

Osborne announces retirement

■ Assistant Head Coach Frank Solich will replace the coach, who said the stress of the position he holds prompted him to step down.

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

The final page of the most successful chapter in Nebraska football history was turned Wednesday.

Emotional and teary-eyed, Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne announced his retirement after 25 years at the helm of the Cornhusker program. Osborne, 60, addressed more than 200 media members, players, supporters and family members at a 3 p.m. news conference in South Stadium as well as a national ESPN and a CNN/SI audience.

As Osborne stepped aside, NU Athletic Director Bill Byrne — speaking via telephone where he was stranded at an airport — commended him before naming Assistant Head Coach Frank Solich as Osborne's successor.

"The culture that has been created at Nebraska, in a large part, has to do with what Tom Osborne has done," Byrne said. "He has done a remarkable job here. He is a great leader of young minds and that's one of the main reasons why I wanted to come to Nebraska. Tom will be missed by all of Nebraska, particularly by our staff, coaches and athletes."

One of six coaches ever to reach the 250-win plateau in Division I college football, Osborne has compiled a 254-49-3 record along with two national championships at Nebraska. His .833 winning percentage ranks second in the nation.

During the past five years, Osborne has helped the Huskers to a 59-3 record and this season's 12-0 squad is in the hunt for another national championship.

Osborne, who will remain Nebraska's head coach through the Orange Bowl on Jan. 2, said retirement was something he had been seriously considering recently. He said his health, family, faith and the future of the program all played roles in his decision to step down.

"The hours have been long," Osborne said, "but that's what I have wanted to do. If you're going to call the plays on Saturday ... there are no short cuts."

"What I've come to realize over the last couple — three months, is that I was not going to be able to sustain that pace for any length of time."

Osborne said his plan was made final before Tuesday's weekly press conference, but he said he didn't confirm the rumors because the coaches and the players had not been told.

Leaving the players, Osborne said, would be the hardest part. Osborne met with the players at 2 p.m. — one hour before he addressed the media.

Many players stood on tables and chairs in the back of the room as Osborne made the announcement.

Concentrating on his coaching, Osborne said he missed out on spending time with his family. But junior fullback Joel Makovicka noted Osborne had focused his time on another family.

"He got a chance to watch 150 guys on this team grow up and the thousands that came before us," Makovicka said. "He's been like a father figure to all of us."

Senior tight end Vershan Jackson agreed.

"I love Coach Osborne just like I love my father and my mother," Jackson said.

Though it will be tough to leave the players behind, Osborne said he thought it was in



IN TYPICAL TOM OSBORNE fashion, the coach held back emotion during the Wednesday news conference.

MATT MILLER/DN

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Nebraska's best interest for him to step down at this time to insure the program would be in good hands.

An assistant under Osborne since 1979, Solich said he had been approached by Osborne "some time ago" concerning taking over the program.

It still came as a surprise, but Solich said he had known of Osborne's decision and had spoke with Byrne before leaving on a recruiting trip Sunday.

Solich said he did not plan on making any coaching changes and hoped Osborne would stick around as long as possible.

"I will not equal what he's done in 25 years, but I'll do the best that I can each and every game," Solich said. "I just hope that the effort I put forth will be enough to continue the success this program has had."

The assistant coaches, Osborne said, supported the decision to name Solich as the suc-

Please see OSBORNE on 7

Moeser, Byrne, regents approve Solich's position

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

Stability, continuity and experience at Nebraska were the three components officials were looking for in Coach Tom Osborne's replacement.

Wednesday, that job was placed on the shoulders of Frank Solich.

Solich, who played for Nebraska under Coach Bob Devaney and has coached the past 19 years under Osborne, said he doesn't have any major changes planned.

"I don't know that you replace Tom Osborne as follow him," Solich said.

Solich will follow the man who has compiled a 254-49-3 record as head coach for the past 25 years. Solich has been with Osborne for the past 19 of them, working with players such as Mike Rozier, Jarvis Redwine, Tom Rathman, Roger Craig and Lawrence Phillips.

Solich moves from the assistant head coach and running backs coach spot to replace the legendary Osborne after the Orange Bowl against Tennessee.

Chancellor James Moeser and Athletic Director Bill Byrne had approved Solich for the job. At 3:25 p.m., Byrne announced Solich as the new head coach by telephone from Chicago.

"I have named, with approval from the chancellor and the regents, Frank Solich as the new head coach," Byrne said.

Several NU regents said, however, they have yet to approve Solich for the position; but they also said they would do so if asked.

As Solich took the podium from the 60-year-old Osborne, it seemed the finality of Osborne's decision finally set in. Solich graciously thanked the regents and chancellor for the opportunity to coach at Nebraska.

Osborne said he spoke with all of Nebraska's assistant coaches Tuesday night, and all of them expressed confidence that Solich is the best man to replace Osborne.

"I did not have any qualms about Frank taking over," Osborne said. "Frank will do a very good job. ... That's why I wanted to do it now."

Solich, who has had offers from other

Please see SOLICH on 7

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Osborne
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