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An Interview With:

## TEXAS TECH COACH TOMMY TUBERVILLE

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined at the podium by Coach Tommy Tuberville from Texas Tech.

Coach, welcome.

COACH TUBERVILLE: It's great to be here. Great to be back at a Media Day, out for a year working on your guys' side of the ball a little bit. Actually working in television. In television they taught us to speak our mind. I forgot to get that out of my mind a few weeks ago, so got to get back on the coaching side.

We're excited. It's been a tough six months just trying to get everything arranged and organized. It takes a while. It takes a good year. I could remember sitting down interviewing for this job. I go back home to Auburn. My wife is going, You remember how tough this is. You've done Ole Miss and you've done Auburn. It's going to be a good year away from your two boys, who are 14 and 16, and me. Can you handle it? I said, Yeah, we need to do it.

So we made the decision, and it's been great. It hasn't been an easy transition. Obviously, when you go into a new coaching job, everything's not peaches and cream, but it's been fun dealing with the players. They're the guys that you have to go in and sell early and get them on your side and get your philosophy over.

And then same thing with your alumni. I spent a lot of time on the road going out and selling everything to our alumni, how we're going to handle their program and everything that we're going to do and how we're going to try to win and win championships. That's my goal. We can do that. Every day we'll talk about it.

So I'm excited about being in the Big 12. I know we've had some changes, but it's going to work out great. Eventually, you know, when we get into our nine-game round-robin, I guess, it will be a situation where we'll have a champion playing on the field. So looking forward to it, and it should be fun. Questions?

**Q. Tommy, few programs have sort of been defined by their coach as much as Texas Tech under Mike Leach the last ten years. Is that a difficult thing when you come in and the culture changes and trying to get your own stamp on the program?**

COACH TUBERVILLE: Yeah, you have to get your philosophy over, as I said. If you don't sell that to your team and your fans, then you're going to have problems. You've got to let them know up front how you're going to handle things. Everybody's philosophy is a little bit different.

I'm excited about having an offense with the players that we have. We're going to be exciting. We'll change it to some degree. We'll put our stamp on it, but we're going to throw the ball around. We're going to throw it deep, and we're going to be very fast. We're going to be different, but, again, we're going to be explosive. We'll run the ball a little bit more. That will be the difference.

Defensively, we want our defense to take a step up. We want to let them know that they're part of the team. For us to win a championship, they have to be accountable. The one thing I noticed about our defense is they didn't have a lot of confidence. You know, wasn't a lot of talk about them. If it was, it was about, know, not playing very well, no credit on that side. I think they played pretty well last year. A lot of games they played well.

For some reason, everything was focused on offense. I'm a team player. I wanted the players to know pretty quick this is going to be about team. It's not going to be about special teams or defense or offense. It's going to be about team. Everybody is going to play their part, play their role, and get the job done. If we do that, then

we've got a much better chance of winning a championship than we do if we separate the team.

**Q. Tommy, could you compare and contrast your two quarterbacks and whether their injuries in the spring set them and you guys back much. Plus what will be the ultimate factor in your mind as far as deciding who starts?**

COACH TUBERVILLE: Both good kids. I don't know if you've talked with them yet or not. Both have played in the Big 12. They've both been starters in the Big 12. They've both been backups in the Big 12. They've both been injured. They've won games. They've gone through some tough situations, and both can play.

We had them three or four days in the spring. Unfortunately, they both got injured. I've told them that their growing process is part of this. That's the reason I brought both of them. I wanted to see how they handled themselves in front of you and the TV cameras.

Your quarterback is your team leader, not your head coach. Your quarterback has to have the respect of every player on the team from the kickers, defensive linemen. Everybody has to have confidence that the quarterbacks are going to get the job done.

This quarterback, whoever it is, can lead us down with two minutes to go in field goal range to kick the ball and win it by one. They have to be leaders on and off the field, and they have to handle themselves very well.

So this is just part of their growing process coming here today, and at the end of the day we'll have a vote, and we'll let you pick out the starter. That will make it a little easier on me.

