



Montclair Athletics: Interim AD Miello speaks on search for coaches, full-time AD



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by Andrew Garda

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Things have finally calmed down for Montclair High School's interim Athletic Director Mike Miello, which is to say the to-do list has slowed down from a deluge to a drizzle.

"We got off to somewhat of a hectic start in the transition, timewise," Miello said Monday in an interview in his office. "So I had to play catch-up on seven or eight positions that had to be filled immediately which concerned some fall positions, as well as winter. So I prioritized them according to season and we've gotten that done."

Miello has been allowed to be very involved in the hiring of coaches within the department as well as the search for a new, permanent athletic director.

"I am very happy that our administration allowed me the opportunity, as I've always had in the past, to interview candidates, make recommendations to them, which they then passed on to the Board of Ed for approval."

Not wanting a coach to come in last minute, Miello was happy to be able to take care of not just fall sports but winter sports as well. He's also finalized interviews for a new boys lacrosse coach, and put forward two names to Principal James Earle [for interviews] this week.

Miello feels that the candidate pool was very good and the two finalists very strong.

For a marquee sport like lacrosse, making sure the right coach ends up in place as the program rebuilds is important, but Miello approached it the same way he does all the positions he has filled.

When it comes to hiring candidates for any coaching position, Miello believes it's critical that anyone coming in has a long-term view. He wanted candidates to convince him that they were looking to stay for the long haul.

"Building a program, you have to come in every day like you are going to be here 30 or 40 years," Miello said. That's how he has always approached coaching and athletic director jobs, and he feels that is the only way to do it. You may have success short term if you are only focused on the season at hand. but eventually the program suffers from that myopia.

Miello looks for the same attributes in an athletic director as well, along with experience and a strong personality. When it comes to sports, the Montclair community is very involved. That is a good thing, but it can sometimes cause problems for an AD as well, so Miello said that whoever takes the position has to find a way to welcome help but also be able to say, "I've been hired to do a job, now let me do it."

Miello also believes an athletic director must have a strong sense of equity in both men's and women's sports as well as a willingness to mentor his coaches as they try to manage their way through a landscape which, in addition to helping their kids be accountable and make good decisions on the field, is filled with land mines like social media.

Things have changed for coaches, Meillo points out, and both coaching staffs and an athletic department have to be able to adjust to those changes.

Clearly, it's about more than good administrative skills.

Miello and Earle have interviewed multiple candidates for the AD position, and two weeks ago, passed on two names to interim superintendent Barbara Pinsak's office. Both candidates have been interviewed by Pinsak as well as an assistant superintendent and a human resources staffer.

He hopes a decision will be made shortly.

When asked for comment, Pinsak replied via email that there was no update on a timeline for filling either position as of Tuesday evening.

No matter what the timeline ends up being, Miello is dug in for the duration.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'll be around here up until Feb. 1, at the latest. But I'm hoping we can get someone in place long before that so they're involved early in the winter transition and not coming into the middle of it."

That's not to say Miello hasn't enjoyed his time at Montclair High School.

"I've really enjoyed my stay here so far. You can't work with a better principal in terms of getting what sports is about, and he's been so supportive. Our superintendent has been great."

With that group to build on, Miello says the sky is the limit for Montclair High School's sports department.

"There's a really good nucleus here. Forget about returning to the glory days — let's get it even better."