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An interview with:

**JOHN HEISLER
JOE BERTAGNA
JACK SWARBRICK
MIKE LYNCH
JOHN MILLER
JEFF JACKSON**

JOHN HEISLER: Thank you for being here on behalf of everybody at the University of Notre Dame and also from Notre Dame Athletics. Safe to say that Notre Dame hockey has made its share of headline news appearances in the last few weeks. Coming off last year's visit to the Frozen Four, the Irish begin the season ranked number one in one preseason pole.

This weekend, Notre Dame opens the regular season against the defending NCAA Champions, Minnesota Duluth, and then in two weeks, the Irish will begin playing in their brand-new facility, the Compton Family Ice Arena where we are here today. This afternoon, we add another headline that should have a major impact on the future of the Notre Dame hockey program.

So to open the proceedings today, I'd first like to introduce the Commissioner of Hockey East. He's beginning his 13th year in that role. He's also the executive director of the American Hockey Coaches Association. Please join us in welcoming Joe Bertagna.

JOE BERTAGNA: Thank you, good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for being here for this significant day for our conference and for this institution. Just had a quick tour of the building, and just the building alone would make this an exciting day seeing what's going on here. I'm happy to be here to bring some other news as well.

Since the formation of the Hockey East Association 27 years ago, when seven schools took the ice under our banner that year, we have added programs on three occasions. 1989

Merrimack College became our eighth institution, followed by the University of Massachusetts in 1993 and the University of Vermont in 2005. Those are all special days in the history of our conference.

Those were all special days in the history of our conference. Today we celebrate a uniquely special event in the history of Hockey East. It is my distinct pleasure to formally announce University of Notre Dame will become our 11th member institution commencing with the 2013-2014 season.

I say it's uniquely special not only in all that Notre Dame is and all that it stands for, but also unique in that the addition of Notre Dame signals a most significant change in the reach of our conference.

As this became possible through a vote of our member schools, I will allow Mike Lynch, of Boston University to speak to this. Mike chaired a special committee that looked into the future alignment and future conference structure of the league.

Nine of our ten existing schools have played a combined 69 games going back to 1970 against Notre Dame. Eight of those nine series are within one or two games in the win/loss column, indicating how close the competition has been and will continue.

The only hockey school that's not played the Irish is the University of Massachusetts Lowell. I could point out it is with some courage that I mentioned at the last two meetings between Notre Dame and our conference took place last March in the regionals up in Manchester when Notre Dame ended the seasons of New Hampshire, Merrimack, and in effect, our league.

It's has been suggested that the seeds of this day stem from the regionals when we decided if we couldn't beat them, we should try to join with them. Today we have.

Before I give up my time here, I just want to make mention of a connection with Notre Dame. I saw Lefty Smith earlier in the day, and it's good to see his name on the ice.

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One of the pleasures and privileges I have in hockey is I also work for the American Hockey Coaches Association, and get a chance to get outside of New England and to visit different parts of the hockey world. Lefty is an esteemed member of our association and a former officer of our association. I think it was great to see him.

I was supposed to be here last January to present an award to Dr. Michael Collins, a former Notre Dame player, but had some travel issues and never made it out here. I was supposed to spend the night at Lefty's house, which would have been an experience.

We do have some hats that we're going to give out later. Having been united with Lefty today, he looks like he could use the first hat. So we'll make sure the first Hockey East Notre Dame hat goes to Charles Lefty Smith.

Finally, I want to acknowledge in this spectacular building the help from everybody here, not just these last few quickly arranged days to make this possible, but dealing all summer long, dealing with Jack, and particularly Tom Nevala, have already established a relationship that will go on into the future.

Our relationship with Coach Jackson and his staff, familiar with all the coaches, familiar with all the coaches that have served here since Lefty brought that program back up in the late '60s, early '70s.

So it's an exciting day. You here at the campus have a lot to be excited about and all of us at Hockey East. I've got my staff, Pete Souris and Kathy Wynters here today. Hockey East is very proud and very happy to be part of the excitement that's going on with Notre Dame hockey for the future of the program and the building here today. Thank you very much.

JOHN HEISLER: Thank you, our next speaker is the assistant vice president and director of athletics at Boston University. He's in his 7th year in that role, and his first six years have produced three Hockey East titles for his terrier hockey program. Please welcome Mike Lynch.

MIKE LYNCH: Our first order of business is to welcome on behalf of our coaches and administrators Notre Dame into the Hockey East association, certainly to thank Mr. Bertagna for his great work with Athletic Director Swarbrick and the other members of the Notre Dame family in terms of putting this partnership together.

