



Daily News file photo

Ex-Villanova coach Dick Bedesem enjoyed his three seasons at Neshaminy High

Back to College

Bedesem Eagerly Takes Del Val Challenge

By MIKE KERN

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Dick Bedesem doesn't have any regrets about spending the past three seasons as the head football coach at Neshaminy High. Actually, in many ways, it turned out to be an ideal situation for him.

But despite the sincere enjoyment he experienced at Neshaminy, the former Villanova coach never did lose the desire to return to the collegiate level. So when that opportunity presented itself, he leaped.

As expected, Bedesem was formally introduced as the new coach at Delaware Valley College, a Division III school, at a press conference yesterday in Doylestown. He succeeds Al Wilson, who resigned after 11 years to devote more time to his job as athletic director. Wilson also will continue to coach the golf team.

"It's a day of mixed emotions for me," Bedesem said. "The time at Neshaminy has been absolutely super. On the other hand, while I don't mean to minimize the last couple seasons, returning to the college game is something I always wanted to do.

"It's another challenge, one I'm looking forward to with great anticipation."

Bedesem, 54, signed a three-year contract with an automatic renewal option. He was the only person interviewed for the position, one he did not actively seek.

"I'm in a unique situation, with my wife and son, Tommy, running a business [two restaurants] in this area," he said. "So to move my family would have been very difficult. But I thought that if something did open up locally, it would be to my advantage and I'd certainly look into it.

"My son, Vince [who will be a senior next year], plays for the [Delaware Valley] team, and when Al had intimated to them around the fifth game the possibility of his stepping down, we got together and talked. But it wasn't like I came out and said, 'Hey, Al, I want to jump in your grave.'"

Ironically, when Bedesem left Archbishop Wood back in 1973 to become an assistant at Temple, the man he replaced was Wilson, who went to Princeton before moving on to Del Val.

Bedesem coached at Bishop Egan from 1957 to '70, where he compiled a 94-36-6 record and won five Catholic and four City championships (one was shared). He then went 13-8-1 in two seasons at Archbishop Wood, which had failed to win a game the year before he arrived.

In 1975, Bedesem left Temple to become the head coach at his alma mater, Villanova. He guided the Wildcats to a 30-35-1 mark in six seasons until the university dropped the sport in 1980. The following year, he served as a volunteer assistant at Pitt. At Neshaminy, where he inherited a program that won only two games the previous year, his teams were 23-9.

And now, he is back at the level where he yearned to be.

"There will obviously be quite a difference [from Villanova, which was then Division I] in recruiting, but I don't think football is any different on the field, whether it's high schools, colleges or pros," Bedesem said. "To be successful, you still have to cover certain basics. The players might be 2 inches shorter, or a step or two slower, but the skills are still there."

Bedesem's immediate task will be to form a staff he is comfortable with. At Neshaminy, he surrounded himself with virtually the same group of coaches that were with him at Egan. So it would not be surprising to see many of those people, most notably offensive coordinator Ed Neumann, follow him once again.

Of course, any added familiarity would make it that much easier for Bedesem to install his trademark wishbone offense, which he has used exclusively since 1969.

"I don't think it's difficult putting anything in, if you believe in it," Bedesem said. "If you have your doubts, the players can sense that."

The Aggies won the Middle Atlantic Conference North title from 1980 through '82, but have been down a bit ever since the league, considered one of the strongest in Division III, consolidated into a one-division setup four years ago. Bedesem's goal is to revive the glory days.

"In my mind, there's no reason why we can't get back to where it was," he said. "I've seen the caliber of young people that they're bringing in here. I think we have to put a staff together, bring in our people and renew the enthusiasm and commitment. I know I'm excited. The day I get out of bed and don't look forward to doing this, that's the day I'll get out.

"But I didn't beat out anybody to get the job, so I don't know what that says for me."

It suggests that Del Val needed Dick Bedesem just as much as he craved a fresh rebuilding task.