SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. -- Tim Walsh was a quarterback on UC Riverside's last football team before dropping the sport in 1975. He coached against the Mustangs while at Sonoma State in the early 1990s and at Portland State in the mid-1990s. Today, Walsh finds himself on the other side of the field.

Walsh, 54, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at the United States Military Academy the last two seasons, was named Cal Poly's 16th head football coach at a press conference held this morning in Mott Gym's Mustang Hall.

"Tim Walsh brings all of the qualities we were looking for in a head coach for our football team," Cal Poly director of athletics Alison Cone said. "He has been a successful head coach at two universities in California. "He is a quality leader who understands the unique culture at Cal Poly," Cone added. "He knows how to help young men reach their potential in the classroom, as citizens, and on the football field. We had several outstanding applicants from which to choose, but I am thrilled we were able to hire a person with such outstanding credentials to direct our program.

"He has the ability to continue the success the Cal Poly football program has enjoyed the last six years and that the community and the university will be proud of and excited to support," Cone said.

Walsh replaces Rich Ellerson, the Mustangs' head football coach for the last eight seasons. Ellerson was named head coach at Army on Dec. 26.

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which to choose, but I am thrilled we were able to hire a person with such outstanding credentials to direct this program,” Cone said of Walsh. “He is a high-character, high-quality individual who will bring great passion and enthusiasm to our campus.”

Walsh has compiled a 117-82 record in 18 seasons as a college head coach, including four years at Sonoma State (27-14 from 1989-92) and 14 more seasons at Portland State (90-68 from 1993-2006). He guided Sonoma State to the Northern California Athletic Conference title in 1991 (ending UC Davis’ streak of 20 consecutive conference titles), a pair of NCAA Division II playoff berths while at Sonoma State and four more postseason berths while at Portland State.

“I have a tremendous working knowledge of Cal Poly, its history and current status,” said Walsh. “The combination of a tremendous academic university, a tremendous area to recruit and live, and a football program that’s winning all added up to a great opportunity for me.

“He did an excellent job at Portland State and is extremely well respected in the profession,” said Tollner. “Cal Poly had some great candidates for the position and I think he’s an excellent choice. He will keep the program moving forward and continue the success it has had in recent years.

“People who have worked for him have great respect for his total abilities from a recruiting standpoint, his communication with players, his sound philosophy and his winning record,” Tollner added. “His track record speaks for itself.”

Added Bobby Beathard, also a former Mustang who has held numerous positions in the NFL, including scout, personnel director and general manager, “Tim Walsh is a terrific choice. He will be a tireless recruiter, he knows what athletes are and what kind of athletes will fit into the program.

“I am excited about him. It’s a great choice,” Beathard added. “When you find a guy that is really good for you, you grab him and I am glad Cal Poly hired him.”

A charismatic speaker and motivator, Walsh guided Sonoma State to three winning seasons in four years at the helm of the Seawolves and 10 more above-.500 campaigns in his 14-year term at Portland State. With the Vikings, Walsh coached 14 All-Americans and 11 Academic All-Americans.

Teri Mariani, who was director of athletics at Portland State when Walsh accepted the duties of offensive coordinator at Army, said at the time of his departure that “Tim showed great loyalty to our program and led us through a transition to Division I that a lot of coaches wouldn’t have wanted to do. He has had proven success both on the football field and off, and he’s always been such a team player within our department.

“Two words that describe him in my eyes are loyalty and class,” Mariani added. “In his 14 years (at Portland State), he has never done one thing that could change that opinion of him.”

Portland State joined the Big Sky Conference in 1996. During Walsh’s 11 seasons when the Vikings were in the Big Sky, he coached players who earned 39 first-team All-Big Sky honors, 51 on the second team, 80 honorable mentions, 58 Academic All-Big Sky honorees, 59 Big Sky Players of the Week, 20 national player of the week honorees, five Walter Payton Award finalists and one Buck Buchanan Award finalist.

A Serra High School (San Mateo, Calif.) graduate, Walsh played football at UC Riverside in the mid-1970s and earned a bachelor’s degree in history in 1977.

He began his coaching career at his high school alma mater, Serra, spending four years (1977-80) as an assistant coach before becoming head coach (1981-85) at Moreau Catholic High School in Hayward. Walsh moved into the college coaching ranks in 1986, becoming an assistant coach and defensive coordinator at Santa Clara for one season.

