

The Knight Termination Press Conference (Sep. 10, 2000)

**Christopher Simpson** [00:00:56] Good afternoon. My name is Christopher Simpson. I'm the Vice President of Public Affairs and Government Relations for Indiana University. On my immediate left is Indiana University President Myles Brand. On the far left is Vice President of the Board of Trustees Frederick Eichhorn. President Brand will have a statement. Mr. Eichhorn will then follow with a statement. And we'll open it to your questions, President Brand.

**Myles Brand** [00:01:19] Thank you all for coming today. We've completed an investigation into the recent allegations involving Indiana University basketball coach Bob Knight. I'd like to report on the findings of that investigation and other events involving Coach Knight. On May 15th of this year, I announce to you findings of a seven week investigation into three allegations raised by a former student athlete. At that time, we made clear what is acceptable behavior for Coach Knight. For that reason, on May 15th, we announced that Coach Knight was being given a series of sanctions and one last chance under zero tolerance policy. Let me remind you how we define the sanctions and how we define the zero tolerance policy. And I quote, as a result of that review, which found a pattern of inappropriate behavior, the sanctions for Coach Knight are a three game suspension during the regular 2000-2001 season and a thirty thousand dollar fine, which will be withheld from his salary. Two, any verifiable, inappropriate physical contact discovered in the future. With players, members of the university community or others in connection with his employment at IU will be cause for immediate termination. Three, public presentations and other occasions during which Coach Knight is a representative of Indiana University will be conducted with the appropriate decorum and civility. Included among these occasions are interactions with the news media. Failure to do so will be cause for further sanction, up to and including termination from the position of basketball coach. Four, a task force will be established to develop policies for appropriate behavior for all coaches, athletic department employees and student athletes, and for sanctions for not following these policies. The task force will make its recommendations on these policies to the athletics committee, the president and the board of trustees. I believe the media here today have copies of this handout. In recent days, it's been reported that our zero tolerance guidelines are unclear or ill formed. Nothing could be further from the truth. As I just reiterated, we specified exactly what zero tolerance is at the May 15th press conference. Those guidelines, which Coach Knight has been required to abide by for these last four months. The Code of Athletic Conduct Commission is developing a code of conduct for all student athletes, coaches and administrators on all of our campuses. This commission will report its findings to our university board of trustees this Friday at its regularly scheduled meeting. But do not confuse the two. Since May 15, our zero

tolerance guidelines have been in effect, and they are what I just quoted to you. Unfortunately, there have been many instances in the last 17 weeks in which Coach Knight has behaved and acted in a way that is both defiant and hostile. These actions illustrate a very troubling pattern of inappropriate behavior that makes it clear that Coach Knight has no desire, contrary to what he personally promised me, to live within the zero tolerance guidelines we set out on May 15. We have given Indiana University basketball coach Bob Knight one last chance, and he's failed to take full advantage of that opportunity. Let me give you some examples of Coach Knight's behavior in the last 17 weeks that is uncivil, defiant, and unacceptable. There was a continued unwillingness by Coach Knight to work within the normal chain of command at the IU athletics department. I personally asked Coach Knight on May 13th to resume the normal chain of command with athletics director Clarence Doninger and he's adamantly refused to do that. This violates the letter and spirit of the guidelines set down on May 15. There have been several attempts to embarrass Indiana University in private and public. Coach Knight has made angry and inflammatory remarks about the university officials and board of trustees. This violates the letter and the spirit of the guidelines set out on May 15th. There have been several instances in which Coach Knight has shown disrespect for our university alumni. Specifically, the coaches inform the university that he now refuses to participate in previously scheduled varsity club events in Indianapolis, Bloomington and Chicago. While the coach has informed the university that he will attend four public events as required in his contract. He has refused to attend the most popular and widely attended events of our alumni that our alumni anticipate each year. This violates the letter and the spirit of the guidelines set down on May 15. There has been an incident in the recent past in which Coach Knight verbally abused a high ranking female university official in the presence of other persons. This angry outburst in his office was completely unnecessary and inappropriate. This violates, again, the letter and the spirit of the guidelines set down on May 15. There's been a lack of cooperation fulfilling the sanctions handed down on May 15th. It's important to note that the coach has agreed to fulfill these obligations, but he has forced the university to go through a protracted, unpleasant and completely unnecessary process to reach that end. This again violates the letter and spirit of the guidelines set down on May 15. There's been one other instance of gross insubordination. I had a telephone conversation with Coach Knight at ten thirty pm Friday to discuss the allegations raised in the current situation. At the conclusion of the conversation, Coach Knight informed me he was leaving Saturday morning to go on a fishing trip in Canada. Due to the seriousness of the investigation, I requested more than once that he postponed his trip and stay in Bloomington. He adamantly refused. This violates the letter and spirit of the guidelines set down on May 15th. And most recently, we have a well publicized incident in which Coach Knight had a confrontation with a 19 year old IU student in front of Assembly Hall. The IU police are investigating this matter and have complete completed their preliminary findings. They

