

MSU HALL-OF-FAMER

# BOBBY DALY

PUTS IT ALL ON THE D-LINE



***“Being Able To Add Value To Young Men’s Lives Just Like Others Did For Me Is Something I’m Proud Of.”***

BY CYNTHIA LOGAN

**B**obcat linebackers' coach Bobby Daly was clearly under the gun last January during the FCS championship. He admits his guys weren't at their best in Frisco, when MSU gave up 380 total rushing yards against the North Dakota State Bison. "We hoped to play better, to put up a better performance out there," he says. We had a number of opportunities to stop them on third down; they had a good game plan against us, and there were a lot of explosive plays, which is uncharacteristic of our defense. When we needed to play our best, we weren't at our best." Starting his fourth year with MSU as Assistant Head Coach (his third season in the position due to Covid), Daly faces a significant challenge with the loss of some key starters. "With a new season, I take the approach that we have a new team," he says. "With that being said, there is no replacing guys like Amandre (Williams) and Troy (Andersen)." The 'Cats also lost Chase Benson and Daniel Hardy (now with the Los Angeles Rams). "There are younger guys in the program that need to continue to develop and eventually step up and be 'The Guy,' says Daly. "I think guys like Brody Grebe, Nolan Askelson and Danny Uluilakepa are ready to step up and be contributors for our team. The biggest challenge every year in spring ball is about developing your two-deep. Callahan (O'Reilly) was a starter for us last year; he didn't play spring ball because he underwent surgery, but he should be able to play in the fall, so we're looking for him to get healthy, so he can be his best for his senior year. Having him back, and seeing the development of guys like Uluilakepa, Askelson, and Alex Johnson, I feel good about where our two-deep is at linebacker." A 'product' of Capital High in



Helena, Daly was a defensive end for the Bruins, and a two-time first team all-stater. A member of the Bruins' undefeated 2002 State championship, he established the school's career record of 25 sacks, (later broken by brother Brad with 26). He then earned a scholarship to Montana State, teaming up with former local gridders Clay and Brian Bignell, Dustin O'Connell, Shawn Sampson and Brian Beniger of Capital High. "The passion that Bobby has for football is unmatched," says former Bruin teammate Luke DenHerder. "Even back in the high school days, his drive and passion for every practice in every game pushed us as a team." Daly speaks with the slightest hint of a drawl; he smiles as he mentions that his wife, Jasmine, a physical therapist who ran track (100- and 200-meter dashes) at Ole Miss, is from Dallas; "I guess the accent is rubbing off a little." He teasingly complains, "I hate to admit it, but she was faster than I ever was." Even in jest, Daly hardly needs to compare himself to anyone. One of the greatest linebackers in Bobcat

history, logging 382 career tackles, the fourth in program history, he was in 2019 elected to the MSU Hall of Fame. Former coach Rob Ash considered Daly one of the most productive football players he'd ever coached, saying, "Bobby Daly is truly an All-American, because he plays the game full speed on every play in every game, and he makes plays all over the field." Kane Ioane, Montana State's linebackers' coach during Daly's career, also has high praise, saying; "Bobby was the perfect combination of instincts, toughness, and a desire to be great."

Bring it up to him, and Daly will take a humble attitude: "I was lucky to play early and get on the leader board," he says. "I was a starter during my sophomore and junior years, and senior year I played at middle linebacker, which should be the most productive position, in my opinion." As a player, Daly says he was 'very cerebral.' Now, as a coach, he looks for players who enjoy competing in a physical but intelligent manner. "Football



*“Everyone, coaches and players, are working toward a common goal and you put it all on the line on Saturdays in the fall. You either win or lose, there’s no grey area.”*

is made up of individual one-on-one match-ups. Size, speed, and strength help win these individual match-ups, but if you’re not willing to embrace the physicality necessary to play football, it doesn’t matter how big and fast you are,” he declares. His favorite game as a player was against the University of Colorado in 2005, when the ‘Cats beat the Buffaloes on their home field in front of a packed stadium. “My favorite game as a coach would have to be the semi-final game last season, when we beat South Dakota State to earn a trip to the National Championship in front of a sell-out crowd here in Bobcat Stadium.”