In 1987 and 1988, Walsh was offensive coordinator at Sonoma State before becoming head coach of the Seawolves (then the Cossacks) in 1989. His first season in Rohnert Park produced a 4-6 mark, but Walsh guided Sonoma State to 7-3, 9-2 and 7-3 records in his final three years there.

Walsh embarked upon a 14-year head coaching career at Portland State in 1993, guiding the Vikings to NCAA Division II playoff berths each of his first three seasons.
Portland State elevated its athletics program to Division I in 1996 and, though the Vikings struggled in the first three years at that level, there was steady progression — from 3-8 to 4-7 and 5-6. The 1999 Viking team began a string of seven winning campaigns in eight seasons, including a Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA) playoff berth in 2000.

Walsh piloted Portland State to a quartet of second-place finishes in the Big Sky along with a third and three fourth-place finishes. In 14 seasons at the helm, Walsh’s Vikings were 62-21 at home. He earned two wins against FBS schools — Hawaii in 2001 and New Mexico in 2006 — and was 3-0 against Cal Poly while at Portland State along with a 2-1 mark against the Mustangs while at Sonoma State.

Walsh was a finalist for the Eddie Robinson Award (FCS Coach of the Year) in 1999.

In 2008, Walsh’s second season at Army, the Black Knights finished ninth in the Football Bowl Subdivision in rushing offense (241.42 yards per game), fourth in sacks allowed (1.00) and 15th in time of possession (31:45).

While at Army, Walsh’s recruiting responsibilities included nine Western states.

The list of coaches who were assistants under Walsh includes Dan Hawkins (Colorado), Gary Patterson (Texas Christian) and Chris Peterson (Boise State). National Football League players who competed under Walsh’s tutelage include — from Sonoma State — offensive lineman Larry Allen (Dallas) — and from Portland State — tight end Tony Curtis (Dallas), wide receiver Shaun Bodiford (Green Bay), linebacker Jordan Senn (Indianapolis) and linebacker Adam Hayward (Tampa Bay).

Walsh and his wife, Jody, have four children: Luke, Casey, Sean and Megan.

Ellerson, named head coach at Army on Dec. 26, posted a 56-34 win-loss record in his eight seasons at Cal Poly, guiding the 2008 Mustangs to an 8-3 record, their sixth consecutive winning season, third Great West Conference title in five years and their second berth in the NCAA Division I FCS playoffs.

He earned three Great West Conference Coach of the Year awards and was named NCAA Division I-AA Independents Coach of the Year in 2003. A year later Ellerson was honored as AFCA Region 5 Coach of the Year.

Ellerson’s 56 wins ties him for No. 3 on Cal Poly’s list of winningest football coaches. Howie O’Daniels also earned 56 wins from 1933-41 and from 1946-47. The leader is Joe Harper, who won 96 games from 1968-81 while Roy Hughes was 73-36-1 in 12 seasons (1950-61).

In terms of winning percentage, Ellerson again is No. 3 at Cal Poly, behind Harper (96-43-4, .685) and Hughes (.662) and just ahead of O’Daniels (56-33-6, .621).

Tim Walsh’s Coaching Career

1977-80 Assistant Coach, Serra High School, San Mateo, Calif.
1981-85 Head Coach, Moreau Catholic High School, Hayward, Calif.
1986 Defensive Coordinator, Santa Clara University
1987-88 Offensive Coordinator, Sonoma State
1989-92 Head Coach, Sonoma State
1993-2006 Head Coach, Portland State
2007-08 Offensive Coordinator, United States Military Academy
2009- Head Coach, Cal Poly

Career Record as a College Head Coach

1989 Sonoma State 4-6
1990 Sonoma State 7-4
1992 Sonoma State 7-4 (27-14 in Four Seasons)
1993 Portland State 8-3 NCAA Division II Playoffs (First Round)
1994 Portland State 9-3 NCAA Division II Playoffs (Quarterfinal Round)
1995 Portland State 8-5 NCAA Division II Playoffs (Quarterfinal Round)
1996 Portland State 3-8
1997 Portland State 4-7
1998 Portland State 5-6
1999 Portland State 8-3
2000 Portland State 8-4 NCAA FCS Playoffs (First Round)
2001 Portland State 7-4
2002 Portland State 6-5
2003 Portland State 4-7
2004 Portland State 7-4
2005 Portland State 6-5
2006 Portland State 7-4 (90-68 in 14 Seasons)

Total 18 Seasons 117-82