

December 2, 2005



An interview with:

MACK BROWN

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome **Coach Brown** up to the podium at this time and congratulations for an undefeated season, and a championship for the South. Make a couple comments, and then we'll take questions.

MACK BROWN: Our guys started talking in the spring about coming to Houston for this ball game. It was their goal. After we beat **Kansas**, then they started winning in Houston. Matthew McConaughey came and talked to the team in **Austin** and he said "Get your goal accomplished on Saturday, and then look forward to your dream."

This team has been one that's had fun. They have been relaxed, but when it's been time to play, they've played well. The bigger, the more important the game, the better they have played. They have had three great practices this week, and I'll really be surprised if they don't play well tomorrow.

From **Colorado's** standpoint, I've said this repeatedly for the last three or four years, I think **Gary Barnett** is one of the best, if not the best, coaches in the country. He's overcome a lot of adversity, it's been very publicized. His teams are well-coached.

They play hard and with a lot of enthusiasm. They had really tough luck at **Iowa State**, because they had that game in hand and had the two turnovers for touchdowns that broke their luck.

You can bet that **Gary** will have them ready. They'll play as hard as they possibly can. They know there's a tremendous amount of pressure on our bunch. One of our deals is we have to make our bunch understand how important the game is, but still relax and play. If you know **Gary**, you'll see trick plays coming from him to stir up his team during the game. You'll see blitzing, and after watching our game last week, we'll probably see some options.

We expect a great ball game and are really happy to be in Houston. **Reliant Stadium** may be

one of the best stadiums in the country. If not, it's in that group.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Coach, you're coming off the perfect season and Gary off two tough losses. How do you prepare your guys for such a seemingly overmatched game and not to look ahead to a National Championship?

MACK BROWN: We're probably fortunate that for the last two weeks everybody has talked about how overmatched our team was with **Texas**, and then we found ourselves in a fourth-quarter game. There couldn't be any better game for us leading up to this one. The other thing that's happened mid-season, when we played in **Colorado** and had a great game, we knew that **Colorado** would be the team we played in Houston.

I remember telling **Gary** "We'll see you in Houston," and **Joel Klatt** coming up and saying "We'll see you in Houston." We told our guys they need to understand that. They have been visualizing this game since that time. They have to have great respect for **Colorado** because they have been here three of the last four years.

Q. Mack, Vince is on Cloud 9 coming back to his hometown. Have you spent any extra time this week pulling him aside with all the distractions he's going to have with all the family and friends here to watch him?

MACK BROWN: Yes, and he's been through this before. We played **Rice** here a couple years ago, when he was a red-shirted freshman, and he had all the hoopla about the **Heisman**, before the **Texas Tech** game, and since that time, he has handled himself very well with the media. I feel like last week's game, where he managed the game really well, but didn't have one of his best games, will probably help him tomorrow.

Q. Mack, Gary said that he showed his team the 2001 game on the trip over. Did you do the same with your group?

MACK BROWN: No, I didn't. I showed them the 2005 game in October.

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Q. Mack, Gary says he loves these conference championship games. You have more to lose. Can you tell us again your thoughts on whether or not these conference championship games are a good idea.

MACK BROWN: Well, when you're sitting here right before one, they're a good idea because we need the money within the league for all the schools, and for schools that aren't in a position to get to the championship games, and may not go to a bowl game, and might never be able to get to the championship game, this gives them an opportunity to make some money, and those things are good.

As far as the decision to have a championship game, I've never been asked except by you guys, so the people that made it decided it was important, and half the leagues in the country have it, so here we are, and we're going to do our best to win it.

Q. Mack, just regarding Vince's background, I've read some stories he came from sort of a troubled youth here in this town. Can you talk about what you know about that and the amazing path that he's taken to get where he is today.

MACK BROWN: **Vince** has a great mom and grandmother, and they're very supportive, and he was also raised with really good values, and he's had a good support system around him. His uncle, Keith, has been like a father to him. I think he took a tough situation with his dad and turned it into a positive for him, and **Ray Seals** is a great football coach in Madison High. He's been instrumental in his life as well.

