



Troy University Director of Athletics Steve Dennis addresses the media during his introductory press conference in February.

Q & A with Steve Dennis

Last fall, Steve Dennis was among the 28,000-plus people gathered in Movie Gallery Veterans Stadium to witness the biggest win in Troy University football history, a 24-14 upset of then-No. 18 Missouri. Dennis and his son were spectators on that September Thursday night. Five months later, Dennis became part of the TROY family as Chancellor Jack Hawkins, Jr., introduced the Macon, GA, native as the Trojans' new director of athletics. He sat down with Troy University Magazine recently to talk about his new position, what he had learned about the state of the TROY athletic programs and his vision for the future.

Q: What have you learned about Troy University during your short time here?

A: I have not been surprised by anything I found here at TROY. I have to tip my cap to Dr. Hawkins, Dr. Patterson, the Board of Trustees and the faculty and staff here. It is a wonderful university and a strong foundation has been laid within the realm of athletics. I have been very impressed with the staff and its commitment to success. It is an exciting time in the life of this University with us coming together as one. There are very few times in life when you have the opportunity to be on the ground floor of such an exciting time of growth and change. I am excited about being here and I am open to hearing the ideas of the TROY family.

Q: For those who are unfamiliar with you, how do you describe Steve Dennis?

A: In my opinion, you must know someone's personal foundation in order to truly know them. I have three main areas that make up my foundation. First is faith because I believe that it builds character. Second is education because it leads to mental strength. And third is hard work because it leads to success. Add to

that a positive attitude and enthusiasm and that is how I try to live my life. We only have two main rules that we are going to operate under as a department. First is the Golden Rule; we are going to treat others the way we would want to be treated. The second rule is we always tell the truth. Communication plays a key role in our operation whether it is communicating with University leaders, internally as a staff, with our supporters or with our student-athletes.

Q: How have your first weeks on the job been spent and what are your goals for the future?

A: I have had the opportunity to meet with our coaches and athletics staff. What we are in the process of doing is getting a feel for where we are and how we compare to other institutions of the Sun Belt Conference.

My main areas of concern are for us to continue to grow in terms of fan support and in private support and partnerships. We really need to see our fans, students and supporters in the stands at our athletic events. Having the committed support of our fans, alumni and students is critical to our continued growth. We have experienced some positives in terms of gaining private financial support and partnerships, but we are climbing that hill toward gaining more commitments. It is a growing process and it will take time. We need the continued support of our alumni and friends, and I challenge them to do whatever they can to support TROY.

Q: While Trojan fans got a taste of the Sun Belt Conference during the 2004 football season, what differences can fans expect as the remaining sports transition from the Atlantic Sun to the Sun Belt beginning in the fall?

A: The most noticeable difference between being a member of the Atlantic Sun Conference and the Sun Belt Conference can be seen in football. It gives us the opportunity to compete for a conference title and a trip to a bowl game, which we did not have as a football independent. For all of our sports, the move

to the Sun Belt Conference means an elevation in the level of competition. As we make this move, we are going to be the best that we can be, which means winning on the field of play and doing so with class and humility.

Q: The NCAA recently released its initial report on academic achievement in college athletics today, the Academic Progress Rate (APR). What do these new academic requirements mean for Troy University athletics?

A: The opportunity to get an education is what it is all about for our student athletes. We applaud the NCAA's efforts to ensure that academics remain at the forefront in college athletics. The idea is we want all student-athletes to progress through their education and graduate with a degree that will prepare them for the future. The reality of life is that not all student-athletes are going to reach that point. We don't know what the final outcome of the APR standards will be. It is in flux right now and there may be some areas that are tweaked. As for the bottom line of what it will mean for us here at TROY, we've got a great compliance staff and a great academic support staff for our student-athletes. We are striving to provide all of our student-athletes with the best possible opportunity to leave here with a degree.

Q: Where do you see Troy University athletics in the next 10 to 15 years?

A: I see this athletic department and our athletic teams moving forward, taking the steps necessary to be successful at whatever level in whatever sport. I see us getting to the point where we are packing our facilities with fans and supporters consistently in all sports. I hope that the demand outcomes the supply. It is my hope that we will experience the kind of growth that will make our alumni, students, faculty and staff and fans proud and committed to supporting Troy University.

About Steve Dennis

- Native of Macon, GA
- 1978 Cum Laude graduate of the University of Georgia
- 1978 Defensive captain of Georgia football team and Academic All-SEC selection
- Assistant Coach for Tennessee-Chattanooga, Georgia and Auburn
- Sales, marketing and promotions representative for three years with Great Southern Wood, Inc.
- Vice president for Cleveland Brothers Construction
- Associate director of Tigers Unlimited, the development office for Auburn University athletics.
- Married to Lisa and father of four, Chris, Cale, Corey and Allison.