have talked to seven people and have two more persons with whom to talk, but we believe they have settled the factual aspects of the case. The coach reached out and initiated physical contact with the student on his arm, and the two had, according to varying accounts, an uncomfortable exchange. It is not in dispute that the coach reached out and grasped the young man's arm in an unwelcome fashion. The severity of the act is in dispute, however, but the bottom line is that an angry confrontation with a student explicitly violates the spirit and letter of the guidelines set out May 15. It's important to note that the incident involving the IU student in which he unfortunately became an unwilling part of a very public story. While the stepfather of the young man has aggressively sought media coverage of the event, and that is unfortunate. We are committed to ensuring that every IU student has the right to a safe, productive and enlightening educational experience at Indiana University. This young man is no exception, and I hope that we all will respect his privacy and understand that this young man has been caught up in events well beyond his own responsibility. I have been briefed continuously by the IU police on this matter since Friday. I've also consulted informally on a regular basis throughout the weekend with our trustees. No vote of our trustees has been taken, but a large majority share my view on our response to this pattern of unacceptable behavior. I've also conferred with the men's basketball players, the IU Athletics Committee through their chairman, key faculty leaders and of course, our trustees, President John Walda, who's traveling abroad and cannot be with us today, but expressed his full support for this action. No one incident of the ones I've named may singly rise to the level of the removal of Coach Knight. But this persistent and troubling pattern of behavior has led me to only one conclusion. In an early morning telephone conversation with Coach Knight today, I gave him the option of resigning as head basketball coach. He declined, and I notified him that he was being removed as basketball coach. Effective immediately. This is an option the university can exercise under paragraph nine of Coach Knight's contract, and I believe that was handed out to you as well. It specifies, and I quote, If the university at any time desires coach shall cease to serve as head basketball coach when so advised in writing, a certified letter will be sent to him tomorrow. And exercising this option, the university is obligated to continue to pay Coach Knight his salary through the end of his contract, which expires June 30th, 2002. Coach Knight is therefore entitled to approximately two years salary, and of course, the university will abide by all the terms of the contract. Let me add some personal thoughts now. I've been in higher education for over 30 years. I've been a president of two major universities, an administrator, a faculty member at several others. Unquestionably, this is the most difficult decision I have ever had to make. Bob Knight is a legendary coach at a school with a legendary basketball reputation. He's been a national coaching example not only in wins and losses and Big Ten national championships, but also fielding teams for three decades that comprised outstanding fine young men. His program has been devoid of major NCAA violations, and his

graduation rates are among the highest in the country. These young men have had the honor to play under Coach Knight, a representative of the best of IU. This includes, of course, the outstanding team we have now. I met with these young men late yesterday, and I pledge to them and renew that pledge to give my unwavering support to our basketball program. But that aside, my decision, which came after consultation and deep thought, is in the best long run interests of Indiana University. I've asked Vice President Terry Clapacs, athletic director Clarence Doninger, to lead the effort to find an interim coach for this season. That search begins now. In an appropriate time the committee will be formed within Indiana University to find a permanent coach. Thank you.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:12:52] Mr. Eichhorn.

**Frederich Eichorn** [00:12:55] Thank you. A large majority of the board of trustees fully supports this decision. We regret that the coach's actions have resulted in this conclusion. But this is the best answer for the university at this time. I have great respect for what Coach Knight has accomplished, but his attitude towards his peers and the university officials is intolerable. In the end, Indiana University is much more than its basketball program, and it is the overall interest of the university that motivates this conclusion. It is time to move forward with the essential business of the university. Thank you.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:13:38] Questions. Yes, sir.

**Audience** [00:13:44] Why did you allow events to accumulate? Why not address the situation instantly the first time there was a violation?

**Myles Brand** [00:13:54] No one event rose to the occasion of breaking the policy. The problem is, is that we have a continued pattern of unacceptable behavior similar to the pattern we had prior to May 15, except it's gotten worse. But no one event had risen to that occasion and we were moving in that direction until the accumulation was sufficient.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:14:15] Yes, sir.

**Audience** [00:14:19] inaudible question.

**Myles Brand** [00:14:22] Maybe not today, but my guess would be shortly. I think that was one more example. It was not the precipitating cause if that were the only instance that took place you would not be here today. For it's the unacceptable pattern of behavior. So we would have been here, in my estimation, in a short period of time.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:00:12] Right in the middle, please.

