

July 27, 2009



An Interview With:

## OKLAHOMA STATE COACH MIKE GUNDY

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Oklahoma State Coach Mike Gundy. Coach, welcome. Opening comments and your thoughts about this year's team.

COACH GUNDY: Thank you. We're very excited about being here today. Looking forward to the opening of the season.

There's been a lot of talk about our opener against Georgia, justifiably so.

Our football team is finishing up school this week and going home for a few days. I noticed the excitement, just being around them in the last week and also listening to the players that came down today with me today on the airplane about the upcoming season.

We're healthy. We've got a number of players on the offensive side of the ball that everybody's aware of; that we're really excited about what they'll do this fall.

Even more so, on the defensive side of the ball. Our new coordinator Bill Young and our defensive players Andre Sexton and Perrish Cox and Derek Burton and Pat Lavine and those guys are excited to improve defensively and play better football.

To kind of sum it up, there's a lot of excitement right now in the state of Oklahoma. Stillwater on campus for Oklahoma State football, and we're just finished to move into our new facility. We're thrilled about that. Just looking forward to the upcoming season.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you for those comments. We'll take questions from the floor.

**Q. When you were a quarterback there and you guys had Hartley Dykes and Barry, they talked about the triplets. A lot of people are saying the same thing now with Zac and**

**Kendall and Dez. I wonder if you can compare your group to this group now and does it bring back some memories? That kind of stuff.**

COACH GUNDY: That's a good question. It's hard to compare anybody to Barry Sanders, to be honest with you. Kendall Hunter is very good. It's hard to get anybody in the country like him. But a future hall of famer is difficult to compare to. Hartley Dykes, shortened NFL career. Don't know if I've ever seen anyone like him at this level.

Dez Bryant is special, tremendous strength, great hands, great leaping ability. Fearless. Great competitor.

The quarterback spot, I'm not sure there's much of a comparison. If I could go back and recruit, I'd recruit Zac Robinson, and I wouldn't recruit Mike Gundy, to be honest with you.

His ability to make a play running the football is tremendous. His durability, much bigger and stronger. We're very excited about our group of triplets.

**Q. Coach, what was the first thing you noticed with your defense when Bill Young came in?**

COACH GUNDY: First off, Coach Young came in with a lot of experience, a lot of maturity. I know that our players were excited about his attitude and the way he approached our team. The confidence that he exemplifies when he talks to the players, the way he carries himself in the staff room amongst the coaches has been very good for me.

I know sitting in the room, the staff room, at times there can be a lot of egos involved in coaching, and he certainly doesn't have one. I think that's really been a plus for our program.

**Q. Mike, there's some tendency every year to separate your team into offense and defense. Without doing that, what do you see as the sum total of your parts? Are you guys ready to challenge the OU-Texas duo this season?**

COACH GUNDY: We've worked hard

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over the last few years because of all the notoriety that our offense has gotten.

Quite honestly, we've been more athletic as a group on that side of the ball, and we've had players that could potentially play in the NFL, which makes a big difference.

Defensively, we've acquired more speed, more athleticism, and our leadership that we're getting this year from Perrish Cox, Andre Sexton, Derek Burton, Pat Lavine and those guys helps to alleviate the split between an offense and defense.

We're hoping that our special teams play, which we think will be very good this year. Joe DeForest does a great job for our special teams, and the team chemistry we have narrows the gap over the period of years in this league, Big 12 and what's happened in the south with Texas and Oklahoma. Both can be very good.

Unfortunately, we're one of the few teams that can be in the top ten in most polls across the country and be third in our division.

But we have a goal, and our goal is to put a team on the field that has a chance to win every Saturday. We'll work hard to accomplish that.

**Q. Mike, can you talk about, you've got the triplets on offense, but talk about what Russell means to your offense and maybe the offensive line in general with two other returns.**

COACH GUNDY: I'm glad you brought Russell up. Russell Okung is a true senior. He's going to graduate early, in 3 1/2 years. He'll finish his degree program at Oklahoma State.

Within of the few players in 20 years of coaching that I've seen that can come in and play in this league in the offensive line that had great knowledge of the game, great demeanor, very level-headed, great work ethic and obviously strong and can run and all of the physical skills that you look for with a big-time offensive lineman.

He's been in the battle. He's durable. He's stayed healthy over a number of years. Can't say enough about what he's done. He's done a great job in the classroom, as we talked about, to be able to graduate in 3 1/2 years.