What we'll do is we'll go into two-a-days, and I want to get at least two scrimmages with both. It's going to be tough to make a decision, but one will stand out. We look at everything from how they handle the pregame all the way to how they handle the meeting at the end of a scrimmage.

You can look at a guy, and you can think that they might be the guy to get the job done and throw them the football 40-yard-out route or 60-yard deep pass, but there's a lot more to a quarterback. They've got to make decisions. And decisions of winning games, if I'm at the end of a game and we're trying to drive the ball down, and I can run it, but I can also think I can throw a pass in there 30 yards to get the first down. Will they make the right decision to do that? Will they just keep the -- will they get the job done?



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So there's a lot of things that go into a quarterback. Fortunately, we've got two quarterbacks this year. Unfortunately, next year both of them will be gone. So we'll have to look at our young guys. I think it's going to be a heck of a competition for the next few weeks. I haven't been around two quarterbacks like this in a long time. They're both very, very good athletically, and they can get the job done.

It's going to be tough. We'll make a decision. We will not have rotating quarterbacks. I don't believe in having one guy go out one series and one the next. We won't do that. If we have a starter, then we'll have a scenario where we might put a quarterback in just to change the momentum of the game or change the different type of formations that they'll run. We'll have a game plan of our own. We'll have a starting quarterback for the first game.

**Q. Tommy, you talked about how the offense might change a little bit obviously under Mike Leach. He'd throw the ball sometimes 70 times a game or go for three or four fourth downs during the course of a game. Tell us what you envision in a perfect world: How will the offense work, how you break down passes to rush, and maybe give us a little bit of a preview.**

COACH TUBERVILLE: I'd probably say 60-40 pass to runs, maybe 65-35, depending how the defenses play. If we get into a game and find a team that can't cover anybody, we're going to throw it 100. We're going to throw it as many as we can.

Looking at the defense ins this league, they've gotten better over the years. Normally in the Big 12, you've had two or three teams that really emphasized defense. Now you have more and more teams that are really getting better defensively. You know, one thing I want to do, I want to help the quarterbacks out. I think we can win games throwing the ball almost every down this year at Tech with the receivers and quarterbacks that we have.

You know, when you do that, you set your quarterbacks up for a tough deal. When they come up there and that other team knows that you're throwing the ball every down, they're going to get hit every snap. That's what you don't look at. There's not a stat in the game where a quarterback throws it 70 times and completes 35

and four touchdown passes.

We look at the stat of how many times did he have to pick himself up off the ground after he completed a pass? Because it is a long year, and last year Sheffield got hurt, Potts had concussions. We want to protect the quarterback. So we want to slow down the defensive line. We want to take away and protect the blitz. We don't want him to be a target in the backfield.

Me being a defensive coach, I love lining up on guys saying they're not going to run. So somebody's getting ready to get hit. We want him hit every time he throws it, you know, legally. We want to see how many he can take. We want to get away from that. We want to get away from the protect the quarterback and run the ball.

One thing to tell you, you get to Tech and throwing the ball and made a lot of yards, the error rate, it's good, scored points, won some games. I'm thinking we're going to have a couple of running backs that are probably 5'8", 150 pounds because you don't think of a running game.

We've got two running backs that can play. We've got Eric Stephens and Baron Batch. We're going to use those guys. Might be on screens. Might be draw plays. We're going to have some plays that are drawn up where we're going to be more physical. We'll take some snaps underneath the center, but we have to get those guys involved to run play action, to keep them off the quarterback.

You know, we might need both of those quarterbacks if we throw it 70 times a game because they're not going to make it the whole season. So we want to protect the quarterbacks. We want to be more balanced, and we want to give the defenses something to think about other than just rushing the passer every time.

**Q. Tommy, now that the dust has settled a little bit, how concerned are you about the Big 12 in the future? You came from the SEC. You know how aggressive that commissioner is.**

COACH TUBERVILLE: You have to wait and see. Obviously, you hate to lose two teams. We can be a very good conference. You know, I do know the coaches in this league. I'm getting to know more athletic directors. They're going to be very proactive. It's not just about football. It's about every sport.

