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**Capitol View**

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**New Coach, New Governor, New U.S. Senator**

Unless you’ve been out of the country or living off the grid in a cave, you probably know by now that the University of Nebraska Lincoln football team has a new head coach, Matt Rhule, who is making more money than is humanly possible to spend.

If you’ve been paying attention, you’ve also likely heard that it’s going to take several years to rebuild a once mighty culture that saw the Huskers competing for conference and national championships. In recent years, it’s been a chore to teach the football team how to tackle and how to participate in rigorous practices.

Let’s give credit right now to former interim head coach Mickey Joseph, a Husker quarterback from the Tom Osborne era, who did more to right the ship in the past 11 weeks than a number of his predecessors did in years.

As for the “years to rebuild,” let’s remember that Bob Devaney came to Lincoln in 1962 from the University of Wyoming and turned the program around in one year. He inherited a 3-6-1 record under former coach Bill – three plays up the middle and punt – Jennings and gave the Husker faithful a 9-2 record. In later years, Devaney became athletic director and passed the baton to Osborne.

While Rhule appears to have the chops to change things, a number of fans were pulling for Joseph who is now on administrative leave.

I like what Lincoln Journal Star sports columnist Amy Just wrote. Joseph “has been the glue that held this rickety ship together.”

Meanwhile over at the State Capitol, pig farmer Governor-elect Jim Pillen has been announcing his new “Team Pillen.” Yes, he’s a former Husker football player and has mostly been keeping loyalists from the Pete Ricketts administration in place. That makes sense for a political novice who has a lot to learn in a short amount of time if he wants to effectively lead the state.

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I’m sure he’ll prune the ranks and replace in subsequent years if he sees change as necessary. So far: Tony Goins stays on as director of Economic Development where he has been since 2019; John Albin stays on as state Labor Commissioner, a post he’s held since 2014; Eric Dunning stays on as head of the state Department of Insurance, a post he’s held since 2021; Lee Will remains as state budget director, a post he’s held for two years; John Hilgert stays as director of Veterans’ Affairs where he has served since 2001 after a stint as a state senator; Jim Macy will remain as Director of Environment and Energy and Jason Jackson stays on as Director of the Department of Administrative Services.

One exciting new hire has been the appointment of Sandhills rancher Sherry Vinton of Whitman as the Director of Agriculture, the first woman to fill that post. She and her husband run a cow-calf operation and she currently serves as first Vice President of the Nebraska Farm Bureau.

With current Nebraska U.S. Senator Ben Sasse set to step down in January for a private sector job as President of the University of Florida, many expect Pillen to appoint term-limited Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts to the post.

He’ll be the fifth Nebraska governor to move to the Senate since 1970. Three Democrats -- Jim Exon, Bob Kerrey and Ben Nelson – and Republican Mike Johanns have all served post gubernatorial. Exon served three terms; Kerrey and Nelson two; Johanns one. All left the Senate when they chose.

It’s December, but it looks like this year that awkward time between the last Husker Football game and the first day of the New Legislature will be a bit more exciting.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years*.