He does not show up on lists. Lists are guys who miss classes or are late for things, issues on and off the field. He never shows up on lists. He's been a great player and a great person for us.

**Q. Mike, considering the schedule, the experience, the play-makers and everything, is this your best chance to win a conference**



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**championship in all the years that you've been paying attention to OSU football?**

COACH GUNDY: I thought we had a great chance back in '88, but there's probably only three or four people in here, Barry, that can go that far back.

I think since I've come back, the first few years with Coach Miles and then been the head coach, I would say that because of our experience that the Big 12 went through in big games and having a number of those players back, I would only hope that our experience would benefit us this year playing in big games.

We have a terrific home schedule of eight home games. But we also have a very difficult schedule. We have teams on there that people would consider sleepers, and they certainly are sleepers.

If you look at the number of teams we're playing that were in bowls last year and/or won nine or ten games.

It's a great year for us, but I would say with the returning players, the experience, we stay healthy. The continuity and structure of the program and where we're at would give us the best chance since I've been back here with Coach Miles and myself as head coach.

**Q. Does Zac Robinson get overlooked playing quarterback in this conference? Does that motivate him at all?**

COACH GUNDY: Zac is a special person. He's not necessarily concerned about notoriety. I think that he's as good as anybody in the country for what we ask him to do in our system, and that's the only way you can compare him to anybody else.

Not taking anything away from Colt or Sam Bradford or whoever else may play in this league, but we ask Zac to run a spread system efficiently, understand where the advantages and disadvantages are of our offense and how we're going to attack the defense. We ask him to run and make plays. We ask him to run the option.

He does a lot of play passing. We don't do as much drop-back passing as much as some other teams in the country. But for what we do, I would say he's as good as anybody in the country.

I think his best years are ahead of him, and I think he stays healthy and gets into a camp. I think he can play for a number of years beyond college.

**Q. Your team last year started off so quickly. I mean, just looking at the schedule, it looks like your schedule is backloaded. Do you feel that way? I mean, it's the same schedule you played last year basically. But with switching home fields, and how might that affect your team?**

COACH GUNDY: Obviously, we start out at home, and we play a number of them at home for you. You go on the road, and I think that every coach hopes that that happens. I think that there's a comfort level in being at home.

Again, we do play some very good football teams. I think it's important to stay level-headed, for lack of a better term, as coaches and players because we're going to play teams that are capable of winning and have a good season.

You have to be sound, take care of the football, play good special teams, and all those things will be important to start fast again.

**Q. Mike, when it came time to choose a defensive coordinator, but besides the personality, what did you see in Bill Young's defenses in Miami that either when you coached against him or watched him that really stuck out?**

COACH GUNDY: A few things were very important. One, we were looking for a defensive coordinator that could give us some sort of commitment to years. There are a lot of guys out there that are good defensive coaches that were interested in the job.

I was trying to avoid bringing a guy in that I thought maybe in a couple of years, if we had success, would bolt and become a head coach, even though I hope every guy on our staff becomes a head coach.

Bill has done it for a long time. He's very mature. He's got experience in this league. I think he's got a great demeanor. I don't think there's any question he understands defensive football. And we'd like to think he'll coach at Oklahoma State until he retires.

If you add all that up, it was a great fit for us.

**Q. Mike, can you explain the series with Texas that you all played better or closer than nearly anybody but still haven't been able to get over the hump in the final score.**

COACH GUNDY: Your guess is as good as mine on that one. I'd like to blame myself, but

we were in a couple of them with Coach Miles, so I blame part of them on him.

It's been interesting our players have played very well. We've had an opportunity to win those games. We haven't finished.

I think that you tell a team that you keep pushing forward and you keep working hard and you keep preparing, that the ball will bounce in our direction at some time.

You know, interesting enough, these are very, very good Texas teams. So hopefully our players will continue to play well, put ourselves in position to finish one off.

**Q. Mike, talk about Andre Sexton and your entire linebacker core as a group. Seems to be one of the best in the league, does it not?**

COACH GUNDY: Very experienced. Orie Lemon, Pat Lavine, Donald Booker and those guys, Andre Sexton. I'm excited about it. I think as a coach, it's important that you don't try to set them up.

But when I see them out there in practice and the commitment they have, their ability to run and make a play, and a lot of experience, which is so important in competing and having success at this level, the experience that those guys bring to the table.

We don't have a number of positions where we have depth, but we have some depth at that position now. So I'm excited about watching those guys play.

I think that the terminology and the scheme that we have with Coach Young fits our defensive linebackers to a T.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you for your answers.

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