Randy Walker Passes Away

EVANSTON, Ill. -- Northwestern University Head Football Coach Randy Walker died suddenly Thursday night (June 29) of an apparent heart attack. He was 52 years old.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to his wife, Tammy, and his two children, Abbey and Jamie," said NU Director of Athletics Mark Murphy. "This is a devastating loss, not only for our athletic program, but for the entire Northwestern community. Randy truly embraced Northwestern and its mission, and cared deeply for his student-athletes, both on and off the field."

Walker, who led the Wildcats to a share of the 2000 Big Ten title and a trip to the Alamo Bowl, directed Northwestern to a 14-10 combined Big Ten record the past three years. NU also played in the 2003 Motor City Bowl and the 2005 Sun Bowl, making him the first coach in school history to guide NU to three bowl games.

Walker, who joined the Wildcats in 1999 after a successful nine-year tenure at Miami (Ohio) University, his alma mater, guided Northwestern to a seven-year record of 37-46 (second most wins in NU history) and was ranked 27th on the NCAA's all-time wins list (96-81-5) for active Division I-A football coaches who have at least five years of I-A coaching experience.

Walker was named the Big Ten's 2000 Dave McClain Coach of the Year. In the 2006 Sporting News preseason football magazine, Walker was cited as the Big Ten's best coach. Another magazine, Athlon Sports, cited him as the league's "most underrated coach."

A native of Troy, Ohio, Walker departed Miami as the RedHawks' winningest coach with a 59-35-5 record. Ironically, Northwestern opens its 2006 season with its first-ever trip to Oxford, Ohio, to play Miami in a nationally televised game (ESPNU) on Aug. 31. He graduated from Miami in 1976.

In April of this year, Walker was granted a contract extension through 2011.

Walker was the first Northwestern coach to direct three straight teams to four or more Big Ten wins following this past year's 5-3 mark. He also was the first coach in over a century to record four six-or-more win seasons since C.M. Hollister (1899-02) accomplished the feat.

In October of 2004, Walker was hospitalized for two days with myocarditis, defined as an inflammation of the heart muscle. Myocarditis is most commonly caused by a virus, which doctors believe triggers the initial inflammation.

For a complete biography on Walker, refer to Randy Walker bio.

"The Sun Bowl Association is deeply saddened by the loss of Randy Walker. He truly was a great football coach and an even greater individual. Randy was a person who treated everyone with the same kind of respect, no matter who you were. We are better for having known him and he will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Tamara and his children Abbey and Jamie, as well as the entire Northwestern community."

— Bernie Olivas, Executive Director, Sun Bowl Association