account for all situations in the course of the six-year window. For instance, if a student-athlete decides to transfer from a university and is eligible at the time, it will not count against the GSR for that university in the future, and if graduation is met within the window after transferring to another university then that university will get credit toward the GSR. The reason I do not feel that it will really affect us is that we have determined that a 75 percent graduation rate at Purdue is equivalent to a GSR of 85 percent. We always are striving to reach that goal of 25/75 and surpass it. The reason that this is so important to us is that our research has shown that if you are able to achieve this goal, you will be performing in the top 10 of roughly 300 Division I programs. I believe that we are doing an excellent job on monitoring this and keeping focused on the ultimate goal of academic success coupled with consistently improving athletic performances. Our strategic plan, being updated this year for submission to President Córdova and scheduled to be completed by December, will ultimately show the vision of the 25/75 now being referred to as the 25/85 Club.

***Q: How is the Mackey Complex renovation project going?***

One point that I feel has been misunderstood in regard to the Mackey Complex project is that it solely benefits the basketball programs. Yes, it will have a huge impact on the basketball programs; however, the point that I feel sometimes is missed is that 70 percent of the 280,000 square feet of new or renovated space in this project affects and benefits all student-athletes. This project provides much-needed renovations and upgrades to the training room and sports medicine facilities as well as upgrading and expanding the academic support center and the strength and conditioning facility. The expansion of the strength and conditioning facility will allow us to better organize the schedules of our student-athletes so it will not be necessary to have training sessions at all hours to fit in all the teams. Ultimately, we want to provide contemporary competition facilities and state-of-the-art academic facilities to position our students for success in both academics and athletics. This allows us to focus on our primary mission to have these athletes pursue and obtain their degrees. The other part that I feel is sometimes not clear is that the fundraising campaign is not only for Mackey Arena itself, but also for the development of the northwest site and the numerous venue changes

in the Purdue Athletics master plan. Because this vision is a long-term one, it is important that we send the clear message on how this will affect all of Purdue Athletics. This project is an athletics-funded project, so that is why the private giving is so important. We have set what I believe is an attainable goal for the campaign based on a formula that for each dollar given in private funds, we will invest \$3 of future athletic department funds. This is one where we are clearly trying to build a consensus and partnership with our alumni and make sure the entire project does not fall on their shoulders. These institutional funds come from other sources within athletics, such as the Big Ten television agreements, some new premium seating in Mackey and increased concession revenue. The overall picture is that we will preserve the history and tradition of Mackey Arena, avoid the need to build two buildings in the Athletics Department master plan and do so at slightly more than one third of the cost that it would take to build the three buildings separately, and we will move baseball, softball and the outdoor track to the northwest site. This series of projects within a single business plan allows us to provide upgrades and correct facility deficiencies in our entire department without having to do another capital campaign.

The timeline really has begun already in the sense that every step must be taken and authorized by the correct entities before we can move on to the next step in the construction process. We also have to consider that with the magnitude of this plan, we are essentially working on two comprehensive projects concurrently. These could be labeled as the Mackey Renovation and Rebirth and the all-inclusive northwest site development and replication of the Grand Prix track. As to Mackey, what I would consider to be Phase I of the construction process will not be quite so noticeable in that it deals with mostly utility work and the creation of enough of a power source to run the new structures. The approximate start day for this work is March 1, 2009. Phase I also includes the excavation and construction of the football north practice field over the old Grand Prix track. This will take place at the same time as the migration of the F parking lot to where the lower practice field now sits and the creation of a compound for the equipment being used for the construction. The Grand Prix track will be moved and ready for the race in the spring of 2009. Because of the amount of time needed to relocate and build the north practice fields, football will be using a remote site for practices during the spring season of 2009 and subsequently will begin using the new fields for fall camp and the 2009 season. Phase II of construction is set to begin on May 1, 2009, and will continue through to November 11, 2011. This is the bulk of the project in that it includes the renovation of Mackey Arena itself as well as the new building and upgrades and changes to the current IAF. The first task scheduled is to begin foundation work on the arena and create the new student entry at the south-

west corner of Mackey. As the project progresses, we will begin the migration of the offices that currently surround the concourse of Mackey into their new space and truly transform the face of this landmark facility. Phase III can be classified as the finishing touches and deals with hardscape, landscape and IAF renovations. This process actually will begin about midway through Phase II and extend through May of 2012. It will involve the building of paths and walkways through the plaza area between the Mackey Complex and the IAF as well as the major expansion of the Drew and Brittany Brees Student-Athlete Academic Center. Because of the priority of academics, this process will be completed in such a way as to not shut off the access and support for the student-athletes. We will continue to provide them with a place to study while the expansion is taking place.