So, the two things we have learned to appreciate about **Vince**, he's very bright, but the two things we appreciate that we didn't know for sure he knows the difference in right and wrong, and it's important him to do the right thing, and that's why he wants to be a great leader for kids.

The second thing is he's got such a competitive team spirit, and if it's a negative, he usually puts the entire game on his back, and we have to continue to talk to him about that he's got a lot of help, so don't try to win the game yourself every time.

Q. Home field advantage, they say there could be 60- to 65,000 in orange and white, and Colorado has a sliver of people. Coach Barnett said earlier this is not a neutral site.

MACK BROWN: Well, as **Gary** knows, if they're all for you and you're playing well, you hear them, so it will not be a neutral site if we're playing well, and that's what we've learned. I coached at LSU one year, and if you're not playing well in **Baton Rouge**, it's like a visiting team has the home field advantage, even though you're in **Baton Rouge**.

We need to play well and excite the fans here. If we were playing in **Kansas City**, they would have more people for them than us, and that's one of the things by moving the championship game around. I remember two years ago here, it was **Oklahoma** and **Colorado**, and there probably wasn't a huge home field advantage that time.

Q. Mack, have you talked -- how much have you talked to your team about the 2001 game? I know there was just one guy extra that played in it.

MACK BROWN: We talked very little to none about that game. It was not a positive for us. It was a great positive for **Colorado**, so we have been talking about the positives of this team in the time since then. That team got this all started because that was our first 11-win season.

And then that team had enough about them to come back after such a disappointing loss and beat **Washington** in the **Holiday Bowl**, which is very, very unusual. Since that time, we have won 10 or 11 teams each. So, that team was really special to us, and a lot of those guys helped us get here today.

Q. Mack, Vince told us he promised you that he would make sure that Texas got to this game, in part because it's in his hometown. Can you tell us when he said it and how he said it?

MACK BROWN: **Vince** is talking all the time, so this summer, the guys -- you always want to win your conference championship, but this summer -- or last spring, I guess, when we told the guys next year's game was in Houston, they were adamant about wanting to get back to Houston for this game, so even then they were talking about their ability to get back here. It was talked about after the **Oklahoma** game. They talked about this is another step toward Houston.

They didn't talk about how great it was to beat **Oklahoma**. This has been something that's on their mind all year. They have been waiting for this moment. Again, our job will be to keep them from getting too excited. This has been their goal,

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and they can't wait until tomorrow at noon.

Q. Mack, would you talk about their kicking game, and especially in a field position kind of game, how it might change your philosophy with Crosby there?

MACK BROWN: You would rather not kick off to them because if they return it to the 25, and kick a field goal, that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen in my life.

When we first started looking at it, and he kicked a 60-yard field goal, they said, "Yeah, but that air is lighter." Well, number one, it's not that much lighter if you see a 60-yard field goal. And then I showed them a 58-yard one in Miami, and it might have been into the wind, so I don't think we can go there. They have arguably the best kicker and the best punter in the country.

And I do think **Gary** does the best job in the country playing team ball. They run the ball well. All of his teams have for years. They use great play action with their wide receivers and tight ends. They play the run as good as anyone in the country. They've given up 79 yards a game against the run, which is second best, and then they make it hard for you to get explosive plays because they're smart in their secondary. They're not a great blitz team. That's not their deal.

They may blitz more to stir them up to start the game that way, but it's not their MO. Because of their ability to punt it and kick it and change the field with just a punt, that makes the kicking game so much more important in this game. You have to either get off the punter and try to block it or get something in punt returns and flip the field because they can flip the field on you very quickly.

Q. Coach, can you put yourself in Gary's position for a minute and talk about what you think it's been like for him the past week to try to prepare for this game after such a bad game against Nebraska?

MACK BROWN: Yes, we got beat in '99 by **A&M** when we had the bonfire tragedy. I'll never forget getting home and watching **Colorado** getting ready to kick a field goal to beat **Nebraska**, which meant we weren't going to have to play them again, because we beat them 24-10 in Austin, and they were much better than we were, and I'll never forget going to San Antonio and everybody got into this, is it an advantage, and I said no, it made them mad.

