

October 22, 2008



An Interview With:

IOWA STATE COACH BILL FENNELLY

PETER IRWIN: We have Coach Fennelly and we'll have him make an opening comment.

COACH FENNELLY: Good morning. I want to thank everyone for being here. Certainly appreciate the time and effort and energy you give to our student athletes and our programs.

There's no way we can continue to grow this league and continue to make it the best league in the country without your support and your interest. And all the kids that we coach sincerely appreciate, love seeing their names in the paper and stories written about them and the coverage we get and we do thank you for that.

And we're excited like everyone else to start. This is a great time of year with football getting going and the baseball and college basketball, all the teams are excited to start practice.

We've practiced five times. Like everyone else, we're not as good as we need to be but we're still undefeated and excited to see what this team can do. So thanks again for being here this morning. Look forward to talking with you.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. In reference to your funny statement a few minutes ago, in this league, Kim Mulkey could get elected mayor of Waco and Sherri Coale could get elected governor and Gail Goestenkors has her own clothing line. You guys are becoming celebrities. But is that a good thing or a bad thing that women coaches are becoming the rock stars that men coaches have been for a while?

COACH FENNELLY: I think it's fantastic. It's taken too long. I think the names that you mentioned, as well a number of others, are people that are extremely committed to what they do.

They're very good at it. And they're very good at doing more than just coaching basketball. They've impacted their communities. They've impacted our sport.

And they've made a name for themselves in a national basis that's nothing but positive. So I certainly think that the people that you mentioned and some of the coaches that have left our league, like Marsha Sharp and Jody Conradt and Marian Washington and Ceal Barry -- there's a lot of great people that have done a lot of great things. And it's taken a lot of effort and time for those coaches to get where they are and they certainly deserve all the attention they get.

Q. Even though you guys are returning everybody, shuffling the lineup around, can you talk about the importance of getting the kids to buy into the new roles and getting them to know them?

COACH FENNELLY: I think it's the number one thing with our team. We have a lot of returning players. Everyone's returning, and we added four freshmen.

And the challenge for our team is to accept their roles as far as maybe less minutes. Maybe new positions, new things that we ask them to do. And that's the job of the coaches, to convince them that if they do that, we have a better chance to be successful in the best league in the country.

And, yeah, there's some gambles involved with it. But that's what we have to do. So I like the mind-set of our team in the sense of I think they understand it. But at the same time we have to be able to do that daily and understand that from five seniors to four freshmen and in between, sooner or later every coach talks about the team first.

And this is going to be the greatest example of my time at Iowa State where if we have all of our players put the team first, we'll be very good. If we don't, then we're not going to do the things that we could do, and that ultimately is my responsibility.

Q. Do you feel like you have an almost



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an embarrassment of riches in the post game, now maybe more than one post, talking about Wieben and Ross back, but also you have a couple of high-profile non-conference games in the Pac-10 predicted champ and Stanford in the SEC predicted champ in Vanderbilt, could you talk about those things?

COACH FENNELLY: We have six post players on our roster, and we've never had six post players. And I think all six of them can contribute. I think all six bring something unique to our team. So certainly depth in that area has been something that we've never had and could have used in the past in this league.

When you look at the post players that we have to play against. So I really like that group. I like how hard they've worked.

We have some size with Joc and Nicky. We have some athleticism and we have some experience. We brought Amanda with us today. If every coach got to coach Amanda Nisleit they'd never quit and that's the kind of person that never gets enough credit on our team and is someone that will impact our team directly and allows me to come to work smiling every day.

And as far as our non-conference schedule goes, it's by far the toughest one we've ever played. Like you said, we played Stanford, who was pretty good, and Vanderbilt, like you said. That's a home game for us. We'll be excited. We'll play Iowa, we'll be picked to win the Big Ten and as well as San Diego State got picked second in the Mountain West, a great basketball league.

Our team will be challenged and I think, as I mentioned a second ago, someone said where do you want to be when the conference season starts. I said my answer was I hope we're still alive for a post season tournament. With that schedule, you could put yourself in a really bad position coming into the Big 12 feeling like you had to win 10, 11 games to be in the NCAA tournament.

So I think the challenge is use those games to make us better for the Big 12 but you better win some of them. And I hope that we can do our part as so many other teams have done in the Big 12 to win some of those games because that's what the national media -- everyone compares. How do you do against the other conferences, and that's important to us. And certainly we have an opportunity to do that with our schedule and we certainly want to do our part.

Q. When you have everyone back from a very good team, people just assume that



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everything's going to be there, the chemistry and everything. And it's not just a flip the switch. Where as a coach do you get a feel it might be working, and if not what do you do to try to change that?

COACH FENNELLY: That's a great question. That's exactly right. There is no flip of a switch. Every year you start over. We add four new players who have never been through at Iowa State before. You bring back Toccara Ross and Nicky Wieben who were -- have been on the team but didn't play on this team last year.

And so I think it's something that I've talked to them about more than any team I've ever talked to about. It's the ultimate sacrifice of what do you want to do for your teammates and give up minutes and maybe accept new roles and whether or not they can do that we'll see.

And I think you find out in practice early, to be honest with you -- to be honest with you, the first three days of practice was fantastic. Monday was absolutely a joke and terrible. And yesterday we started out just as bad as Monday. And it was not a really pretty sight.

But I think to answer your question a little bit, I think I've learned a lot about our team because the second half of practice was as good as we've ever practiced. They did that internally and managed to change the course of practice, which means they have it inside of them.

They're starting to understand. So that was a good sign to me. I've never been more impressed with a practice in my time at Iowa State than I was yesterday, because it went from that bad to that good in the same day.

And you don't see that very often unless you have a team that's somewhat talented and somewhat has an ability to figure out the moment. And we'll see. I think specifically we'll see -- if we start out 1-4 which could happen, or you're 2-5 and people are writing bad things and saying bad things, then you'll find out for sure.

But hopefully we can get to the point where we're getting better and getting to the point where our team understands what it means to play and what it means to play at Iowa State and what it means to play in front of our fans. That's something we talk about every day.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about this league in terms of -- I mean, you've got a team picked first that gets seven first place votes but

there are three other, four other teams that got votes. Texas A&M goes to the Elite Eight, they're fifth. Can you talk about the strength of the league?

COACH FENNELLY: The biggest thing is exactly what you just said. I've been coaching a long time, I don't think I've ever seen a preseason poll where five teams got a vote for first place. And they're five very different teams.

So I think we have a lot of really good teams in our league. We have a lot of great coaches. We have probably I think 80 percent of the best players coming back from last year's all-conference and if you look through all the stats we have a league that went 8-0 in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

Everything you can measure quantitatively our league is as good as anyone. From attendance to post season play to hall of fame coaches to All-American players. You look at every preseason top 25 poll in the country, there's six, seven teams in our league being mentioned, if not at the top. And I think it's a year where we arguably have teams, if they stay healthy, get hot, have a legitimate chance to be a national championship kind of contender.

You put all that stuff together, I think it means you have a really good conference that has a chance to impact the sport on a national basis, and that's what I think our league has done in the past, but certainly we have a chance to do something more unique this year.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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