



PRESS RELEASE -- 8/18/2023

Legendary Abington High School football coach Jim Kelliher recently announced that this upcoming football season would be his 50th and final season as the leader of the Green Wave football program. Coach Kelliher is a graduate of Abington High School and served as an assistant coach under Coach Walter Paster before taking over as head coach in the fall of 1974.

We look forward to celebrating the lasting impact Coach Kelliher has had on the community of Abington, starting with a brief ceremony to honor Jim Kelliher just prior to Abington's 2023 home opener on September 8th at Memorial Field. Jim Kelliher is the first and only coach in the history of Massachusetts football who has coached the same high school football team for 50 or more years, and his imprint on the lives of five decades of players and families will certainly extend well beyond this season. "Coach Kel", as he is known by residents and members of "Green Wave Nation", has been an icon on the sidelines of South Shore League football since he assumed Abington's head coaching role in 1974, yet it is his lifelong bonds and relationships with former players and generations of Abington families which are most celebrated by his admirers.

"He's one of a kind, and for years has had an uncanny ability to bring out the best in all of his players. He literally has been a father figure to all of us for decades", attested former fullback Roger Woods (AHS '81). "Coach Kel is a man we should all aspire to be like; he made a huge impression on my life as an athlete and later as an adult, and I cannot thank him enough", said former QB Zach Littman (AHS '11). Matt MacLean (AHS '07) remarked "Coach had such an incredible influence on my life and he's one of the main reasons I got into teaching and coaching. A true gentleman and certainly one of a kind."

School Superintendent Peter Schafer noted that "remarkably, the players on the first Abington Football team Jim Kelliher coached are now in their mid to late 60s. More important than any number of wins or championships over the years – and

there have been many wins and championships -- Jim has helped shape and mold a better and brighter future for thousands of individuals on and off the playing field. That's like winning the Superbowl 50 times in 50 years."

Kelliher has coached over 500 football games for the Green Wave, winning a Superbowl or State Championship in 2002, 2005, 2012, 2014 and 2019. There are too many South Shore League championships to list, but "Coach Kel" treasures all of them. "The kids have been fantastic to work with, and I have always admired their pride, hard work and teamwork. Hopefully what they have learned from me and my fellow coaches will pay dividends as these athletes mature into fine young adults... I say it all the time, but I am extremely fortunate to not only coach as long as I have, but to do it all in the same place. I appreciate the administration for giving me that opportunity and always supporting me, my coaching staff and our teams. Coaching has been a big part of my life, and I'm going to really miss it, but I'll still be there rooting for the Green Wave! It's time for someone else to have the honor of leading the team – and I will be their biggest fan."

AHS Athletic Director Peter Serino said that "Many will remember Coach Kelliher for his larger-than-life stature, his at times intimidating presence on the sideline and his success on the field. What I admire most about him is his grace and humility. People don't see it but Kel can be found in the bleachers at games of every AHS sport, in the back at the NHS inductions, awards ceremonies, weddings – and always there for the difficult times for his players. As large as his presence is on the sidelines of Memorial Field on a Friday night – it is even larger in our Abington community."

Ed Reilly (AHS '90) played quarterback for Jim Kelliher in the late 80's, and since 2001 he has coached alongside him for the Green Wave. "The success of our football program starts at the top, and I've loved every minute of coaching with Coach Kel. He's been a second father to me and about 2,000 other players, and I cannot express how much we all cherish and admire him."

Abington High School Principal Jonathan Bourn shared, "Throughout Massachusetts, Abington is synonymous with Coach Kelliher. A casual conversation with an employee at the Patriots Hall of Fame or a barber in Hanson reveals how many people outside of Abington know 'Coach Kel'. Those from Abington, especially his current and former players, remember his coaching and support fondly. I will remember his smile, crushing handshakes, and dedication to his athletes as hallmarks of his amazing career."

The community of Abington will celebrate the start of Jim Kelliher's 50th and final season 30 minutes prior to the start of the first game of the season, scheduled for 7pm on Friday, September 8th at Abington's Memorial Field. Families, alumni and fans of "Coach Kel" are encouraged to attend to show their support for the "Coach with the Green Hair" and for the 2023 Green Wave team.

More details on the celebration will be announced in the coming weeks.

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