

# Stroia holds press conference to make own statement

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In an emotional press conference yesterday afternoon, men's basketball coach John Stroia answered questions from the media about not having his contract renewed for next season. Stroia, fighting off tears, gave a statement over the condition of YSU basketball and his personal stakes in it over the last four seasons.

The following are excerpts from a statement made by Stroia and a question and answer session with the coach:

"I want to thank Bill Dailey for giving me the opportunity and having faith in hiring me six years ago...

"Four years ago when I had

the opportunity to become head basketball coach, my number one goal was to get players into YSU that would represent the University with integrity, class and get players to do what was asked of them. Secondly, we wanted players to give 100 percent in the classroom and on the basketball court...

"Third, we wanted players and our teams to get better from week to week and from season to season.

"I feel we accomplished our first goal...You only read about our players in the sports page.

"We've also accomplished our second goal...Potentially, by the end of next year, of the 12 seniors that I've coached at YSU, 10 will earn their degrees.

"In accomplishing our third goal, I feel that our freshman class is the best class we've had

and that this can be a very special class as long as they can stay healthy.

"The growth of the program from the standpoint of personnel...leads me to this quote: 'we aren't where we want to be, we aren't where we ought to be, thank God we aren't where we used to be.'

"I've honestly come to realize that the bottom line is to win. Anyone who tells you differently is not telling the truth.

"It's to a point...now where coaches may not get their contract renewed for losing before they not get their contract renewed for cheating.

"Four years ago,...I tried to develop pride and interest in doing it honestly, fairly and working as hard as I can and giving 100 percent commitment to YSU, its players, its program

and community.

"As far as my future goes, I have developed this philosophy in the past few years: I have prayed for guidance, strength and direction in everything I do and especially in what I call the four 'F's: my faith, my family, my friends and my future. I hope I have strengthened the same standards in the past six years.

**Q: Joe Malmisur said (yesterday) morning that it does come down to wins and losses. Is that a major problem at YSU and throughout the country in college athletics?**

**John Stroia:** Anyone who tells you differently about the bottom line, (pauses) you can't really talk to me about academics and don't talk to me

about having good kids and don't talk about having a good image...The only time those factors come into play is when you're not losing. The bottom line in college athletics is to win and to fill the seats...

**Q: If you had to characterize an area that was a prime factor in (not winning) here, what would it be and how did it inhibit your progress?**

**JS:** For anyone to think you're going to make the proper strides in a program as an independent (before they become members of the Mid-Continent Conference), it's not really going to happen. I think it's very difficult to recruit to begin with and it's much more difficult when you're an independent. But, I'm not by any stretch of

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the imagination singing sour grapes and pointing the finger at anyone. The bottom line is winning. I was given an opportunity and we didn't win, so we move on from there.

**Q: With 20/20 hindsight, is there anything you would have done differently to change the course of the program?**

**JS:** I think the biggest statement you can ever make when you're in a position like this is "Do it your own way." When it comes right down to the end, everybody's pointing the finger at you so you better have done it your own way.

**Q: What would you say is the biggest challenge for whoever comes in here and tries to get it turned around?**

**JS:** I've got some really good kids in this program and I feel fortunate about that. They want to win. I think that whoever comes in has got to be their own man [sic] and do it their own way.

**Q: Knowing how tough it was to play and recruit as an independent, did the Univer-**

**sity give you long enough to turn the program around?**

**JS:** That would be like someone firing you then having someone ask if they gave you long enough... The only measuring you have is your progress in the conference. Within time I think that this program is going to be a very competitive one.

**Q: You've known for a couple of weeks that they weren't going to renew your contract. How have you been able to stay on with the team?**

**JS:** I ask for 100 percent commitment from my players... I ask the same commitment from my coaching staff and I hope that everyone in this organization knows that I'm 100 percent committed to this program... I'm totally committed to them to the end and I think I proved that at the end of the Valparaiso game.

**Q: What would tell the new coach about the players you have in the program now?**

**JS:** That you've got a great group of kids that want to win.

Good luck to you, John. You're truly one of class acts here at YSU.