I'll never forget standing out there and seeing their offensive lineman sprint the length of the field and pointing at our guys. I said, "Oh boy, here we are." We got killed. We got beat 24-6, but

it was a lot worse than that because we couldn't make a first down.

What you learn about sports is anything can happen in a ball game. We've always felt that if you don't have enough respect for the other team to think they're going to play well, you're in trouble. The thing I like about the preparation of this team this week is they know **Colorado** is the best team in the North, and they know they've got great coaches. Our team is not looking at this as a game against two lopsided teams at all.

Q. Mack, after four years, can you give your impressions on Rod Wright and what he's meant to the defense, and the fact he's another Houston guy who's coming back for the Lombardi announcement?

MACK BROWN: Yes, Joe, a number of years ago they changed the rule where coaches could not be involved in the summer workouts, and the kids could not be required to come. It was all voluntarily from their standpoint, and at that time **Rod Wright** and **Justin Blalock** were our two most vocal guys two years ago that said "We've got to do a better job on our summer workouts," and they actually started recruiting guys and forcing guys to get into that weight room. That's the kind of leader he's been off the field, which has definitely carried over to the field.

He was so highly publicized as a Freshman, and then we lost **Marcus Tubbs**, so everybody started double-teaming, and but his stats came down some, but that hasn't bothered him at all. He's stayed as an ultimate team guy. He's one of the reasons we're here right now.

Q. Mack, look at the recent history of the sports and there's so many upsets usually the last couple of weeks in the season. Do you address that with your team and what have you done to get to the Rose Bowl?

MACK BROWN: I told this team, if you're playing for your conference championship, and you're not focused and ready to play, you ought to quit. That's the only thing I mentioned. What a great thing to go undefeated, there's only two of us in America, and put yourself in a position where this team has played well just about every week, and when you -- you have to play consistently good to be great, and this team has done that, and that's why we expect them to play well tomorrow. Even last week, when we score 40 and win by 11, and people think we played poorly, that means this football team has set a pretty high standard.

We've constantly talked to them about

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playing to a standard, not playing to a level of an opponent, or where you think you should be, but playing to the standard of being the best in the country. This team has done that. They have had the ability to be relaxed until game time, but when it's time to turn it loose, they turn it loose.

Q. Mack, a lot has been written about how light-hearted you kept it this year. How tough was that for you? Coach Switzer doesn't remember you talking jive in '84 and '83. Was that orchestrated by you?

MACK BROWN: First I would say, if you ask **Coach Switzer** if I'm more loose than he is, that's probably unfair. I don't think anybody would win that one, best I remember. I've probably loosened up some with him.

I was raised hard, and my coaches were not light-hearted when I was played. They wouldn't let us laugh and speak. When you're on the bus on Friday, you had to keep your mouth shut and be focused on the game. Saturday, you did that as well. That was the way it was with our age group and pretty much that way throughout.

I think probably this team has played with more confidence, and therefore had more fun, and so, they're saying that I'm having more fun, and when you're 11-0, you can have more fun than when you're 9-5. I've tried it both ways. It's a lot more easier to be relaxed around a team who's doing what you ask them to do. They prepare well and play well. You can be more relaxed with them.

Q. Mack, are you a closed-roof or an open-roof kind of guy?

MACK BROWN: I don't care, and somebody asked me that out there. I told him I've got a lot of things on my plate tomorrow, and the roof is not one of them. I'm glad I don't have to make that decision.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the progress Jamaal Charles has made?

MACK BROWN: He's been great. He surprised us how mature he was at **Ohio State** and he had the great run at **Oklahoma** before he got hurt. And then he took a step back and he wanted to still play and he wasn't hurt badly enough not to, but even in this game, I think he carried it two or three times. We have had to revamp our running game since this game earlier in the year. But **Jamaal** continues to come back and work, and I'll credit **Selvin Young** because he's helped him so much with maturity and telling him what to do, and he's been like an older brother

to him, and I think he has a chance to be a great one before he leaves **Texas**.

