

# Introducing Michigan State's 24th head football coach

EAST LANSING, Mich. - Mark Dantonio, who has coached Cincinnati for the past three seasons and was a former assistant coach at Michigan State for six years, has been named Michigan State University's 24th head football coach. Dantonio was formally introduced at a noon press conference on Nov. 27 in the Clara Bell Smith Student-Athlete Academic Center auditorium.

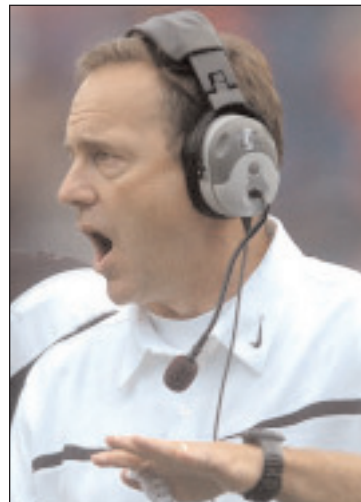
The 50-year old Dantonio established himself as one of the nation's up-and-coming coaches during his three-year tenure at Cincinnati. This

season, Dantonio led the Bearcats to a 7-5 overall record and a 4-3 BIG EAST mark, making Cincinnati bowl eligible for the second time in three years. Dantonio accomplished the feat against the second-toughest schedule in the country, as UC's opponents compiled a 69-42 record. His Bearcats upset then-No. 7 Rutgers, 30-11, on Nov. 18, handing the Scarlet Knights their first loss of the season and marking the highest-ranked opponent ever defeated by UC.

Highly respected as one of the top defensive coaches in

the country, Dantonio's Bearcats rank 21st nationally in tackles for loss, 23rd in pass efficiency defense, 27th in rushing defense and 36th in total defense in the latest NCAA statistics.

Dantonio compiled an 18-17 overall record in his three years at Cincinnati and led the program in its transition to the BIG EAST Conference. He became the first head coach in 23 years to direct a team to a winning season in his first year at UC. The Bearcats' went 7-5 in 2004, including a 5-3 mark in Conference USA to finish



**Mark Dantonio**

second in the league standings, and defeated Marshall in the Fort Worth Bowl.

In his first two seasons at Cincinnati, 15 of Dantonio's players earned all-conference honors and 25 received academic all-conference recognition.

Prior to his appointment at Cincinnati, Dantonio served as the defensive coordinator at Ohio State for three seasons, where his defensive unit became known as one of the stingiest in the country. During the Buckeyes' 2002 National Championship season, OSU ranked second nationally in scoring defense and third in rushing defense, and the following year, his unit ranked No. 1 in the country in rushing defense and ninth in total defense, sparking the Buckeyes to an 11-2 mark and a No. 4 national ranking.

Dantonio is familiar with East Lansing, as he spent six seasons (1995-2000) as Michigan State's secondary coach, including associate head coach duties in 2000. He contributed to Michigan State's successful 1999 season, during which the Spartans

went 10-2, won the Florida Citrus Bowl, led the Big Ten in total defense and ranked No. 7 in the final polls.

A Zanesville, Ohio, native with Midwest ties, Dantonio has 24 years of collegiate coaching experience, and has coached in 10 bowl games. He has worked for some of the top coaches in the game, including Nick Saban, Jim Tressel and Earle Bruce.

Here's a closer look at Dantonio's tenure at Cincinnati:

The 2006 Cincinnati Bearcats went 7-5 overall and 4-3 in the BIG EAST Conference against the nation's second-toughest schedule. Four of UC's five losses came to teams ranked in the current top 15 (No. 1 Ohio State, No. 6 Louisville, No. 14 Virginia Tech, No. 15 West Virginia). The Bearcats produced arguably the greatest victory in school history with a 30-11 victory

over then-No. 7 Rutgers on Nov. 18, marking the highest-ranked opponent ever defeated by UC.

Defense was the strong suit for the Bearcats this season, as Cincinnati ranked among the national leaders in tackles for loss (No. 21 at 6.8 per game), pass efficiency defense (No. 23 at 109.30 rating), rushing defense (No. 27 at 107.5 ypg) and total defense (No. 36 at 304.3 ypg.). UC held seven of its 12 opponents to less than 100 yards rushing, highlighted by performances of 36 yards each in back-to-back games vs. Miami (Ohio) and Akron. In the win over Rutgers, Cincinnati held the nation's No. 15 rushing offense to a season-low 50 yards on the ground, and held the nation's No. 3 rusher, Ray Rice, to a season-low 54 yards. Middle linebacker Kevin McCullough leads the team in tackles.

## ERNIE SEZ

By Ernie Boone

Flanked by Board Chairman, David Porteous, board Vice-Chairman, Joel Ferguson and members of the university's four-man internal assessment group, MSU president, Lou Anna Simon made it clear that Mark Dantonio is the unanimous choice to head the Spartan football program.

"This is our coach," she said, "Our person, a part of Team MSU."

And one by one, Porteous, Ferguson, Mason and all the others came to the microphone to say their obligatory amens.

This time they were determined to get it right, and it looks like they've done it.

It's pretty clear that the former Ohio State defensive coordinator who went 18-17 in three years as head coach at the University of Cincinnati is a sound choice.

He's a good fit having

spent six years at MSU as an assistant under Nick Saban and Bobby Williams, served as defensive coordinator at Ohio State, and spent three years as a head coach at Cincinnati.

I'd call him the right man for the right job at the right time.

The outstanding question? Is this the right place?

It certainly can be, but it will depend upon the people here in East Lansing. The Spartan fan base and supporters will determine that.

In all likelihood, the Spartans will win next season. They should get the usual new coach bounce, and they have a pretty good nucleus returning. They could qualify and go to a bowl. But how Spartan fans react in the tough times. And there will be tough times.

Despite best efforts, this could be a lost recruiting

class. It could take a three or four years to make the change over from athletes recruited for the Smith system to those recruited for the Dantonio look.

The result could be a record that hovers around .500 and maybe a losing season or two.

Should that happen and the boo birds come out and "Fire Dantonio," websites go up, this is the wrong place.

Spartan fans, supporters, and administrators must understand that to return to the days of consistent glory and equal footing competition with Michigan, Notre Dame and Ohio State, will take a firm 10-year commitment.

When problems arise, the solution can no longer be change the head coach.

If Team MSU can make that kind of commitment, then this time the Spartans will have found the right man for the right job at the right time in the right place.



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