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Media Contact: Ron Cole, manager of news and information services, 330-941-3285 or racole.01@ysu.edu.

Well wishes, regrets exchanged as Jim Tressel accepts Ohio State head football coaching job

YOUNGSTOWN - An outpouring of blessings and regrets emerged from the Youngstown State University campus and the surrounding community after popular head football coach and executive director of intercollegiate athletics Jim Tressel formally accepted the head coaching position with Ohio State University Buckeyes' football program at a press conference Thursday afternoon in Columbus.

"I am very proud to name Jim Tressel as our head football coach," said Ohio State director of athletics Andy Geiger. "There were never any doubts with the Xs and Os - the football side of it was not an issue. What really sold me was Jim Tressel the person and what he brings to the table in other areas. I really listened to the people in the Youngstown area about what he meant to the University and to the community."

Geiger called Tressel "a proven winner and disciplinarian" who cares about his players. "He is the person who can take our football program to the next level," Geiger added.

Dr. David C. Sweet, YSU president, said of Tressel, "Coach Jim Tressel is a first-class professional, citizen and leader, and these attributes will continue to serve him well as he moves to Columbus." Sweet continued, "The entire YSU community joins me in congratulating Coach Tressel on his selection as coach of the Ohio State football team."

Tressel and OSU agreed to a five-year contract where he'll be paid a base salary of \$700,000 plus a \$100,000 signing bonus.

Tressel succeeds John Cooper, who had been the Buckeyes' head coach since the 1988 season.

No time frame has been set for naming an interim replacement as athletic director or head football coach at YSU. Sweet met with the staff of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics this morning and will meet with the YSU Board of Trustees in a special executive session next Tuesday, Jan. 23, at 3 p.m. to discuss the vacancies.

Tressel spent 15 years as YSU's head football coach and served as its executive director of intercollegiate athletics since 1994. During his tenure, the Penguins claimed four national titles and played in six national championship games. YSU earned playoff berths in post-season games in 10 of Tressel's 15 seasons. Last year, the Penguins gained a berth in the NCAA Division I-AA playoffs and finished with a 9-3 overall record. Tressel's overall record at YSU was 135 wins, 57 losses and two ties. Only legendary Dwight "Dike" Beede's 147 coaching victories surpassed that total.

As executive director of intercollegiate athletics, Tressel focused on the well-being of the student-athlete, helped to raise funding for a stadium expansion, expanded the University's fan base and worked to achieve gender equity.

"Jim's departure will be a bittersweet experience for us. We wish him all of the best, yet there is sadness about his leaving YSU," said Pauline Saternow, associate director of intercollegiate athletics. "I don't think Ohio State knows the real depth of Jim Tressel yet, but they'll know soon. They'll soon know that what Jim built here at YSU was not just for him, but for the University and the nearby community, and the best thing we can do is ensure that it continues and grows."

Recently, Tressel was involved with the committee that spearheaded passage of a levy to fund the Youngstown City School District among his many efforts with charitable and civic projects in this area.

"Jim Tressel's major accomplishment was earning the respect of the entire community. To me, that was a greater accomplishment than his football record," said Youngstown Mayor George McKelvey. "People all over this area and outside our city readily respect Jim Tressel. The community loves him as a person. He has been a true asset to this community."

Prior to coming to YSU, Tressel served as a quarterbacks' and receivers' coach at Ohio State under then-head coach Earle Bruce from 1983-1985 and also was the quarterbacks' coach at Syracuse University for two seasons.

The 1971 Berea High School graduate stayed in his hometown as a quarterback and four-year football letterman at Baldwin-Wallace College where Tressel played for his late father, Yellow Jackets' coaching master Dr. Lee Tressel, who compiled a 155-52-6 record at the school. Jim earned a bachelor's degree with honors from B-W in 1975 and later received his master's degree from the University of Akron in 1977 as he was serving as the Zips' offensive backfield coach.

Tressel and his wife, Ellen, have four children - Zak, Carlee, Eric and Whitney.

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