Q. Mack, could you discuss your offensive line and how they have helped this running back by committing more this year?

MACK BROWN: They've all played together now for about three years and so they all play so good. We lost **Jason** last year and a couple more guys the next year, but most will be intact again for next year. They need to be strong and talented, but they also need to play together. A lot of the guys would come in before, and we didn't have a lot of continuity in our calls. There's not much you can throw at this bunch that they haven't seen. **Ohio State** threw a totally new defense at us in the second quarter. They obviously prepared it in the spring and we handled it. We expect **Colorado** to come out with a different personality tomorrow to stir up this game. They blitzed 21 percent against us the first game. We expect them to blitz a lot tomorrow, and with **Vince's** experience and the experience of the offensive line, we feel like that we have been able to handle whatever has been thrown at us.

Q. Mack, how much have you not shown at this point in the season?

MACK BROWN: There's still quite a bit. We have to make decisions between the one-back shotgun in the eye for one thing, because we have a lot of things in the eye we haven't done this year and we used some of them in the fourth quarter that helped us late last week. We worked so hard on the zone and the zone read, so we still have some things. You always keep trick plays. We've been so far ahead, we haven't used them so much. It's not like we put them in for this game. We have had them and work on them each week.

So you feel like if you do need them in tomorrow's game, you feel like your level of success is probably higher because you've worked on them all year.

Q. Do you think you have Brian Carter in this game tomorrow?

MACK BROWN: Yeah, I think so.

Q. And finally, do you assign a graduate assistant or something to start looking at USC, even though your main guys are focused on this game tomorrow with an offense like that?

MACK BROWN: I think **Brian Carter** will play.

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Q. Mack, can you smell the roses yet?

MACK BROWN: I think Brian's pretty healthy. What happens, and this is a good point, media, in some instances, our fan base, parents, have been asking about the **Rose Bowl** since the **Texas Tech** game, and one of the things that this team has had to learn to do, and I have had to be part of this is learn how to handle all of the distractions from people like that question, Rick, like the parents saying, "Where do I get my tickets, and where are we going to stay."

People in August were talking about this game, and these guys have not been able to enjoy playing. It's one of the things I appreciate more of **Bob Stoops** in **Oklahoma** for the things they've put up with over the last two or three years when people keep talking about things other than the thing in front of them. It's something I talked to **Pete Carroll** about two weeks ago, what an amazing thing for them to have won 33 straight games when people are talking about the end, not the moment.

Thank goodness we took a slogan of "take dead aim early in the year," and we have been able to tell our guys don't listen to all the things around you. About the time you start talking about something other than the things you've got right in front of you, it gets taken away from you. **Colorado** is not happy over their last two games. They have had people very critical of them for the last two weeks. Same as **A&M**. Same MO exactly coming into the game.

We said -- I wore a rat trap around my neck last week with some cheese at the bottom, and I said, "Men, don't eat that cheese or it will snap your head off." At the half time of the **A&M** game, I said, "Some of you nibbled on it. I can tell that for sure. You may not have got your head bitten off, but you felt some of the poison."

The same thing this week. That's why I think last week's scenario will help us this week. This is important to this football team. You don't want to -- even if you could lose this game and go to the **Rose Bowl**, it wouldn't be the same. You want to win all your games. It's been a goal from the beginning. No **Texas** football team has ever been 12-0. That's important for us tomorrow to be 12-0.

Q. The more you win the more outside schools will look at your staff, maybe try to raid you. Locally, Coach Akina's name has been mentioned. Can you talk about your assistants and the process you have to go through where you might lose some of them?

MACK BROWN: I think it's great for them to have an opportunity. How in a world could a guy like myself, who has been so fortunate in coaching, to ask coaches not to take head coaching jobs when they're offered to them. I remember, I thought it was a mistake in 2001, two of our coaches interviewed at SMU the day before the game. I wouldn't do that again. I would ask them to wait, because I thought that was a distraction. So, I've learned some things over the last four or five years too.