As Joe mentioned, I had the distinct pleasure to chair a special group that's been

looking into the possibilities of expanding the Hockey East Association for some time with the right partner, and we believe firmly that we've found that partner.

Over the last few months, we've entered into some really substantive discussions about the future of our league and the future of college hockey, for many of us here today, the future of college athletics. We think we've made a great move in the right direction, and we are thrilled to welcome Notre Dame to Hockey East and look forward to many great years together in our conference.

JOHN HEISLER: Next up the vice president of athletics here at the University of Notre Dame, He's in his fourth year in that position. Please welcome Jack Swarbrick.

JACK SWARBRICK: John indicated at the outset that this is a very exciting time for the Notre Dame hockey program. For performing at such a high level on the ice, and I would add in the classroom, we have built this remarkable facility to house that program which, by the way, I stepped into the first time about 20 minutes ago. It was exciting for me to see it.

In the context of that, when the necessity of deciding where we would play hockey in the future was presented to us because of changes in the hockey landscape, we felt a special pressure to get it right. Jeff was doing his job. The building was providing the environment. We had to make sure we did our job.

We had to make sure that we considered all of the options available to us and made the right choice for our student-athletes and our coaches and the University. We considered three options. We considered independence, we considered the newly formed National Conference, and we considered Hockey East.

There were pros and cons to each, but at the end of the day, the choice was a clear one for us. It was a clear one for us principally for three reasons. The first was our assessment of the impact on our student-athletes. Part of that has to do with the nature of the scheduling and how it would work, issues of missed class time. Part of it had to do with our assessment of travel. Part of it had to do with the assessment of where they'd go and what their experiences would be. So that led us to Hockey East.

Second one related to media opportunities. Opportunities to do what we think we do

particularly well, which is to use sport to promote the University. We believe our affiliation with Hockey East sets the platform for us to do that with hockey in the way we've been able to do it successfully with football in the past.

Finally, and in some ways most importantly, just the issue of fit. When you spend time with people in prolonged discussions about something this important, you get a sense of who they are. You get a sense of whether Notre Dame fits there. And that came through to us over and over again in this process.

I can't thank Joe and Mike and their colleagues enough for the way they approached this discussion. Their professionalism, their patience, their engagements over a host of issues that reminded us at each turn that this was the right fit for us.

Two other people in particular I want to thank on this really important day for future of Notre Dame hockey: One is Tom Nevala. Tom who is the administrator in charge of this sport. At the same time he was bringing all of this together, took the lead on the analysis of our choices and the discussions with various people and did a masterful job of bringing that together in a way that helped make the decision so easy.

The other is our coach, Jeff Jackson. Decisions like this are really complicated if your coach has only one view of the right outcome. Instead what you want is your coach to engage with you in the dialogue and the discussion, to think through the factors, to be flexible and thoughtful about the University's interest and the program's interest.

I cannot imagine working with a coach in these circumstances that would have demonstrated those attributes more effectively than Jeff Jackson. It's a testament not only to why he's such a great coach, but why he's such a great coach at Notre Dame.

So thanks to all of you for coming. We look forward to a very bright future with a conference we have great admiration for, that has its core in a part of the country where we have great strength and passion. We hope we bring to Hockey East as much as we know it will bring to us. Thank you very much.

JOHN HEISLER: Jack, thank you. At this time we have on the phone with us John Miller who is the president of programming for NBC Sports and Versus.

John, if you're with us, we'd like to invite you to offer some remarks at this time.

JOHN MILLER: I just want to say on behalf of NBC Sports, our relationship with Notre Dame is one of our most important partnerships and has been for in excess of 20 years. And the opportunity to broadcast Notre Dame hockey games as well as Hockey East games is something that was very exciting for us as we rebrand the NBC Sports Network, and we're excited about what the future holds.

JOHN HEISLER: Any questions for John?

Q. What might that plan look like going forward? And how much coverage will Hockey East and Notre Dame get as well?

JOHN MILLER: I think the question is how much hockey, how much Notre Dame? The exciting thing is we're working with Tom Nevala and the Notre Dame team as we lay that out starting the year after next.

Our hope is to get a very robust schedule on our air of Notre Dame games, and, obviously, when the opportunity arises, Hockey East games as well.

JOHN HEISLER: Also with us is the head hockey coach of the University of Notre Dame, he's beginning his seventh season in that role. And he's already taken the Irish to the NCAA Championships on four occasions, including two appearances in the Frozen Four. Please welcome Jeff Jackson.

JEFF JACKSON: Thank you. Obviously, this is a huge day for our program. First and foremost, I'd like to thank Joe and Mike for being here today, and giving us the opportunity to play in one of the premier conferences in college hockey.

