

July 28, 2009



An Interview With:

BAYLOR COACH ART BRILES

PETER IRWIN: Coach, your thoughts about the summer and your upcoming football season.

COACH BRILES: Good morning. Good to see everybody out. Used up all my good stuff in previous ones, but we'll get through this.

Thoughts on the upcoming season and what else?

PETER IRWIN: Summer.

COACH BRILES: Just whatever? Summer. Okay.

Personally, summer doesn't hardly exist in the football world. Our guys, of course, have had an outstanding summer with Kaz Kazadi, our strength coach. He's one of the best in America. He's done a great job with them.

Upcoming season, what we have to do is take the little bit of momentum that we felt like we finished up with last year, which included beating an opponent that certainly, we felt like, desired some respectability. And taking that to the next level.

The next level for us is not just being on the outside of the ring looking in, but being in the arena and being somebody that's got to be dealt with on a daily basis.

PETER IRWIN: With those comments, we'll take questions from the floor.

Q. Art, you've been speaking a lot --

COACH BRILES: This had better be easy, John. I know where you live.

Q. Art, you've been speaking to a lot of alumni groups over the last month. Can you just tell me the reception you got, maybe the excitement you're getting from them.

COACH BRILES: I think in general it's a great time of year for all football, you know, junior

high, high school, college, pro, because everybody anticipates good things happening. You know, so everybody's full of hope and full of hype, full of want, full of desires in the football world. It's a good time.

So that's one great thing about our profession is that each year you get to reload and get ready to recharge and then do it again.

What we've got doing on the level at Baylor has turned the hype into happen. We can't just operate on hope and want. What we've got to operate on is reality and results.

What we're seeing in the Baylor community is, I think, a renewed sense of appreciation of a program, you know, going in the right direction. So with that reputation, we have expectations that we have to live up to on the field.

Q. What did you see from Robert Griffin this spring, and how exciting has it been to see him kind of help prop up Baylor in terms of national attention?

COACH BRILES: You know, Robert's an exceptional person first and foremost. He's a guy that's very self-driven, self-motivated, has a plan, and carries through with the plan.

What he's done for the Baylor national football scene, you know, we're very appreciative of. He hasn't done it through what is said; he's done it through what he's done. That's how you make noise in the football world is about production.

So with his production on the field and then the style of play that he brings to the table, I started to think we have one of the more dynamic football players in the college world at Baylor, and it's brought us some national notoriety.

Q. Art, for the first time in a long time, Baylor players are dealing with some fairly high preseason expectations. Is that something you've discussed with them on just how you expect them to handle these things?

COACH BRILES: You know, Randy, expectations are always high in the football world

in any locker room, in any coaching staff because that's what we deal with. It's not a situation where you go into a season with an attitude of, you know, not being victorious.

So from our players' standpoint, as far as how to handle that, that's what you want. That's something you need. And that should be motivation for them.

Now, the flip side of it is by our play last year on the football field, where one of our goals last year, or a couple of them were, to be a respectable, credible football team and football program. I felt like to a certain extent we accomplished that.

People are going to approach us differently on the other side, in other staff rooms and on other practice fields because they're going to come into Baylor with a different mindset than they did a year ago. We understand that. We understand we're going to have to rise up and be better in all facets of the game, not only physically, to deal with the charges that are going to come our way.

Consequently, what that's going to do is make us a better football team in our program.

Q. When you were out recruiting, did you find players who wanted to come to Baylor because they wanted to play with Robert? Or did you try to sell that a little bit?

COACH BRILES: We try to sell everything. That's the recruiting world. You need something sold, let us know, and we'll see what we can do about it.

Yeah, there's a lot of guys that want to come to Baylor for a variety of reasons. That's the great thing about our university in our division in our conference. We feel like, without arguing, in my estimation, the Big 12 South is the toughest division in college football today.

What we try to do is approach people from the mindset of, you know, how much of a competitor you are. Where do you want to land, where do you want to play, where do you want to excel.

So we use that, and Baylor being a centrally located university right in the middle of Texas, by that standard, it's kind of unparalleled.

But as far as coming and playing with Robert and being a part of the system, yeah, that's helped a bunch. And the thing it's helped is his dynamic qualities that he brings and the style of play that we played with on both sides of the football.