**Audience member** [00:00:12] What was Coach Knight's reaction to this?

**Myles Brand** [00:00:16] Coach Knight told me that he wanted to continue to coach at Indiana University. We had our conversation. It was a civil conversation. He understood the points, and I told him that we will remove him from being IU's basketball coach.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:00:33] Right on the right.

**Audience member** [00:00:35] Is there anything else being investigated that we haven't heard about yet?

**Myles Brand** [00:00:35] No.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:00:38] Ed, straight back.

**Audience member** [00:00:40] President Brand. In retrospect, seemed like I know a lot of work went into the zero tolerance policy and what we all saw here today. In retrospect does it seem like it was a mistake at that time to continue down this path?

**Myles Brand** [00:00:56] No in fact I'm reinforced that we did the right thing. That was the ethical and moral thing to do. Coach Knight has contributed almost 30 years to this university, and it's been successful in many ways. I believe then and I continue to believe that we had to give him one last chance. Some people believe I overreached with that and disagree and think that May 15th should have been the end. I believe then and I believe now that it was the moral act. The fact is that having given Coach Knight one last opportunity, he failed to take advantage of it. It's his decision.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:01:27] On the right over here. Please.

**Audience member** [00:01:28] President Grant (inaudible).

**Myles Brand** [00:01:34] I don't believe any conversations have been taking place. And I refer that to our athletic director.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:01:39] Over here on the left, please. Let's go over to Don. Please.

**Audience member** [00:01:51] President Brand, I've covered Bob for almost 35 years and what I've always enjoyed about covering him was that he was always the same. When did his conduct become intolerable?

**Myles Brand** [00:01:57] Leading up to last May 15th, the university was slow to react to a number of instances, the Neil Reed incident precipitated an in-depth investigation in which we found a continuing pattern of unacceptable behavior. We took action then and gave him fair notice. His unacceptable behavior not only continued since then, but has increased.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:02:20] Right in the middle.

**Audience member** [00:02:21] President Brand. (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:02:34] Yes, he had been notified through intermediaries time and time again.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:02:40] Sir. Yes, sir. Over here on the left.

**Audience member** [00:02:44] President Brand, the team obviously, is very much in support of their coach, how do you deal and how do you take that next step towards the team that would like to have Bob Knight as their coach?

**Myles Brand** [00:02:52] The decision has been made. These are fine young men, in addition to being excellent basketball players, they're the pride of Indiana University, and we hope that they will continue with us, and I expect that they will continue with us and we will find an interim coach that can lead them on to victory.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:03:07] Terry.

**Audience member** [00:03:09] President Brand, your meeting with the players last night they had the impression that you had already made up your decision. Had you made up your mind at that point or did you make it after that meeting?

**Myles Brand** [00:03:19] At that point, I was getting the evidence from the IU police department. I think the facts of the matter are clear, even if not every interview had taken place. With my conversation with Bob Knight this morning, we reached the point that we would go forward now.

**Audience member** [00:03:34] Right here.

**Audience member** [00:03:44] (inaudible)

**Frederich Eichorn** [00:03:46] Well, there's been no there's been no trustee vote taken, but by sampling and conversation, we are aware of the attitudes of the various trustees. And by that, we conclude that there is a large majority of the board that supports the decision.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:04:06] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:04:07] When will the search of Knight's replacement begin?

**Myles Brand** [00:04:10] I will ask the athletic director to undertake that question and perhaps afterwards, but we have not begun the search. As of this time, this is the announcement, the beginning.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:04:20] Right in the front, please.

**Audience member** [00:04:28] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:04:31] That hasn't been decided yet or talked about with the coach and there are some options that we all need to talk with him about.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:04:37] Yes, ma'am. Right here, please.

**Audience member** [00:04:40] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:04:44] Coach Knight's annual salary is approximately one hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:04:50] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:04:52] President Brand, are you personally stunned, shocked, baffled by someone of this intelligence and ability who just doesn't seem to get the point?

**Myles Brand** [00:04:54] I'm very saddened by it. It's been, I admire Coach Knight's accomplishments and I'm very saddened by it, and I had hoped by making it as clear as I possibly could in May that this is unacceptable and it has to change, and then given his direct face to face assurances that he would change, I'm very saddened that he did

not take advantage of that opportunity. I believe we did everything in our power to make it possible for him to alter his behavior.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:05:32] Over here, please.

**Audience member** [00:05:45] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:05:48] I did see that side of Coach Knight, but apparently it has gone away, to use your words after our meeting, I don't know exactly when, but he did not fulfill the promises that he gave me during that meeting.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:06:03] Mike, Mike.

**Audience member** [00:06:04] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:06:14] The players are important to us, and they are they were taking into account in the end the single most important element was the future of Indiana University, and we need to move on from here. We need to go forward. And that was the overriding consideration.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:06:33] Right in the front please.