Without question, knowing the coaches in that league and the programs in that league, it's going to give us the opportunity to play some of the top teams in the country on a regular basis, to play for a conference and playoff championship, and hopefully it will create a long-term relationship as far as our alumni out east.

Also with the young men that we try to coach on a day-to-day basis, I think it's important that they have a great experience in the environment in which they play.

Obviously, we've arranged for that to happen here on campus, but going to places like Boston College, Boston University, New Hampshire, Vermont, you go down the list,

they're all tremendous institutions and also tremendous hockey programs.

So this is going to be a great time for us, and in the meantime, we have to recognize and respect the great environment that we had playing in the Centra Collegiate Hockey Association and all the great people that have come through that conference over the years.

It will be disappointing for me being a lifetime member of the CCHA to see it no longer exist in two years. That's where I was groomed as a coach, and that's where I followed hockey. So it's a disappointment, and yet we have work to do yet in the CCHA. And that's my task here in about an hour is to get our guys ready to play.

The other important thing is everybody asks why we waited, what was the problem? I mean, I give Jack Swarbrick and Tom Nevala a lot of credit for not being the ones to cause college hockey to be blown up. And our patience, I think, was valuable to the sport. We did not want to be the ones to initiate conferences breaking up, especially the CCHA.

Once the Big 10 was formed, there was obviously a lot of speculation about conferences forming to put national powers together or whatever. To me, it's more about the balance and what we're trying to do here.

I think it's about the balance of playing with like-minded institutions, Division I schools as much as possible, and the other part of it is to have the same values of programs that we have as far as the importance of balance in the student-athlete's life, whether it be academics or hockey and their social environment.

So all these things came into play, and Hockey East was obviously the best choice for us. The thing it's going to do for us is allow our program to become even more national than it has been in the past, with a national television deal with NBC Sports, with the ability in which to play more non-conference games with Hockey East's commitment to playing a smaller conference schedule. Something that they chose to do well before we came along.

It's certainly going to allow us to retain relationships and opportunities to play in the west and in the midwest against team that's we've developed long-term rivalries with.

My number one objective was to be able to have the ability to schedule more home games and make sure that we have the opportunity to bring not just big-time Hockey East programs into this

new building, but to also bring in some of the top programs from the west and the midwest. With the ability to potentially play 12 or 14 non-conference games, hopefully, we'll be able to make eight to ten of those at home. It certainly will create a much better environment for our fans, our students and our university.

The other important part of this in my opinion was the national exposure with our home games being on national television will certainly allow us to continue to recruit kids from across the country. Recruiting was a big part of this in my estimation, and I think that there are plenty of great players from the west that play in Hockey East. So it's not uncommon for kids because the sport is more national now.

So this is an exciting time for us, and we look forward to this new partnership. I'm looking forward to actually going to the coaches meetings this year because of my great respect for guys like Jack Parker, and Jerry York, Dick Umile. There are a lot of tremendous coaches in this league, and I have previous real strong relationships with most of them.

So looking forward to this opportunity, and we're extremely excited and honored to be part of the Hockey East Association. Thank you.

Q. Could you elaborate on what this television deal looks like, in terms of how frequently now we'll see Notre Dame on television and things of that nature?

JACK SWARBRICK: I can't. Those details will emerge in the coming weeks. We have the outlines of it in place, but a little more work to do, and we want to coordinate that announcement with NBC.

I can say, I think, without reservation, that the University of Notre Dame's hockey team will have a more robust television platform than any hockey team in the country?

Q. Did the conference shuffle in National League in football delay this announcement or affect it in any way?

JACK SWARBRICK: No, it didn't. Just wanted to make sure that anything I did in any day involved alignment in some way or another. But, no. The timetable was ours, and I think Jeff spoke very effectively to it. Did not want to be an initiator. Worried a lot about the consequences of other programs around the country.

College hockey can't afford to lose programs as an industry, as a broad group. So we were very conscious of trying to do what we could to make sure that we didn't disrupt anyone's program. And to the extent we could, we helped find homes for others.

But beyond that, we wanted it to be a deliberate process. We didn't quite understand the haste that some other people might have felt about this, and, fortunately, everyone we worked with gave us the time we needed to make our decision and make it in a thoughtful manner. At the end of that conclusion, we were very pleased with where we were?

Q. How difficult was it to (Inaudible)?

JACK SWARBRICK: I think it was easier than you might think. Part of it was because the choices narrowed themselves down pretty quickly. We started with the three that I mentioned that we focused on. We concluded relatively early in the process that the scheduling challenges of an independent model wasn't going to work.

Then it came down to two very good options and spent time talking to our colleagues and then with both of them. It moved at a deliberate pace, but one we were very comfortable with.

