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An Interview With:

NEBRASKA COACH BO PELINI

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by coach Bo Pelini from Nebraska.

Coach, welcome. Your comments before we get started.

COACH PELINI: Thank you. Great to be here. We're excited. I know myself, the staff, everybody, we're excited about this upcoming season. We're really looking forward to.

Got a good football team coming back. Really like what we have on both sides of the football and special teams. I think we finally have some depth on our team. We're real excited about the upcoming season. You know, we understand that we're going to get what we earn, and the kids have worked hard through this off-season.

We had a good winter, good spring, and we followed it up with a good summer. We got a little bit to really finish up this week and then give them a few days off, and we'll get ready to kick it off in a little less than two weeks. We're really looking forward to it.

I'm going to open up here for questions in a second. But I did want to say I understand I very much respect the job that all of you have to do, but I will not be taking any questions in regards to any Big Ten issues. We're excited about being in the Big 12 this year. We're excited about the upcoming season, and all our focus is on the Big 12, which is a great conference. We're excited to be in it this fall and looking forward to the future.

I'd like to open up for any questions you may have.

PETER IRWIN: We're going to take questions.

Q. Coach, I respect your not wanting us to ask about it. Can you just talk about how you've handled this with your team? What

have you told them, or how are those conversations going?

COACH PELINI: Business as usual. We're -- in our program, we kind of -- the way we run our program is we talk to our guys about focusing on the process and what they have to do on a day to day basis to have an opportunity to compete. That hasn't changed.

You know, we really haven't talked much about it. We're looking forward to the fall, and we've been doing our homework on the opponents. You know, obviously, the out of conference opponents first, and we're looking forward to the opportunity. We think we have an opportunity to be a good football team. If we continue the hard work and stay on track and keep our focus in the right direction, I think we can accomplish some great things.

Q. Coach, it's the third year now with the program. Got a lot of your guys that you've recruited. Your system's totally in place. Do you know what your expectations are? You know what they can do. How does all that factor into what you might accomplish this season?

COACH PELINI: I think it's a big thing. Unfortunately, in my coaching career, I've had a lot of three-year stints, and I always felt like the third year, you know, in a system and third year together, you really have a chance to make a big jump.

You know, you have a lot of people in there who -- a lot of guys in the program who understand what you want, understand what the expectations are, and understand exactly how to go about the process of becoming a good football player and a good football team. We're excited about that. That's really why -- you know, at the end of the bowl game, after the Arizona game, when I said Nebraska's back, I wasn't saying we arrived, and we'd won a national championship or anything like that.

I finally felt the culture that we were trying to instill from the point that we got there had taken

hold. And that excites me as a head football coach, and I really feel like, you know, we got to the point where we're at that point where we can beat we line up against, or compete with anybody that we line up against.

And that's exciting for me and exciting for the program.

Q. Bo, let's talk about you guys recruiting in Texas. What's been the message from the high school coaches in Texas based on your guys' move?

COACH PELINI: There hasn't really been much. Like I said, it's been business as usual. It really hasn't had any impact on us.

Q. Bo, can you talk about any potential problems being in your last year in a conference, fan reception on the road, or whatever it might be. Have you considered any problems you guys might face as a football team being in this unique situation?

COACH PELINI: You don't really know. I don't anticipate any problems. Number one, the leadership of the Big 12 from Dan Beebe and his staff has been exceptional. And you go through the conference, and the fans and the institutions in the Big 12 are highly respected institutions, very classy programs, very classy fans.

So I don't anticipate any ramifications as far as that's concerned. All we're concerned about is playing good football and competing in a great conference.

Q. Coach, what's the health of Zac Lee right now? Is he 100 percent? How much of a negative was that when he's not able to participate in the spring?

COACH PELINI: Well, it's a negative any time that you don't have a chance to practice and gain reps because you've got to try and get better every time you step out on the football field.

Right now he's 100 percent. He's competing well, and he's looking forward to a great fall and a great fall camp coming up. But, you know, any time you miss a significant amount of time, it has an impact on you because you lose time to get better.

