

The mighty Sampson

brings new recruiting muscle to IU

An exclusive Raleigh Limited interview with new Indiana University basketball head coach, Kelvin Sampson

On March 29, Indiana University announced plans to replace departing head coach Mike Davis, who resigned at the end of the 2005-2006 season, with Kelvin Sampson, who was head coach at Oklahoma University. Sampson spent 12 years with the Sooners, was twice national coach of the year and led Oklahoma to 11 NCAA Tournament appearances (three Sweet 16, two Elite Eight and one Final Four finish). Sampson, who also coached previously at Washington State and Montana Tech, is the 26th head basketball coach in Indiana University history.

Raleigh Limited had an opportunity to interview Coach Sampson on August 25, just days before practice began. Here's what we learned:

What's your one-word response to the following names:

- (a) Mike Davis: Good man
- (b) Bob Knight: Influenced generations of coaches
- (c) Eric Gordon (North Central recruit): No comment

Who in your opinion is the greatest basketball player of all time, outside Michael Jordan?

Coach: Oscar Robertson

What coach or coaches have influenced you the most?

Coach: My father, John W. "Ned" Sampson [at Pembroke High School]. He was a basketball coach in North Carolina for 30-plus years; he was inducted into the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's Hall of Fame in 2004. Also Jad Heathcote at Michigan State; I was his assistant for a couple of years.



You were named coach of the year in 1995—your first year at Oklahoma—by the Associated Press, United States Basketball Writers Association and Basketball Weekly, for a second-best overall record posted by a first-year coach in Big Eight history. Any plans to better that record at Indiana? In other words, compared to your start at Oklahoma, how do you plan to prove yourself at IU?

Coach: It's hard to say. My goal is to get the kids to play to the best of their ability level and then see what happens.

What kind of team do you plan to put on the floor this fall?

Coach: You start with a new program by establishing some kind of identity. I want the team to play hard and play together. I'll establish a work ethic—that's where we start.

What should we look for in this year's team? Any standout players we should be watching for?

Coach: D. J. White has a chance to be one of the best players in the conference; Earl Calloway and Roderick Wilmont—you always think of your seniors. Those guys will be a part of our success this year.

Have you seen any surprises in summer league play or with any of the new recruits?

Coach: Of course, I'm not allowed to watch them yet, so I haven't seen them play all summer. It's against the rules. I'll start working with them on August 28.

Who do you think is IU's biggest opponent in this year's lineup? Who will give us the best game this season?

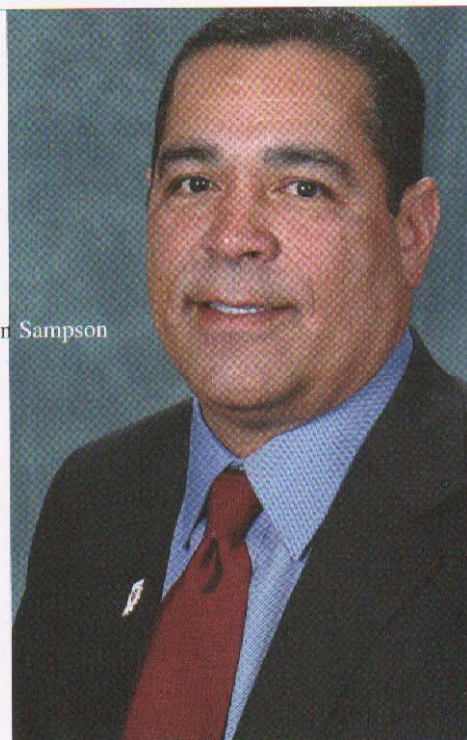
Coach: Whoever our first game is.

Any plans to change your signature blue shirt and red tie combo? Perhaps a new trademark look?

Coach: No, the blue shirt has been pretty good to me; I think I'll stick with it.

Who made your favorite red tie?

Coach: I got it in Hong Kong at the end of a basketball clinic. I wore that red tie for a 12-game winning streak, and being a superstitious person, I only took it off when we lost our first game. When I feel like we need a really big win, I always go back to it.



What kind of knot do you prefer?

Coach: I don't know. What kinds are there? I learned to tie a tie in graduate school at Michigan State. One of the players taught me. I always wore a clip-on until then.

Button down or not?

Coach: I've gone with the sweater shirt or button-down top. I tend to prefer a button-down shirt.

During games, what's your favorite look? Sport jacket and slacks, suit?

Coach: I always take my coat off once the game starts. I coach in my shirt and tie and slacks, but sometimes I like to mix it up. I'm superstitious, so I wear the same sort of thing—mostly a sport jacket and slacks as opposed to a suit.

What do you like to do when you're not coaching basketball?

Coach: Late at night, I love to read mystery novels. I like to play golf in the off-season. I work out on my treadmill and watch basketball games or game tapes. And I spend time with my family. Nothing too unusual.

How do you plan to spend your time between now and the Nov. 13 NIT Season Tip-off at Consecro Fieldhouse?

Coach: Getting my team ready. We start practice officially on October 13—I want to get our team ready, get them to be the best team we can be.

With everything else going on we certainly would understand if fashion doesn't play a big part of your day-to-day life.

Coach: No it doesn't. We have a freshman point guard named Armon [Bassett], and that's as close to Armani as I get.