**Audience member** [00:06:34] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:06:44] Are you talking about his press conference?

**Audience member** [00:06:46] Thursday.

**Myles Brand** [00:06:48] I had a very short conversation Friday night with Coach Knight about the most recent instance of grabbing. I asked Coach Knight, I had seen the press conference. I was not aware there was going to be a press conference. He didn't consult with me or anyone. He held the press conference on the phone. I asked him, is there anything you want to add to the press conference? And he said, there's one or two more people that need to be consulted, interviewed. And that was it.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:07:18] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:07:20] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:07:34] No, I have not. And I turned that assignment over to our



athletic director, Clarence Doninger, with to work with Vice President Terry Clapacs. And we will try and move expeditiously on that. Again, there are there are no candidates. This is the announcement that we're beginning.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:07:51] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:07:54] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:08:02] From my personal perspective, it would have been irrelevant. It was the behavior of an athletic coach and the university's interaction with the coach and the way he represented us. That was the commanding feature. It would not have been relevant.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:08:21] John.

**Audience member** [00:08:29] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:08:34] I think there are really two answers. First of all, it's customary in the case of a very long serving coach to allow that contract to run its course. And secondly, it did not seem to me to be productive for the university to be engaged in long term litigation.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:08:52] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:08:53] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:09:05] Uh coach did say that he did not do anything wrong. That is correct. He didn't tell me that was the reason, but he did say during our conversation he did not believe he did anything wrong.

**Audience member** [00:09:20] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:09:21] That's probably more detailed than I think the conversation was. But my impression was the whole range of activity. But I can't the conversation was just not that detailed. Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:09:32] President Brand, how would you describe the coach's demeanor? Was he emotional did he get emotional?

**Myles Brand** [00:09:38] He was emotional, it was a civil conversation. It was a

conversation of someone who was very thoughtful. How long was the conversation?  
About ten minutes.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:09:50] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:09:56] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:10:00] He has received some threatening emails from others. And IU police are reacting to that.

**Audience member** [00:10:09] What are you all doing about that?

**Myles Brand** [00:10:11] The IU police are reacting to that -looking after his safety and I believe he's not presently on campus.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:10:20] Yes, ma'am.

**Audience member** [00:10:22] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:10:25] There are no other fines and that was levied before this action. So it is in place.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:10:31] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:10:32] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:10:40] There were a number of ongoing issues of the kind I described to you, the unwillingness to follow the chain of command with respect to the athletic director, the difficulty of working with him on the sanctions, trying to find the games and so on. So there were a number of back and forth intermediately led discussions that took place and it just wasn't one incident. It was just ongoing.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:11:09] Yes, ma'am. Speak up, please.

**Audience member** [00:11:22] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:11:27] Yes. The decisions being made now because of my conversation with Coach Knight this morning in which the matter was settled and it became why it would become widely known rather rapidly as it has. And so it was important for me, I think, to be able to publicly and formally announce this. But the

decision was made this morning and there was no reason to wait until Thursday,.

**Audience member** [00:11:52] Drawing the distinction between zero tolerance and the commission.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:11:56] Yes, sir.

**Myles Brand** [00:12:04] But that's Bob Knight has a lot of positive attributes. And I think the person well, if he has another coaching job, will have to make a decision whether his conduct would change. And I would tell that person everything I'm saying publicly now.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:12:21] Anybody else who hasn't had a question yet? Please. OK, a couple more and we're going to wrap up. Yes.

**Audience member** [00:12:27] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:12:35] He did try and change my mind, he did not react angrily. With sadness, yes, I believe that would be a fair characterization. The conversation lasted about 10 minutes.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:12:52] Excuse me, one at a time, please. Are you done? John, go ahead.

**Audience member** [00:13:06] (inaudible).

**Myles Brand** [00:13:09] No because we gave him one last chance in May. It was zero tolerance. We spelled out the zero tolerance in the four key points that was on the board. And I said there are no more chances. So it was not open for further discussion at this time.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:13:23] Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:13:26] You say Coach tried to change your mind. What did he say to you?

**Myles Brand** [00:13:28] He talked about his successes at Indiana University and said that he will try harder in the future.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:13:34] Yes, right in the front please.

**Audience member** [00:13:37] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:13:42] You'll have to ask the players that. I think they're talking about it right now. The players strongly support the coach. They're unhappy, very unhappy about losing their coach, who they respect. And they worry about the future of the season. They're proud of their team, proud of their teammates, and they do not know what will happen now.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:14:04] Last question. Yes, sir.

**Audience member** [00:14:06] (inaudible)

**Myles Brand** [00:14:12] Nothing like that or anything close relevant has ever been discussed with the trustees in that way.

**Christopher Simpson** [00:14:17] Thank you very much.