

# Bedesem Starts Anew, Vs. Egan

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It's almost 7:30 this evening and Dick Bedesem's new school, Neshaminy, is ready to open its football season against Dick Bedesem's original school, Bishop Egan, at which he regularly walked on coaching water during a win- and championship-filled span that ended in 1970.

Surely, Dick Bedesem's mind is racing. He's overcome with emotion. Like everyone else, he can appreciate the irony of it all.

"What will I be thinking?" said Bedesem, repeating a question. "About how I wish we had another week to prepare. Time runs awful short."

Time also has an awful way of marching on.

It's hard to believe 27 years have passed since Dick Bedesem, former star at La Salle High and Villanova, became Bishop Egan's first football coach. After 94 wins, 34 losses, six ties, five Catholic League championships (Egan didn't even join the league until '63) and four City titles (three alone, one via a tie with Roxborough), Bedesem was off to Archbishop Wood.

He put that program back on its feet in only two years (13-8-1 after 0-10 in '70), then answered Wayne Hardin's come-on-up-to-college call, spending two years as an assistant at Temple. With that, he was off to become the head coach at Villanova, a position he held, going 30-35-1, until the program was tossed aside like a worn-out tackling dummy during 1981 spring practice.

Next, he volunteered his services to Pitt for the '81 season, then basically went stir-crazy until a chance for the Neshaminy job presented itself last spring and the Neshaminy people presented it to him on a silver platter.

The recounting of Dick Bedesem's oddyssey helps to explain why he won't be experiencing any special twinges before tonight's game.

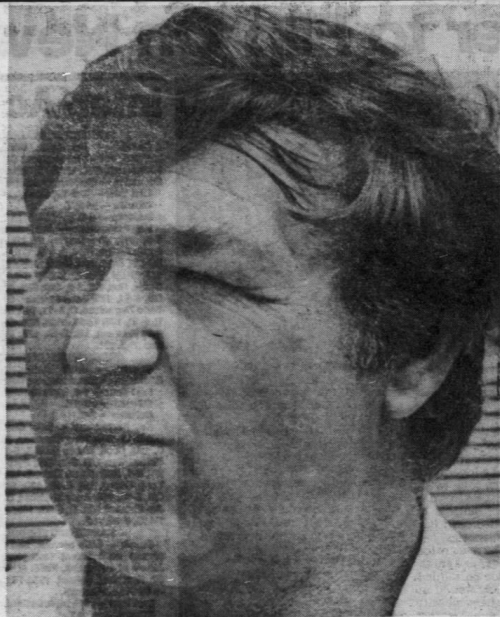
"When I went to play Egan with my first Wood team — now that was emotional," Bedesem said. "I've been away from there so long, whatever interest people had in my successes and failures has probably waned. Oh, I guess a few memories will flash by, but past history is past history. The game itself — it's nothing more than our opening game."

Sure, and Dick Bedesem is nothing more than a guy who happens to carry a clipboard and wear a whistle around his neck.

Though Egan lost its opener last week to Harry S Truman and there are no assurances that Bedesem's players are yet good enough to allow him to weave his old high school magic, tonight's game figures to produce a spread in the sports sections of the Lower Bucks County newspapers to rival ... well, the spread when Bedesem resigned "for personal reasons" from Egan.

And who knows? With a few breaks, the crowd at Neshaminy could approach 1960s proportions.

"I would guess," Bedesem allowed, "that some people will turn out because they're wondering, 'Can he do it? Can't he do it?' Hey, that's one of the best



Daily News file photo

Dick Bedesem says he's glad to be coaching at Neshaminy

things about coaching. Every single day, there's a challenge. And you need that."

Bedesem craves challenges, at least those concerning football. He was as thrilled as anyone when the restaurant he opened in Levittown almost two years ago caught on. But, for reasons obvious to those who know him, Bedesem felt unfulfilled about not having a football team to be around in '82 and '83.

"My whole life had been football; I didn't know anything but," Bedesem said. "When I coached high school football before, I never made any pretense about being a great teacher in the classroom. I felt my prime duty was to put a good football team out there and get our kids in college. I'd give my students a fair shake, but if a football recruiter was at the door, I was out there talking to him. ... Much to the ire," he added, smiling, "of some of the principals I worked for."

"Anyway, when this chance came up, and I talked to my wife about it, she said, 'It sounds like just what you'd want. Take it.' So here I am, and I'm really enjoying myself."

"I enjoyed the whole atmosphere of college coaching, but you certainly don't have the closeness with your players you do on the high school level."

Bedesem then told a story concerning his restaurant, how 40 ex-Egan players ("and that's a really low estimate") stopped in during the first few weeks of operation. Bedesem's wife, Maryanne, knew all but two of them. Then a get-together was arranged at the restaurant for ex-Villanova players. Maryanne Bedesem knew only two. One was Egan grad Shawn Passman.

"There's something about the high school level," said Bedesem, who has formed a great staff, made up largely of longtime right-hand men. "Hopefully,

you can be an integral part of a kid's development, help shape his character along with his parents. And coaching football is coaching football. I don't care what level it's on.

"Anywhere you coach, 90 percent of the parents are super. Unless you're a shaky character, they'll support you. When you come in with a good reputation, it puts you on the plus side right away. And I've found that to be true with the kids, too. They've taken to us like bees to honey."

"But remember, my reputation won't mean anything [today]. The fact that my Egan team beat St. James in 1969 — hey, that will have zero to do with it."

When Villanova announced it was bringing back football, more than a few people were wondering if Dick Bedesem would re-enter the picture.

"They never called me, I never called them," he said, showing discomfort for the first time during the interview. "Maybe their posture was to say, 'Let's go with a clean slate.' Anyway, I wasn't interested in going back."

"I was bitterly disappointed over what they did to all of us, pulling the rug out from under in the middle of spring practice. I said a few things that burned a few butts. And I could care less. That one thing was devastating to me. It totally destroyed the fond memories I might have had."

Starting tonight, Dick Bedesem begins to build memories at Neshaminy, which boasts one of the area's richest football traditions despite some recent hard times.

Will Bedesem be disappointed if the Redskins' record doesn't read something like 9-1 or 10-0 within two or three years?

"Hey," he said, showing the old fire, "what the hell's the matter with the first year?"