



September 13, 2000

Dear Friends,

The sequence of events leading to Indiana University's dismissal of Coach Bob Knight is familiar to most of you. In the past seven months, IU and its basketball program have attracted an avalanche of media attention.

OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDENT

That is understandable. Coach Knight is probably the most famous person in Indiana. He has been an outstanding coach at Indiana University for nearly three decades; his players have consistently won games while living up to high academic standards.

The months of controversy were sparked by allegations made by the CNN/SI network regarding the basketball program, including the charge that Coach Knight had choked one of his players during practice three years ago. A review of the allegations by two Trustees found that there was clearly inappropriate contact between Coach Knight and the player during that incident. The review also found a series of other troubling events concerning Coach Knight over the years, several involving fellow IU employees who had been victimized by the coach's fits of temper.

In response, we enacted "zero tolerance" guidelines regarding Coach Knight's behavior in May. I was hopeful we could continue to benefit from his talents as a coach and an educator while eliminating the uncivil and embarrassing incidents that have also marked his tenure at IU. Our decision not to dismiss Coach Knight provoked strong criticism in the media. But I believed then, and I believe today, that it was ethical and proper to give the coach this final opportunity.

Coach Knight pledged to me that he could live up to the guidelines. Unfortunately, as weeks passed, I received more and more reports of hostile, difficult, and uncooperative behavior by Coach Knight toward fellow IU employees and toward the university.

Included among those incidents was a meeting in which Coach Knight verbally abused a female IU administrator with others present; his continued refusal to work through the chain of command by reporting to Athletic Director Clarence Doninger; angry and inflammatory remarks he made, in public and private, about university administrators and the Board of Trustees; and his refusal to appear at previously scheduled pre-season Varsity Club events in Indianapolis, Bloomington, and Chicago. We were concerned by this series of actions, and were discussing what steps to take in response.

Last week, Coach Knight had a confrontation with a freshman student at Assembly Hall. While accounts of the severity of that incident are in conflict, there is no question that Coach Knight initiated unwelcome contact with the student. That event would not have, in itself, led to Coach Knight's dismissal. But taken as part of a continuing pattern of behavior, it raised more questions about Coach Knight's willingness or ability to live within the guidelines.

Coach Knight made no effort to contact me in response to the reports about the confrontation. He held a press conference, without notifying university officials, to explain his side of the story. I had to go to extraordinary lengths to contact him for more information. When I did reach him on the phone, I asked him to postpone a trip he had planned so he could remain in Bloomington while this situation was resolved. He refused.

University Place  
Conference Center  
850 West Michigan Street  
Suite 243  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
46202-5198

317-274-3571  
Fax: 317-274-5098



This continuing series of events over several months left us with no real alternative. With the support of a strong majority of the Board of Trustees, I decided to relieve Coach Knight of his duties as basketball coach.

It was a painful and agonizing decision, the most difficult one I have had to make in my years of university administration. I share the respect that so many IU fans have for Coach Knight's accomplishments. But my overriding concern is for the greater good of Indiana University. It is the responsibility of each of us in the IU community to work to maintain a civil and cooperative learning environment, to treat each other with respect. Those requirements were specifically spelled out to Coach Knight; he was unable to work within the guidelines.

Unfortunately, the decision led to demonstrations at IUB by some students and people from outside our campus. We believe strongly in and will protect the right of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. We will not, however, tolerate vandalism, destruction of property and acts of intimidation. Public safety officials will continue to work to guarantee that the lines of proper behavior are not crossed.

The overriding issue here is that no person – no president, coach, faculty member, student or trustee – is bigger than Indiana University. We all must work together if we are to succeed. I am confident that we will be able to find a successor to Coach Knight who can continue the academic and athletic excellence of the IU basketball program, while living up to reasonable standards of behavior.

In many ways, this is a sad chapter in the storied history of IU basketball. But both Indiana University as a whole and our basketball program are bigger than any one person. And while we all enjoy the thrill of competition, it is important to remember that IU's first mission is educational in nature. The academic enterprise must be central to all that we do. Athletic competition is a powerful teacher, instilling in student athletes lasting lessons about positive thinking, team building, the hard work ethic, and the importance of staying cool under fire. Athletics also forges friendships between players and loyalty to the institution that lasts a lifetime. IU will continue to offer such lessons in honorable competition, both on the basketball court and in the classroom. I am glad that we will enter the coming basketball season with Mike Davis serving as interim head coach, assisted by John Treloar.

No one wanted Coach Knight's tenure at IU to end in this way. But by not taking advantage of what was clearly presented as his last chance, Coach Knight wrote the final chapter to his career here. I hope, in the long run, that career will be remembered far more for its many accomplishments than for the way it ended.

For the university, it is time to move forward. I welcome your comments. You can contact me via e-mail at [pres@indiana.edu](mailto:pres@indiana.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Myles Brand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "M" and "B".

Myles Brand  
President