But if one of our coaches has an opportunity to get a better job for him, and even if I don't think it's a better job, if he thinks it's a better job for him and his family, what an awful thing for me not to help him, number one, and number two, and when we lost really good coaches, we have been able to replace them with coaches that were good or even better. So, it's been an opportunity for us to bring in new ideas. I have learned from that as well. I probably was more worried about losing coaches five years ago than I am today. I know if you're winning, a lot of people want to come and be part of your program and bring you some new ideas. I would not worry about a coach leaving our staff if it was good for him.

Q. Coach, Vince has said he's going to come back next season. Do you envision any kind of scenario that would happen down the road where he would change his mind? And a follow-up to that, there have been several Longhorns in the past that have had some great years up until their senior year, and they have decided to stay, and they credit you. What do you think of that?

MACK BROWN: Well, let me answer the second one first. Number one, I think the guys have stayed because they like our place. They're treated like heroes in **Austin**. Number one, they're held in very high esteem as a student athlete; and secondly, they're having fun; and thirdly, I think the advice of the ones who have stayed and helped their position in the draft and talked to them about how hard it is in the NFL has probably encouraged guys to stay more than me talking to them.

I would never ask a kid to stay. And usually what our conversation would be is, "If you need the money," somebody going to pay **Roy Williams** \$13 million, I had a college coach ask me once, "How did you get him to stay?" I said, "Well, I didn't have the \$13 million." So, it wasn't the \$13 million. If it's about the money, they should leave hands down, and that's where our discussion starts, and if you need that money today -- and

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we're very honest with them, I tell them it may not be there the same way next year; you could get hurt.

The NCAA helped young guys make that decision to come back with the ability for them to get insurance. Normally they love the college experience. They love the family atmosphere. They love the excitement of the college game, and I do think that is the reason they come back more than not.

Vince has told us repeatedly he's coming back, and he's told you all that also. If you ask if anything could possibly change his mind, I'm sure. Life is different. If he does change his mind, we'll be very supportive of him. We would try to get him in the weight room with an agent and make sure he could get with the best team he could possibly get with and make as much money as he can.

Q. Coach Mack, it's been a perfect season up to now. There are still two games left. Do you think there are still things to improve in the team?

MACK BROWN: Rueben, I think there are always things for a team to improve. This team wants to be one of the best teams in the history of Texas football. They just don't want to be a good team. I think the senior class over a four-year period is 43 and 6. That's the most in a four-year period. Understanding we play more games than back in the early 1900s, but even **Vince**, they said, "Well, this can be the best team ever," but he said, "No, we can win more and more."

These guys have talked about being a great team and they want to finish the season right. If we had lost at **A&M** last week and still could have won tomorrow and gone to the **Rose Bowl**, it wouldn't have been near as good as to finish it like it's supposed to. This game is important to this team.

Q. Mack, back to distractions for a second, is the Heisman something that Vince can use to his benefit and to you all's benefit?

MACK BROWN: Hopefully the **Heisman** voters will wait until after tomorrow. What we've encouraged **Vince** to do is have fun and play. I told the team, "If you're not good enough to play **Colorado**, then you may not want to play **Southern Cal** obviously." We've said all year, with this team, "You are who you are. So, if we're good enough and we play good enough, we'll win tomorrow."

Going into this game, perceptually we're the best team, and he's obviously one of the best three players in America. You have to prove it

week after week, and that's the grind. It's factual, and it's there, and there's really no way to get around it. If he has a great game tomorrow, some of those voters that waited may change their mind.

Reggie Bush is a great player. He's not a good player. I'm amazed **Matt** is 35-1 or 36-1 or whatever he is, and he's obviously a great player. When I sit around, and everywhere you look, **Vince's** picture is up with the other two. He'll be in New York next weekend, and what a great compliment to him. Here's a young guy a year ago, where some people even questioned whether he could play college football, and he's changed a lot of perceptions in 17 games, and I'm really proud of him.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much and best of luck tomorrow.

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