



NEWS RELEASE

DAN DUNN BLENDS OLD WITH THE NEW AS GILBERT'S FOOTBALL COACH

PHOENIX, AZ (July 9, 2009) – It's been nearly 30 years since Dan Dunn roamed the sidelines as Gilbert High's football coach, and a lot has changed.

Gilbert has been transformed from a rural community to a full-fledged suburb of Phoenix. The school has moved and now has a sprawling campus. There are now five high schools in town instead of just one.

What hasn't changed is Dunn's love for the game, and working to mold young men to become strong players, students and citizens.

That is what led him back to the black and gold. He will lead the team again when it embarks on its 2009 season.

Dunn, 64, was most recently head coach at Mesa Community (junior) College. After the 2007 season, he took a year off and is ready to go again after having surgery to replace both knees. He also was head coach at Payson High and an assistant at Mesa Red Mountain.

Dunn led Gilbert to Class 3A state championships in 1973 and 1975, a Class 4A crown in 1978 and state runner-up finishes in 1977, 1979 and 1981. His record was 88-23-1. Dunn's brother, Rick, who succeeded him at Gilbert and won a title in 1985, also returns as an assistant this fall.

"I feel great. It's nice to be able to be out on the field and not be in constant pain (from the knees)," Dan Dunn said.

Two former Gilbert players, Remy Carrasco and Steve Lane, will be assistants, and will be joined by Stacy Garner and Justin McDonald.

When coaching legend Jesse Parker left after the 2008 season, Dunn received a few calls of inquiry as to whether he might be interested in coming back to Gilbert.

"I got a great response from people that I talked to and the more I thought about it, the better the idea became," Dunn said.

"It feels good. What's hard getting used to sometimes is the people who come up to you and say, "My uncle played for you,' or, "My brother played for you,' or, "My dad played for you.' "

Dunn said he sensed "an immediate, in-sync feeling" when dealing with his players.

"But there also are a lot of differences between the players now and when I was here the first time," he said.

"Back then, the typical workout during the summer was 8-12 hours in a hay field or a melon field. Now, they pay a couple hundred bucks for a personal trainer and they have different diets."

Dunn and his team participated in a few summer passing leagues.

“I thought we did real well, showed signs of being competitive,” he said. “I think that area of our game (skill players) is pretty solid. We need to work on some things with our offensive and defensive lines, but Rick (Dunn) and I have worked a lot with linemen in the past and we think we will wind up in pretty good shape there.”

Gilbert’s freshmen and sophomores were scheduled to go to a camp in Snowflake beginning July 13, with the juniors and seniors going to another camp in Show Low July 20. Several other schools from around the Valley also were to be there.

“I have been involved with those types of camps for about 30 years, with guys like Tot Workman, Jesse Parker, Jim Jones and Ray Laing,” Dunn said. “We have guest speakers . . . you can generate a lot of loyalty and kinship, things that you might not get anywhere else.”

He is looking forward to building close relationships with his players.

“Some kids come from single-parent homes and to some, you’re their daddy,” Dunn said. “That’s one of the things I missed while in the college game – being really influential on kids’ lives on a daily basis, teaching them manners, doing things they’re supposed to do, how to treat people. All of that adds to the whole picture and I think it will help us be competitive again.”

Now is the new beginning. Dunn would like to include words about the tradition that began with the championships he was involved in, but knows that doesn’t really apply any longer.

“Jesse (Parker) was a great coach and the kids were used to doing things in his style,” Dunn said. “But we are here now. It’s not about what we did a year ago or 10 or 20 years ago. This is our team, the 2009 version. We are going to develop our own identity.”

It is an identity that will have Dunn’s definitive stamp on it.

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