

# Sports

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Wagner's new coach is 'Just a kid from Staten Island'

Staten Island Advance

There was the expected optimism mixed with the warmth of a homecoming Monday as Tom Masella was introduced as Wagner College's new head football coach.

Masella, 60, a Tottenville HS and Wagner College alumnus, played at Wagner in the 1980s, and coached at the school twice over a career that has hit more than a few places on the map.

"You don't know how excited I am to come home and get this going," Masella told a room of Wagner staff and supporters Monday morning at Spiro Sports Center. "Coming back home for me, it couldn't be better. I used to carry a T-shirt (that said) 'Just a kid from Staten Island.' I still have that shirt. Wagner is a big part of that."

Wagner athletic director Walt Hameline decided on a coaching change in the wake of a 1-10 campaign, the Seahawks' fourth losing season in five years under Jason Houghtaling. He moved quickly to hire Masella, who was the captain of Hameline's first Wagner

team in 1980 and the quarterbacks coach in 2012 when Wagner won the Northeast Conference title and a first-round NCAA playoff game.

"This guy that we're hiring, Masella, I think I can make this statement: this is probably a person that I know better than anyone that we've ever hired here," Hameline said. "I coached him. He was captain of our football team. Teams that won. When he came, the program was down, they started to get it turned around."

Hameline is betting Masella can affect the same kind of turnaround from the head coach's chair. Masella was a head coach at Boston University in the late 1990s just before that school disbanded its program. He won the NEC title twice as a head coach at Central Connecticut (2004 and 2005) and guided Fordham to the Patriot League title in 2007. This season, he was defensive coordinator at NEC opponent Bryant.

"The message I am sending is he knows what it takes to win," Hameline said. "He's very competitive. He will direct our staff and program in a professional way. At the end, we'll win football games. We're excited about where we are. I know things did move very quickly, but in the end we've got the guy to lead this football program."

Masella hopes to hit the ground running.

"Now the hard work begins," Masella said. "We started to come up with a plan for recruiting, and that's going to take us wherever we have to (go) to find players that will help us, (players who are) the right fit as a student and football player. We want to win now, but we want to win the right way."

There's no doubt about how much it would mean to Masella to bring his school back to football success.

"I met a lot of people on campus the last couple of days," Masella said. "Wagner hasn't changed in a lot of ways. It's still a people's college. That's what we're going to sell. We're going to sell New York City, Wagner College and the people on this campus, and then getting back to the top in college football in the 1-AA ranks."



Wagner Athletic Director Walt Hameline, left, Tom Masella, center, and Wagner College president Dr. Joel Martin during Masella's introduction as football coach. *Courtesy*