

July 27, 2009



An Interview With:

IOWA STATE COACH PAUL RHOADS

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Coach Paul Rhoads from Iowa State. Coach, welcome. We're sorry you had such a long trip today.

COACH RHOADS: Thank you very much. We appreciate your patience in accommodating us on our weather delays.

We are anxious and excited to get started on August 4th and build upon what we began this spring. There's a lot of work to be done. Players and coaches certainly recognize that.

I think it's this awareness that has helped us move forward with the new era of Iowa State football.

This new era will begin minus a few players that were with us this spring, namely Dustin Land, A.J. Matthews, and Judah Linder. With that, I'll turn it over to you.

PETER IRWIN: We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, you talk about a new era of Iowa State football. What is your vision of Iowa State football, and what are the challenges that stand in the way of that?

COACH RHOADS: I think my vision is developing a championship program and developing a team of winning football and winning players and quality young men. I think that vision takes place one day at a time and one season at a time and certainly has no win-loss expectations that are placed upon it from day one.

I think the challenges are you inherit a program that has no tradition, so to speak, in collegiate football and in the Big 12 since its inception back in '96, I believe. We have one Big 12 North shared title, something that we're very proud of and need to build upon.

But the lack of recent success is the first hurdle that you must overcome.

Q. Paul, obviously you came with Mack, I guess it was in the late '90s. Where would you say the program is right now in comparison where it was when you first came into the program back with Mack?

COACH RHOADS: Well ahead of where it was in 1995, the last year of the Big Eight conference.

Where we are today from a facilities standpoint alone is times ahead. Most notably, our indoor facility that was opened in 2003. Back then we were practicing outdoors year-round in what was some very rough weather.

The off-season program could not exist the way it needs to exist today for us to be successful. The level of player that were in place in 1995 was minimal on what we rated as a Division I player status. It's above that now as well.

Where we are as far as being able to win immediately, with that group, I don't know. I want to get the Big 12 started and see our conference opponents and their level, and then we'll be able to gauge better the talent level from '95 to where it is right now in 2009.

Q. Just wondering, as a team that comes in having lost ten in a row, if the first hurdle you have to overcome is as much in the head as physical?

COACH RHOADS: Yes and no. You would think that, with the things that were inherited from ten straight losses, from not being able to win a Big 12 football game last year, to having the longest road losing streak in the country right now.

You'd think you'd walk into a group of young men who would have their heads down and couldn't escape that challenge to begin with. I have not felt that from day one. And we've attacked those numbers from day one.

We don't hide from them. We don't try to brush them under the carpet. We talk about them openly and the challenges that it takes to

overcome that.

From the first meeting that took place with our football team on January 12th through today, I see a football team that's very hungry and has a very desirous group of young men that want nothing more than to be successful on the gridiron.

Q. Coach, I know you haven't coached a game yet in this conference, but what have you learned about the Big 12 so far just as far as recruiting goes and the landscape of the conference?

COACH RHOADS: I haven't coached a game yet as a head football coach. I've coached four years in this league.

As a BCS conference, it's competitive in everything you do, whether it's in-season playing head-to-head matchups or out on the recruiting trail.

We're not in a position geographically where we're going to have a lot of players on campus and we're going to nail down a lot of early commitments like some of the people in this league are fortunate and able to do.

Varied plays with everything we're doing right now with the program to advance it forward and know we must do that because the level of competition is as good as there is in the country.

Q. As you say, you've been a coordinator and an assistant at the BCS conference level for quite some time. How different is it now in the big chair with the spotlight on you, and how do you handle the difference?

COACH RHOADS: I think the biggest difference that I've encountered is what comes through my office on a daily basis. I deal a lot less with Xs and Os and the specific recruitment of a certain area as I did as a position coach and as a coordinator.

And from about 8:00 on, there are a lot of things that come through the door, come across my desk that I need to put my fingerprints on, and I desire to do that as we get the program up and running.

I think that's the biggest challenge and the biggest change, going from position coach and coordinator to being the head football coach.

Q. How big, given the trappings that are surrounding your program right now, would victory be against Kansas State in Kansas City at Arrowhead Stadium?



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COACH RHOADS: Every victory is going to be important for us. It's been a long time since I had the last one. And so as we move forward, there are a lot of things that we've got to end. Whether these are individual goals or notches that we've got to take care of, every game is critically important.

Obviously, a lot of folks want to talk about the matchup between us and Iowa, then it moves on to this game or that game. We're worried about August 4th, our start of training camp, and the preparations for North Dakota State.

And really I believe I've got a group of kids that aren't looking beyond that.

Q. Talk about the no-huddle offense. What will that bring to Austen and the rest of your offense?

COACH RHOADS: The biggest thing the no-huddle offense brings to the spread type of offense that was in place a year ago is the control of tempo. And Tom Herman speaks of it all the time. We saw it firsthand this spring. The defense faced the challenges. I certainly faced the challenges last year at Auburn going against Tony Franklin's no-huddle offense through spring ball and fall camp.

There's a whole different level of condition. I don't know if people have figured out yet, strength coaches included, in how you prepare a football team year-round for what that does to you and what that creates.

A lot of offensive success with the spread offense is just a result of wearing down a defensive football team. I think at Iowa State you've got to be unique in approach to a number of things, and one of those things is what we do schematically offensively, and that's why we sought out Tom Herman and this type of offense.

Q. You mentioned all the different things that come across your desk now and how different the job is. Do you feel that the pressure aspect of it more when the expectations are, in your case, to lift the program? They're aimed at you. Is that any different for you, and how do you deal with that?

COACH RHOADS: I don't really feel any more pressure in that regard. I've aspired to sit in this chair for a long time. In those aspirations, I've prepared to sit in this chair for a long time.

I didn't say that things necessarily surprise me coming across my desk. They just have created a need for more time to take care of them.

And as I put my designs on this program and touch everything along the way, I'm not surprised or feel burdened by any of these pressures or answers to the questions that go along with any of those responsibilities.

Q. Paul, since you got the job, have you talked with Dan McCarney?

COACH RHOADS: I certainly have.

Q. What kind of conversations have you guys had?

COACH RHOADS: Iowa State is a job that -- falling in love with the bricks and mortar, as I say, I think is awfully important. You have to pour everything that you have in that job and get everything that surrounds the program, the university and the state involved and supportive of you. I think Dan certainly shared that passion and maybe showed me that passion to a certain extent.

I was there for the first five years of the program when we built that thing and what we referred to as the right way. It was a long way down. When I left to go to Pitt and after the '99 season, people asked me, well, what do you think they're going to do next year? I said, well, they're going to win eight football games. I was wrong. They beat us in the Insight.com Bowl to win a ninth football game.

You knew it was set up to get that accomplished when I did leave. Dan poured everything he had into the job. He shared some insights into some things that possibly will help me be successful, but more than anything else, he just expressed his congratulations and wished me well along the way.

Q. Coach, what did you learn from Coach Tuberville last year at Auburn that you feel is helping you today as a head coach?

COACH RHOADS: Tommy was very hands off with his staff because he had hired a great staff, in my opinion. He trusted those assistants with executing a responsibility and worked hard not to get in their way.

I think one of the things that concerned me is jumping in defensively, and I maybe surprised myself in that I have been able to stay out of Wally's way and our defensive coaches' way as well as everybody on the staff.

I think Tommy did a masterful job of doing that.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, we're going to ask you to stay up here for the one on ones.

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