

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE

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On this week's episode of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's weekly radio program exploring the lives and work of the people on campus and beyond, Greg Budzban, PhD, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) dean, interviews John Kelly, play-by-play announcer for the St. Louis Blues, and Kyle Moore, CAS Director of Development and lifelong Blues fan.

This episode of Segue airs at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 29. Listeners can tune into WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound or siue.edu/wsie.

Kelly graduated from SIUE in December 1982. His father, the late Dan Kelly, was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame for his play-by-play coverage of the Blues for two decades. For years, Kelly has followed in his father's footsteps as a sportscaster for the St. Louis Blues.

"John, you're among the first group that graduated from the Department of Mass Communications," Budzban begins. "Can you tell us about the career start you acquired at SIUE?"

"To be a broadcaster, you have to be on the air and get hands-on experience," explains Kelly. "SIUE afforded me with opportunities to do play-by-play and color commentary. That ability to do hands-on work was what truly helped me as I developed into a broadcaster."

"And you come from a famous broadcast family as your father, Dan, is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame," notes Budzban. "How did he help you carry on that legacy?"

"I'd send him tapes, and he'd listen to my games and critique them," Kelly answers. "It was a huge boost to have a broadcaster be my mentor and also be my dad. It was awesome."

After coming back from last place in the league, the Blues won the Stanley Cup for the first time in team history on June 12, 2019. Kelly and Moore attribute the team's success to roster changes and the addition of then-interim head coach Craig Berube.

"It started off pretty rough," notes Moore. "They made the largest turnaround in the history of the NHL. They were a team of destiny, and it was fun to watch."

"How did you feel Berube helped change the nature of the team?" asks Budzban.

"The best thing Berube did was hold players accountable," Kelly says. "He made them play as a team and would bench players that weren't playing well. He's a no-nonsense guy who got their attention quickly and helped them mesh as a team. The results were the Stanley Cup Championship."

"How big was the off-season trade for Ryan O'Reilly?" asks Budzban.

"They don't win the cup without him, I'll tell you that," answers Kelly. "O'Reilly won the Selke Trophy as best defensive forward and was named MVP in the Stanley Cup playoffs. He was a better player than I anticipated and a great leader. The results speak for themselves."

"His ability to win face-offs, especially in the playoffs, was absolutely huge," added Moore.

The two also praise goalie Jordan Binnington's resilience and stability throughout the Stanley Cup Finals. Binnington was recalled from the minor leagues to join the Blues in December 2018.

"Binnington is one of the few rookie goalies that has won a Stanley Cup," explains Kelly. "The team might have only lost two straight games once during playoffs. Binnington was a brick wall and refused to lose two in a row."

"Veterans like Tarasenko and Pietrangelo have been on the team for a long time," says Budzban. "How special was it for them to be there during the Stanley Cup run?"

"I think of those two, but also Jay Bouwmeester and Alexander Steen, both 35 and the oldest players on the team," says Kelly. "They had never won a Cup before, and it might have been their last chance. They'll have their names on the Cup forever, and I'm sure that they're going to think about this for the rest of their lives."

"Looking forward to this season, what are your thoughts on the chance of a repeat?" asks Budzban.

"One of the reasons the Blues won the Cup last year is their depth," explains Kelly. "They still have that same depth and have some young players knocking at the door, which is a good thing. One of their strongest benefits is that they are a four-line team, and that's certainly going to help this year coming off of a Cup."

The St. Louis Blues open the NHL regular season on Wed., Oct. 2 vs. Washington at the Enterprise Center. To learn more about the Blues' Stanley Cup run and see their current schedule, visit nhl.com/blues.

Tune in at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 29 to WSIE 88.7 The Sound to hear the entire interview.

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