

After much thought and prayer and after much consultation with Athletics Director Bill Battle and our President, Dr. Judy Bonner, I have decided to step down from the only job I have ever known since graduating from college.

Though I haven't shared my physical problems outside my family and a few close friends, they have degenerated to a point where I will have multiple surgeries over the coming year. While, not life threatening, things have progressed to the point where my physicians have mandated that I have both knees replaced and they have estimated that it will be over a year until I am fully recovered.

I will have the first surgery after we receive our 2014 SEC championship rings at the Southern Miss football game and celebrate an amazing season with that team. I will have the second surgery in the spring after recovery from the first surgery.

I would like to thank Coach Battle and President Bonner for offering me the opportunity to take a complete year of medical leave and to then return to coaching. But David and I came to the conclusion that having a staff that changes multiple times in a significant way over a two-year span is not in the best interest our gymnasts or the continued success of our program.

Coaching is a 24/7 job that requires being at our best on a daily basis. I know myself well and I need to put my health first and foremost for the quality of my life in the future and I do not feel that I can do that and give my best as a coach.

I am grateful that for 36 years, David and I were able to implement our coaching philosophy of trying to develop well-rounded young women who are ready to make a difference in the lives of others upon their graduation from this University.

I would like to share how blessed David and I have been with the unconditional love and support of our daughters Jessie and Jordan throughout our career and this decision. They - along with our son-in-law Brett - have been our biggest fans and together we have all shared our love for this University and the amazing experiences that we have had.

This is not a joyous time for David and I as we step away from jobs that we have loved every day along the way, but I know it is this right decision for us personally, as well as it being the best decision for the long-term success of the gymnastics program. I want to thank Coach Bryant for taking a chance on a 22-year-old graduate of Slippery Rock State College and hiring me for the best coaching job in the country.

I want to express my appreciation and fond remembrances of Mal Moore for his support, and the overall vision he had for this department, and for hiring the coaches that have helped turn that vision into the championship program we enjoy as a department today.

Our current Athletic Director Bill Battle is one of the best leaders I have ever worked with and his vision will continue to give our department the opportunity to compete at the highest levels.

To Dr. Judy Bonner, one of the highlights of my career, and one of the very few times I was ever late to practice, was standing in the back of the room when you were announced as our president. I felt like at that point, I could go back to our ladies and tell them that at the University of Alabama, you could truly be whatever you wanted, even president.

I also need to thank Marie Robbins, a member of our first championship team in 1988 and now an associate athletics director and our senior woman administrator. From your first moments on campus, through this latest decision – your guidance, counsel and unwavering support have meant the world to us. I can't imagine how we would have managed without you.

I would like to give a heartfelt thank you to our staff and coaches, both past and present. Each one of you made a difference for our program, in the earliest days right through to the present moment, words can't express how grateful we are for everything along the way.

And more than anyone, I want to thank our ladies. From our first class, who took a chance on us when we began this journey and then took us to the national championships as seniors, to the freshmen of 2014 ... you are all a part of our championship legacy, all a part of the tradition of excellence that this program has highlighted for the last 36 years. You are all in our hearts and we can't begin to express what it has meant to us to continue to be a part of your lives.

While we close this chapter on our careers, this is not the end of the story. I am very much looking forward to the future and continuing as a part of the Alabama family, the Tuscaloosa community and the sport we love so much as a member of the NCAA Gymnastics Committee.

Thanks to everyone for their support over the many years and of course, Roll Tide!
Sarah Patterson