The northwest site development has a similar three-phase timeline that is happening at the same time as the Mackey renovation. Phases I and II currently encompass the Grand Prix track, baseball stadium, soccer upgrades and multi-purpose facility, as well as the de-

velopment of the common space. The beginnings of the construction really hinge around the “unseen,” which builds the infrastructure of the entire area with utility development and topography changes. All this is set to begin by May 1, 2009, and continue through 2012. The goal is to have the 2010 baseball season at the new facility. Phases II and III include the movement of the softball stadium and outdoor track and field complex from their current locations to the northwest site. We optimistically are expecting that the softball team will be in its new facility by the 2012 season, with the track movement to follow thereafter. One point to be aware of on this particular part of the project is that we had to agree on the footprint of this site before we started so that as we continue through the process, it will not matter what order these changes occur. Each facility is its own unique piece of the puzzle that when finished truly will be one of the most functional and modern athletic campuses in the country – a process that will have taken 20 years and was, and is, possible only

through the generous support of John Purdue Club members. This ensures that our current and future student-athletes at Purdue University are given the best opportunity to succeed both academically and athletically. It is important to note that our business plan has accounted for the future of Purdue Athletics, and we are very focused on the future and clearly seeing it for what it can be in the next few years, and beyond. When we began this process, we were extremely cognizant of the overall picture and feel that we have been successful in developing a plan that enables us to correct any remaining facility deficiencies and ensure sufficient resources are allocated to continue operating and maintaining them. We truly are making progress in a way that will better the experience of our student-athletes and the recruitment process by giving them a campus suitable to the preeminence of Purdue University.

***Q: Purdue has undergone many changes in the past year, such as the hiring and succession of our new President France A. Córdoba, the an-***



***nouncement of a succession plan for head football coach Joe Tiller and the launch of Access and Success, to name a few. How do you believe these changes will affect Purdue Athletics? What are your expectations for the upcoming year?***

I believe that the hiring and succession of our new president and the plan for the football program all deal with what I would refer to as good personnel management. When the Board of Trustees readied itself to hire our new president, they did their due diligence on determining where we were as a university and where we need and want to go as a university. I feel that was principal driver for the criteria that led to her hiring. In the same vein, when we looked at Coach Tiller facing the end of his very distinguished career at Purdue, we took stock of where we were and began to look at what we needed to do to have a successor in place. I believe that if you have a good hiring process in place then you increase the chance of the organization to be successful in the future.

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Access and Success is about accessing superior students and doing everything we can to help them be successful. It really can be broken down into two phases. Phase I focuses on a very special subset of our student body, the 500 student-athletes. We want to provide everything we can in regard to contemporary facilities and support to allow our coaches to recruit the best athletes and then once we get these athletes here make sure that they have all the tools to be successful both academically and athletically. Phase II really is more generally about the entire student body and really looking at how we can provide additional aid and programming to get the best and brightest into the system and have them be successful. This will allow us to see our retention and graduation rates improve and continue to build the prominence of the university in terms of national prestige. I expect that Purdue Athletics will continue making strides toward the vision of the 25/75 Club, and the entire university will continue to enhance its impact on students, our state and the nation. I believe that as an entire university we truly are on the same page as to where we want to go and are working together to build a university of the highest caliber.



**Q: What are the biggest victories and challenges for Purdue Athletics this year?**

Well, rounding out this year, the baseball program has an opportunity to have a really special season. Jack Warner has built a foundation for a very successful track and field program, and we have a number of student-athletes that have high national rankings as they go into the Big Ten and NCAA Championships. Track and field is an important piece for us because they can actually score six times in the Directors' Cup standings. They are continuing to make major headway on the national scene. Women's golf has played with many of the teams that they will be seeing at the NCAA Championships, so they have a great opportunity and the knowledge that they can play with and beat these teams. There certainly is a lot going for us through this spring and, as we look back, we obviously have had much success in the fall and winter, as well. We have demonstrated, almost across the board, the ability to compete successfully within the upper echelon of the Big Ten, and when you begin to see that happen you know that your program is growing in the right direction. If teams are in the upper half of the Big Ten then the chances that they are going to put them-

selves in position for postseason play and legitimate opportunities to win championships will follow. As we like to point out, the 25 of 25/75 doesn't mean that we are going to be satisfied at 25th, but it means that we want to be consistently in the top 25, and if we do that then the program will continue to grow, improve and position itself to win championships. At the end of the day, winning championships is what we are trying to put these young people in contention to do. I feel that we definitely are on our way.

**Q: What were your personal highlights from the past year?**

Our entire family gathered in San Francisco on October 11, 2007, to celebrate the wedding of Morgan Jr. and Molly Cutler. Joyce and her husband, Ryan, are celebrating their second wedding anniversary this month. Patrick will begin his senior year this fall in industrial engineering at Purdue. So all seems to be going well on the Burke front.

Kate and I continue to be excited about the challenges associated with intercollegiate athletics and in particular the major renovations of Mackey Arena, the IAF and the development of the northwest site. We are delighted and inspired by the support of our Boilermaker faithful thus far in the campaign. We truly are seizing the opportunity to make a real mark on the next generation and continuing to highlight our campus tradition. We look forward to 2008-09 and our continued pursuit of the 25/75 Club.

Boiler Up!