Q. Art, you injected some new life into your program last year. How close are you guys to being bowl eligible this season?

COACH BRILES: How are you doing, Dwayne? I haven't seen you in a while. You're conservatively dressed today for your standards. I'll give you that. You usually throw a little silk at me.

You know, injecting new life and being bowl eligible, I mean, that's what we do. That's the fun part of the profession and the thing that keeps you going.

The thing that inspires me as a coach are passionate alumni, people that love the university, have great passion, and then players that have hopes, desires, and dreams, which all student-athletes have, with the dedication, discipline, and effort that it takes to fulfill those.

Where we're at as far as being a bowl-eligible football team, you know, without getting into it, our season will tell. We certainly understand that we're capable of fulfilling that goal without a doubt.

Q. Art, what do you feel like the impact of Phil Taylor will be on the D-line?

COACH BRILES: Asked about Phil Taylor transferring in. In my estimation, I don't think there's better in America on the field. The guy is 6'5", 352, and he's got a feed of 165 pounds. Those people don't exist. Plus he's got a demeanor that coincides with what you're looking for on the defensive side of the ball.

We really are proud that Phil puts on the green and gold and he's a Baylor Bear. We expect big things out of him because he can deliver. You take him and help solidify the front along with Joe Pawelek who has the skills. The characteristics and intangibles he possesses at the middle linebacker position solidifies that area. And Jordan Lake as the safety. All the same things I said about Joe plus being a fierce competitor. And then we have the chance to have a really solid defense, which you must have, you must have to win our division.

Q. You just mentioned Joe a little bit. Just talk about the no-nonsense approach of a guy that just goes and makes tackles, makes big plays and receptions. Talk about what you see in his development and just how he handles people that are keying off him.

COACH BRILES: Joe is a special person. I tell our coaches be thankful, be grateful, feel blessed every time you get to hang around a person like that because there's not many like him, in this business 30 years. He's just a different cat on and off the football field. What you see is what you get. There's no flaws. There's no hidden agendas. All there is is inspiration, motivation, discipline, high-quality characteristics, great intangibles, which all equates to being a great person and a great football player.

He understands what's going to happen before it happens. That's why he leads the nation in interceptions, leads the Big 12 in interceptions. He led the nation as a linebacker in interceptions. Led the Big 12 continually.

He's a guy that we're fortunate to have. There's not many of them around. He's going to help solidify that side of the ball without a doubt.

Q. You got a couple of big holes to fill in your offensive line. How confident are you that you can kind of make -- how confident are you about filling those holes and keeping the drop-off to a minimum?

COACH BRILES: We lost the number two pick overall in the draft. And Dan Gay was a free agent. Both those guys are good tackles for us. Jason, without argument, is the number one offensive lineman in North America. How do you replace that? You bring in a guy like Danny Watkins, who we feel is going to be a great football player for us. Danny is 6'4-1/2", weighs 308, and he's got a tough demeanor to him. We like what he's going to bring to the table.

What you have to do to fill those voids is the other guys on the offensive line -- the guards, the center, our other tackle -- those guys have got to be better. They've got to rise up and take care of business, and they have to play better than what they played a year ago because when they're leaning, No. 72 ain't there to lean on. They'd better stand on their own feet, and they'd better have somebody leaning on them.

So collectively as a unit, we have to be better up front because we can't rely on one guy to be a stud for us.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Jason Smith. You got to go to the draft with him and experience that. How much just positive buzz did he bring just by being the number two pick of the draft? Did that put Baylor in a positive light?

COACH BRILES: Well, I mean, you know, there's one university in America that would take him before us. It's like I mentioned to a couple of our alumni. With the grade of talent we have in this room, you know, everybody has a pencil behind their ear and their hat on and a notepad in front of them.

And I asked the question: Somebody tell us the best way to give Baylor national exposure, you know, in a positive fashion. You know, we'd all break off and come back after the brainstorm, and then somebody says, hey, let's let him be the number two pick in the draft this year on national TV. I think that might do it.

That's what he did for us. That's what he brought to us. Because your dreams, your hopes, your desires, your aspirations, your goals can be accomplished in Waco, Texas.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you for your comments.

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