Just prior to taking the position at MSU, Daly spent six years at the University of Idaho, where he was the linebackers’ coach under Vandals’ head coach Paul Petrino, who also attended Capital High. “I will forever be grateful for my time spent at the University of Idaho,” says Daly. “Coach Petrino is someone I had admired for a long time before getting to Idaho. My dad coached him at Capital High and spoke very highly of him as a player and a coach. He provided me with an opportunity that no one else would at the time. Coaching at the Division 1 level is a very tough business to get into, and he not only took a chance on me as a Graduate Assistant, but also gave me my first full-time job in college football. He is very smart and passionate about the game and really molded me as a young coach. I get to come to work every day and do something I love—and that would not be possible without Coach Petrino.” Daly is most excited about the team aspect of football. “Everyone, coaches and players, are working toward a common goal and you put it all on the line on Saturdays in the fall. You either win or lose,



there's no grey area." Besides his knowledge and experience, Daly brings a dynamic energy to his job, and feels he can relate to his players because he's been in their shoes, "not only as a linebacker, but a linebacker at this university." There's a lot of respect for the former Bobcat team captain who led the Big Sky in the 2006 FCS quarterfinals, (and who played professionally for the Billings Outlaws in the Indoor Football League from 2009-11), so Daly's black and white discipline is generally well received.

"I believe honesty is the best policy. There are consequences to all actions, positive and negative. Being up front about those consequences has been a successful tool for me. Making decisions about playing time can be unpopular for the players who aren't getting to play. I back my

decisions up with video evidence, so it's very clear to everyone why someone is playing over another." Fully recovered from his game-ending injury in Frisco, Tommy Mellott is listed as starting QB in the depth chart released this past spring, while Wyoming transfer Sean Chambers will serve as backup. Not surprisingly, Isaiah Ifanse is listed as the first-string running back. The All-American senior also underwent surgery in the offseason but, unlike Mellott, Ifanse missed all of spring camp. As far as the linebackers' workout, Daly is looking for athleticism, and is comfortable leaving it up to strength/conditioning coach (Sean) Herrin; "Whatever they're doing to get stronger, just make sure it translates out on the field. I don't care how much you can bench or squat—if you can't move, it doesn't do me any

good," he says, adding that "our training room does an awesome job keeping these guys healthy, especially with soft tissue issues." Looking at this season's schedule, Daly cites the game against Oregon State as particularly important, but says, "we'll take it game by game—they all matter, when it comes down to it. Developing a game plan is a combination of figuring out what you do well as a defense and what your opponent does well on offense. As a coaching staff, it is then up to us to find a way to take away what the offense does well and force them into situations where we can put stress on the play caller and quarterback." He's confident in the Bobcats' defensive line coaches, Shawn Howe and Nic Jean Baptiste, stating that; "they are doing an excellent job building depth within the defensive line room." The DL has seven players who have experience in games, including Sebastian Valdez. "He was a very productive player for us in 2021," says Daly. "We're looking forward to him taking the next step as a dominant playmaker within the defense. He has had an excellent off-season improving his size and speed." "Watching Bobby succeed in college and semi-pros was amazing, and his passion has now transferred to coaching," says Luke DenHerder. "Knowing him and how he goes about every day business with football, it would've been as incredible an experience having him as a coach, as it was for us being teammates." For his part, Daly considers his single biggest professional accomplishment to be what he's doing right now: "Coaching for my Alma Mater here at MSU was always a goal of mine when I got into this profession. Being able to add value to young men's lives just like others did for me is something I'm proud of."

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# 2022 MSU BOBCAT FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME	LOCATION	TV STATION	CONFERENCE	PROMOTION
03 Sept	 MCNEESE STATE U	6:00 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT		FCS Non-Conference	GOLD RUSH
10 Sept	 MOREHEAD STATE U	1:00 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT		FCS Non-Conference	
17 Sept	 Oregon State U	6:00 p.m. MST	Portland, OR		FBS-FCS Non-Conference	
24 Sept	 E. Washington U	2:00 p.m. MST	Cheney, WA		Big Sky	
01 Oct *	 UC Davis	8:15 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT	ESPN2+ or ESPNU	Big Sky	
08 Oct *	 IDAHO STATE U	200 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT		Big Sky	HOMECOMING
15 Oct *	 N. Colorado U	TBA	Greeley, CO		Big Sky	
22 Oct *	 WEBER STATE	1:00 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT		Big Sky	
29 Oct *	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	
05 Nov *	 Northern Arizona U	TBA	Flagstaff, AZ		Big Sky	
12 Nov *	 Cal Poly	6:00 p.m.	San Luis Obispo, CA		Big Sky	
19 Nov *	 U of Montana	12:00 p.m. MST	BOZEMAN, MT		Big Sky	Brawl Of The Wild Senior Day



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