

October 23, 2008



An Interview With:

BAYLOR COACH SCOTT DREW

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Coach Scott Drew from Baylor University. Welcome, and your opening comments.

COACH DREW: Media Days is always an exciting one for me. Last year my wife gave birth to a baby boy named Peyton, and this year it's my birthday.

So I do know one thing, someone commented and said "you have a voice." And the good thing when you have five seniors and great leadership, you don't have to talk as much in practice and they do a great job setting the tone and getting across what needs to be passed on to our younger players.

So without further ado, any questions?

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. Judging by the preseason poll, the coaches seem to project this as a pretty wide-open race. Obviously, being picked third in the conference, that's good for Baylor. Is this wide-open race good for the league overall?

COACH DREW: I think definitely fans are going to really enjoy this season. The number of teams can win at any given time. The last few years we've always had one or two teams that seemed like they were head and shoulders above everybody else. This year it's not that way.

And, again, I think it's going to make for a great season and fans are really going to enjoy it.

Q. Scott, given the number of players that you've got returning the flirtation that you had playing at a different level last year, is this team ready to take a significant step now?

COACH DREW: Well, I think last year we achieved -- I mean, only the fourth 20-win season in 102 years, the second time in the NCAA

Tournament in 58 years, first time ever ranked in back-to-back weeks in the top 25. So we took a major step forward last year.

I think the big thing is goals changed after went to the NCAA Tournament. Once we left there, the players realized that we had a great year. But now our goal isn't to make the NCAA Tournament, but it's to have an opportunity to get back there and win some games.

So I think our seniors, their sights are a little higher this year.

Q. Any worry or concern at all about your team performing under these new expectations for this season?

COACH DREW: Coaches always find things to worry about. So you don't have to worry about that. No pun intended.

But as far as expectations, I think that's a good sign. Means your program is heading in the right direction. At the same time, at the beginning of the year coaches always -- there's two things we're always concerned about: the first one are injuries and the second one is the team chemistry. You never really know how those are going to pan out until the season is over. But if we can stay injury-free and the chemistry can be good, then definitely we feel it can be a very special year for us.

Q. Kind of a variation on the same theme. You guys were such a great story. How much has that changed your program, do you think, in terms of just the national perception, the local perception and the Big 12 in terms of maybe getting you in some doors that you weren't able to get into before?

COACH DREW: Well, I think recruiting-wise it's made things a lot easier when we call and talk to recruits. I think they're a lot more interested. I think as far as our scheduling has become easier as far as getting games on TV and national TV.

And then I think the big thing, though, is with our players, their mindset has changed from

the standpoint that we're ready to take another step. And, again, I think every team you can have goals, but I think once you have been to a certain step and a certain place, just like raising kids, once they've crawled, they're ready to walk; once they've walked, they're ready to run.

So I think we're on that step now.

Q. Can you talk about five years ago you were playing walk-ons, starting them, and how your program has evolved since then?

COACH DREW: Well, practice is a little more competitive. And I do know at times our staff will joke about our first couple of days at Baylor when our first recruiting trips were around campus trying to find anyone over 6'-5" who could play on our team.

Now we go to practice and we have a lot of talented players, a lot of excitement. I think most people around campus know who the basketball players are now, where before they were students we were just grabbing out to be part of the team.

So very pleased with how far we've progressed. I think, again, the big thing is coaches realize we're only as good as our players and we've been very fortunate to bring in some very talented players that are good people and have represented the program in the right way.

So as we know, the jockey never carries the horse across the finish line.

Q. You relied a lot on the three-point shot last year. Moving it back a little bit, does that affect your team at all? And was that a good rule change for the game in general?

COACH DREW: At the time I felt it was a good rule change. We'll see how it affects our team this year and how it affects college basketball.

I know with our team I don't think that line is going to have much effect. In fact, a couple of our players I wish would just look where it's at and try to get near it instead of shooting so far out.

But in our situation this year, that line shouldn't have much effect. I think different teams, different players, a lot of coaches, we have front-line players that can flirt with the old college three but now we might not allow them to shoot that because that extra foot.

Q. Kansas winning the national championship, what does that do for the conference and the perception of the conference as a basketball power? Obviously

you did an awful lot of things but you never had the national champion before?

COACH DREW: I think that was the icing on the cake from the standpoint in the last seven years we've had more Final Four teams than any other conference, but until you win it all, a lot of people can always bring up the point, "well, you've never won it all."

So I think by Kansas doing that, definitely has helped with our conference and passing on just the excellent play and as far as the number of NBA players and just the great accomplishments we've been able to have. I mean, last year, you look at it, and the best winning percentage in the NCAA Tournament. We had nine players drafted from the Big 12. So just a lot of positives.

Q. In today's college game with so many guys jumping in the NBA, it's sort of unusual to have the number of seniors that you guys have this year. How much of a benefit is that and how different is that from previous years?

COACH DREW: For us, it's something new from the standpoint most of these guys when we started to build our program all played major minutes as freshmen and as sophomores, juniors, and now they'll be seniors. But I think that's what's helped with the parity in college basketball, so -- because teams that are junior and senior laden and have that experience tend to fare better than maybe some teams that have one- or two-and-done players where it takes time to build that chemistry.

At the same time, I don't think any of us college coaches that will turn down one-and-done players, but it does help with the parity of the game.

Q. Everybody knows about your strength in the back court. As far as front line goes this year, you can rely on some new guys there or...

COACH DREW: One thing we did was improve the athleticism in our front line. Quincy Acy, 6'-8", from Mesquite, Horn High School, top five player in the state of Texas, is somebody very athletic and plays very hard around the basket and I think will excite a lot of our fans with his spectacular play down low as far as dunking. Now we have someone besides Kevin Rogers for the highlight film with those dunks. But Quincy will

help our team.

And Anthony Jones at 6'-10", versatile, can handle the ball and shoot it long. Another good athlete, so that helps with the front line. And then we a transfer from Michigan, Ekpe Udoh, 6'10". He's somebody that won't play this year, but every day he will make our team better, because he got Chris Webber's block shot record as a sophomore at Michigan and a great defender and somebody that challenges our front line every day.

Q. What type of improvement do you think we'll see from Tweety and Dunn this year?

COACH DREW: I think both of them have improved. Tweety has gotten faster, quicker, lost a little more of the body fat that he came in with. He's really worked hard in the off-season.

So I expect him to take another step forward. LaceDarius will move better than he did last year. He had a meniscus injury most of the season last season he played with. And he's moving much better now that that's fixed and he still shoots it from anywhere at any time. But I was going to say now he can play a little better defense.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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