You know, at the age these young men are, really any college football player, there's always that room for improvement. Nobody's ever reached their potential.

So any time you miss, it's not the ideal situation.

Q. Bo, given all the returning experience you have around Lee at quarterback there, how important is it for him, I guess, to progress and take another step forward from where he was last year?

COACH PELINI: Well, we feel real good about the guys we have coming back on offense. We have some experience. We have some young men who are going to come in and really provide us with depth and great competition, which I saw throughout the spring. But we need the quarterback position to step up.

You know, let's face it, he's at the center point. He's the trigger guy. You know, we're fortunate we do have some experience coming back at that position. We have two young men who are competing for the starting job with Zac Lee, who had great springs, have a lot of talent. They're play makers, they're very explosive athletes.

You know, any time you have great competition in any position, quarterback position included, it's going to make everybody better, and it's going to make our football team better. We'll just see how it plays out. We've got a lot of practices before we play that first game. You know, it will be interesting to see how that competition plays out.

You know, I preach competition since I took over Nebraska at each and every position, and I think that the quarterback position is just one where you're going to see guys battling it out from day one.

Q. Bo, what were your thoughts on the Red Out video? Would you prefer that it keep the Beat Texas logo?

COACH PELINI: To be honest, somebody asked me about the Red Out video, and I was on vacation. I didn't know anything about it. It was actually a mistake. It was really intended to -- each year our marketing department picks one football game where they kind of take the alumni throughout the country and try to make it designated alumni game.

They picked the Texas game, and they really made the mistake of putting Beat Texas down on it. To be honest with you, I wasn't real happy about it.

I mean, I like the idea. I like what they do, and I really appreciate the fact that our -- that we

reach out to our alumni, and we try to make a special game for our alumni because, obviously, Texas will be a nationally televised game, and it's across the nation it's a game that's probably going to be looked at pretty closely. So they chose that football game.

You know, I didn't think the message it sent to our football team especially because, you know, that's way down the road. We have a lot of things to do before we even consider Texas or worry about what that football game. We've got a lot of work to do in the meantime.

So it was regrettable, but, obviously, we're going to keep the Red Out across the nation. But they took the Beat Texas off of it because it was never intended to be that way in the first place. But it came as a surprise to me because I didn't really know much about it. It comes from the marketing department.

Q. Coach, back to the quarterback position, how soon do you have to make a decision in camp on that? How long -- how much time do you have? How do you divide the reps up when you have three guys in the race right now?

COACH PELINI: Well, it's pretty simple. We kind of equally rep our guys anyway. We're in no hurry to make that decision. That's going to be one that's going to go at least up until the first game and maybe beyond. I mean, I don't know how it's going to play out.

I wish I had that crystal ball to say this is how it's going to be. I do know we have some very capable athletes at the quarterback position. When I talked about -- I mentioned three guys. Really you talk about -- you throw in the obvious, Zac Lee. We talk about Cody Green, Taylor Martinez. We also have Kody Spano coming back healthy, and Brion Carnes, who's now on the football team. We're excited about him as an incoming freshman. I don't know how it's going to play out.

I do like the athletes that are there. I like the fact that we have some play makers at the position, and I have confidence in all of them. We'll see how it plays out.

Q. Coach, in regards to experience and depth, is the offensive line situation the best you've had since you've been here?

COACH PELINI: Absolutely. Not even close. We have the experience coming back, and we have some young guys who -- you know, I did it

at a number of positions. The offensive line position last year where I took a group and redshirted the whole group of them, which wasn't the ideal situation for that year, but it makes you stronger in the future. I think that's the case at the offensive line position.

You saw it at linebacker a couple years ago, and I think it's going to play out the same way on the offensive line this year. We really like our young talent on the offensive line, and we added a couple of young men in the incoming class, and it's nice to have depth at that position because, you know, they pound. They get beat up. I mean, it's a long season, and I think you look across the board, this is the first time that we've had that.

I look forward to -- I really like the guys we have coming back on the offensive line, and I really like the guys that are competing for playing time. I think you're going to see some guys step up, some names you haven't quite seen before. It's going to be a good situation for us.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you for your answers.

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