

BENTON TWP.

Building the right way

ND football coach Brian Kelly talks leadership to Econ Club

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — In four stops over 24 years of coaching college football, Notre Dame head coach Brian Kelly has built his programs on the same pillars.

The fifth-year coach at Notre Dame spoke Wednesday night to the The Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan at Lake Michigan College's Grand Upton Hall about the three stages of building a program.

Kelly, 52, said stability is the first step and followed by raising expectations, which will lead to a championship-caliber program.

"There are difficulties

that are going to arise along the way, there will be negativity," Kelly said. "You start by setting a standard to which you base everything off of. That is .500, if you want to put it in football terms. That is the basic step and you go from there."

Kelly cited the first time he stepped in the Notre Dame locker room when he was hired 2010 and saw the condition it was in.

"There were towels on the floor, guys had just gotten haircuts and there was hair all over the bathroom," Kelly said. "It was bad."

But, through Kelly's steps, the Irish started their rise to an eventual national

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Don Campbell / HP staff

Brian Kelly, head football coach at the University of Notre Dame, speaks during a meeting of The Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan on Wednesday at Lake Michigan College. The Massachusetts native previously coached at Grand Valley State University and Central Michigan University.

KELLY

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championship appearance in 2012 by tightening up the day-to-day aspects of the program, like shaping up the locker room.

“We have a chart now that lays out how the lockers are suppose to look and now they all look right or they know what will come.

“You won’t see a change overnight, but steadily you will start to see a rise in the bottom line. It might be wins, it might be rising profits but it will start to make a difference if people are held to a high standard and stability is formed.”

The Notre Dame coach parlayed his experience with staff inside his football program into advice on how business owners can create a workplace environment that can succeed and sustain.

Specifically, two sets of guidelines implemented under Kelly, the covenants and the gold standards.

“They are things that we expect our players and coaches to do. It started with leadership and works its way down to employees, or in our case, our players. These things are non-negotiable.

“Respectfulness, being trustworthy and accountability are all things that transcend the world of football. They are everyday things to live by.”

Kelly was met with applause on several occasions when he mentioned his coaching days at Michigan schools Grand Valley State University and Central Michigan University. Kelly spent 12 seasons at Grand Valley where he won two Division II national championships and in his three seasons at Central, led the Chippewas to a Mid-Ameri-

can Conference title.

“Every job, every position has it’s challenges, but if you present a vision to the people around you and give people something to strive for, once you have that and add stability to it you will see the rise in expectations,” he said.

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