Q. You guys just mentioned it a little bit, but could you maybe talk about the timetable as far as when things fully started to develop with Hockey East? When you reached the ultimate decision to move?

JACK SWARBRICK: It's so evolutionary, it's hard to say there's one time we sat in a room and said -- you know, there were just a host of conversations that pointed us in one direction.

We tested that theory, Jeff, Tom and I, through several conversations we had. We took the last lap of this, the final run through the check list, testing our judgment in the last week to ten days.

Q. Coach, with the rosters make-up right now, lots of predominantly in terms of your starters, regulars, midwest players, and I know you touched on this earlier. But any concern at all with the move to Hockey East in terms of that versus your other options?

JACK SWARBRICK: I don't believe so. I think the important thing to recognize is that we're probably going to be going east five times which

means we'll probably be going west five times. I think it will create a more national schedule for us and potentially open up new recruiting opportunities out east.

There are a few Irish Catholics in the east, so hopefully we'll be competing for a few of those top players. I certainly believe we made the effort to speak to all of our recruits that are coming in over the next two or three years in the past few days, and I felt absolutely no reservation.

I think that the bigger thing is recruiting is generally based, just like real estate, on location. I think that our home game, having an 18 to 20-game home schedule, is as important as anything. But hopefully it's going to create even further opportunities for us in recruiting nationally.

Q. Hockey East dropped one of their normal in conference opponents, from three and dropped it under two for those extra non-conference games. How important was that in your decision?

JACK SWARBRICK: I know in speaking with a number of the coaches from Hockey East, I think they were kind of clamoring for a smaller schedule so they could play more non-conference games. With the Big 10 only scheduling 20 games, they're going to be looking for a lot of non-conference games.

So we're hoping that we'll be able to continue our relationship with rivals Michigan, Michigan State, potentially the University of Minnesota, potentially Penn State.

I mean, the potential for us to play a number of the Big 10 schools is going to be a big part of it. I think that was extremely important for our program.

We're going to have a great conference schedule and still play for a championship, a playoff championship. And I'd be thrilled to play at Boston Gardens at the end of the year. So there are all kinds of positives as far as the conference schedule goes. And the non-conference schedule is what, in my opinion, is really going to create a really exciting experience overall for our student-athletes and our fans.

Q. I wanted to ask you about how you initially looked toward Notre Dame, and when that conversation started?

MIKE LYNCH: I'd say we were looking at an opportunity to make the league better for a long

time. We had a number of conversations over the past couple of years (Inaudible) that's what happens generally in college athletics and coaches to (Inaudible).

I didn't think we were going to be quick to add just for the sake of adding, as I mentioned earlier in my brief remarks. We wanted to find the right partner.

Q. Does having an 11-team conference now speed up the process of trying to get an even numbered team?

MIKE LYNCH: I'd say we're just getting this part of it done, so we're not quite there yet.

Q. Not really having that conversation yet?

MIKE LYNCH: No, not quite yet. We're trying to let the paint dry, so to speak.

Q. Did Notre Dame's geography, being far outside the radius of the conference, was that a stumbling block for you at all or did that not factor?

MIKE LYNCH: I wouldn't call it a stumbling block, but it's a distinctly different move for our league. We're a very tight league. Everybody rides buses. There are not a lot of flights. There are no flights, actually, unless you want to go to Maine. But this was an opportunity for us to expand our footprint as well.

Jack and Jeff both mentioned the national structure of this league now and how it's impacted us to the opportunity for Notre Dame.

Q. You took it to coaches and administrators across, (Inaudible)?

MIKE LYNCH: They were very enthusiastic. I think all the coaches in our league recognize the program that Coach Jackson has built here and the history. Not only that, obviously, in the northeast, there is a great deal of support for Notre Dame and college hockey in our area. Even though we've got one of the premier leagues in the country, we're still working hard to get people to pay attention, and this is (Inaudible).

Q. Joe or Mike or even anyone from Notre Dame. Is the plan for their to be like two home games Friday and Saturday night kind of thing, and then the next year to go out to Notre Dame and sort of alternate? As far as the rest

of the league is concerned, does that mean one home and one away within the conference?

JOE BERTAGNA: You're getting a little ahead of us, but preliminary talks on schedules would be something along the lines that Jeff referenced. We haven't put anything in stone yet, but they'd probably be half the schedule they'd play at home, and half they'd play away to minimize their travel.

But things like tournament format and the question we had about growing the league, this is all the fun stuff that's ahead of us. All the talks to date have been geared towards what's happening today. But your idea on the schedule is probably close to what would happen.

JOHN HEISLER: Thank you very much. We appreciate everyone being here today.

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