We want to be an all-around conference, and we will be because the teams that are still with us are very dedicated and committed to that. So I

would just disappointed we lost two teams. We come here, and you lose Nebraska and lose Colorado. But everything will pick up where we left off.

I mean, we have our responsibility as coaches to make our teams better. The presidents and the athletic directors and the commissioner have committed, hey, they're going to make this the best conference in the country. We're all behind them, and we're for that. I'm excited about it.

**Q. Tommy, you talked about doing a sales job going around. Could you just talk about how receptive folks were after the controversy over Mike's departure. Was it tough to get that by you, or were people more open to you?**

COACH TUBERVILLE: It's always tough. That's one of the things that you have to make a plan for when you go in. When I took over Ole Miss in '95, Billy Brewer had just been fired. They had an interim coach in Joe Lee Dunn. A lot of controversy, major penalties. Twelve scholarships a year, two years in a row, no TV for two years. So you had to make a plan on what are we going to sell here to get the fans back in the stands. They were only averaging 17,000 fans a game at home games. Nobody's fired up about football. So you got to make a plan.

Fortunately, when we left, we were ranked in the top 25 and averaging 50,000 a game. So we made progress.

We go to Auburn, Terry Bowden quit in the middle of the year. A lot of controversy, fighting inside the office. You know, who's going to be the head coach? Then I take that one over. We go in, and you've got to evaluate your pluses and minuses and what direction you need to go.

But it all boils down to one thing. As I said earlier, when I got to Tech after the experience of going through those two, you immediately go to your players. Those are the ones that you have to go to first. Those are the ones that are going to rectify the program. It's not going to be coaches. It's going to be players that are still going to be committed to their school, doing things right.

First thing I did when I went in to them, when I first talked to them, I apologized to them for what they went through because players are there to get an education and have fun playing college football, and they went through a season that was

hectic and Coach leaves and the bowl game was a mess in terms of it wasn't about them, it was about who's going to be the coach. So we had to get our players back. So it's really been good.

It could have been very difficult had the players just said, you know, we're not doing this. We don't want to play for a new coach. Or we don't want to change defenses. Or we don't want new assistant coaches here.

So I've been very proud of the players and their maturity and how they've handled it. They're usually a lot more mature than a lot of people making the decisions of what goes on. They know really what needs to happen.

So I've been fortunate that we've got good leaders on the team. We've got guys that have stepped up. Again, I put their feet to the fire.

I only know one way to do it, and at Ole Miss, Auburn, and at Tech, I went in and made it as tough as possible, physically and mentally. Do everything right, be on time. You'll pay the price if you don't. And I've had not one complaint nor one player quit the team. That's the only team out of the three that nobody quit.

So they want to win. They want that. They want to get this thing corrected on their watch, so to speak. We've got good leadership, and things have been very, very positive. Seemed like I've been at Tech now for about three or four years simply for the fact of their attitude and how they've handled this tough situation.

**Q. Are both Taylor and Steven 100 percent and ready to go for fall camp?**

COACH TUBERVILLE: Both quarterbacks are ready. They're throwing. They're running. Steven Sheffield broke his foot last year. They put a screw in, obviously. It either didn't heal right or whatever. He just stepped on somebody's foot in spring practice, broke the screw, had to redo it. I mean, they really were very meticulous on it this time. They say he's in great shape. He's running well.

Potts obviously broke his finger the next day inadvertently hitting a defensive lineman's hand on the follow-through and broke it pretty badly. His throwing finger. And so they operated on it. He's really throwing well. He went to the Manning camp and won that. He threw very well. Both of them, I worry more about the quarterbacks confidence than I do their athletic ability.

Obviously, these two guys can play. We've just got to get them to where their confidence is built up to the fact that, hey, no

matter who they play against, they can play well and play consistently.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you.

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