

December 4, 2009



An interview with:

COACH MACK BROWN TEXAS LONGHORNS

PETER IRWIN: We're joined by Coach Brown. Coach, congratulations on a great season, and if you'd like to make some opening comments and then we'll take questions for you.

COACH BROWN: Thank you, I wasn't prepared to speak till 2:30, so I really don't have anything to say (laughing). No, it's always important to be early. What a great place. Kids come in this afternoon about 4:00 to have a walk through with the stadium. It's unbelievable. It was a goal they set to play in this game in this stadium a year ago. And they're really excited about it.

Questions?

PETER IRWIN: All right, we'll take questions. If you would please put your hand up. Again, we'll remind you, no one-on-ones, and if you will please give your name and your affiliation. So we have two people with microphones. We'll start about halfway back on the left.

Q. Is there a different feel to this game when the stakes are as high for your team?

COACH BROWN: I think there's more of a different feel to the game because we haven't played Nebraska this year, for one thing. The previous times we've been in this game we've already played the team, so that makes it different.

I also think the goal for our team was to win the Big 12 Championship, and that's about tomorrow night. And anything you get after that is a dream. And that's what we've talked about all year. So I really don't think the stakes make any difference.

Q. Can you just talk about how this is sort of a culmination of that year long pointing forward ever since the disappointment of last season, and the way you've used this as a

motivating factor? I don't know whether you've brought it up every day, every week or let it just linger?

COACH BROWN: No, eight times a day (smiling). No, a year ago Sunday I walked into a meeting very disappointed myself that our team was not in the Big 12 Championship game. I don't think I've ever seen a more disappointed group of young kids and coaches than in my career than at that moment. It was a very difficult time for me to try to explain to them what had happened. Understanding that we had some of that responsibility not winning at Tech, but they had their hopes up and their dreams and they were shattered at that time.

So what we started doing at that time is said let's prepare to take it away from the system next year. Only way you can assure yourself is control your own destiny to win all your games.

So what we've done is we haven't played off that a whole lot. We have talked about it some and said if you don't want to have the feeling that you had this time last year sitting in that room, play well, because you have to earn the right to be in this game. Our guys have done that by winning 12 games and they've played hard each week, and they've prepared for this game for a year, and I think that's why they're so excited about it.

I do think, obviously, there is a lot at stake for us. But there is a lot at stake for Nebraska as well. But I do think that the Big 12 Championship game right now is more important because that was their goal more than anything else in their minds.

Q. I wonder if you can talk about the first time you got a match-up against Bo Pelini during your coaching career as head coaches?

COACH BROWN: I really don't get into the coach versus coach thing. I think it's overplayed. It's really Texas and Nebraska. It's a great staff on our part against a great staff at Nebraska, and Bo's done a tremendous job. It's a team that's well-coached, they're playing hard.

They're playing with a lot of confidence right now, and they've sure earned the right to be in this game. Could have been an 11-1 team very easily.

Q. You talk about your guys thinking about this since last year, do you feel we're a day away, more relaxed, more focused, more anxious to get this thing going?

COACH BROWN: I think they're totally focused. We've had a great week of practice. We're probably fortunate that our defense did not play up to the standard that they've set, which is a very high standard all year last week. And they're anxious to get back out on the field and prove they're the defense that we've seen from Texas 11 times instead of the one last week.

Our offense is playing at a very high level. Our guys all know that Colt's in a position to win a lot of national awards and same with Jordan Shipley. But I really think they're excited about Texas versus Nebraska and the Big 12 Championship.

The way they've worked this week is any indication, they can't wait to play, and I can't wait to watch them.

Q. Can you just talk about the Nebraska offense a little bit? It's been much aligned all season long. What do you see on film that maybe kind of negates that?

COACH BROWN: After they had the tough game with Iowa State, they've completely turned it around in my estimation. I think Bo did a tremendous job of looking at who they are. Some people said Coach Osborne got involved with it, and we know that Coach Osborne knows what he's doing as well. And they're running the ball. They're being very physical. They've got a huge offensive line. They've got three good backs. Zac Lee is really managing the game well. He's an accurate passer. He's a big, strong guy at 6'2", 210, but they're holding the ball. They're playing field position. They're running the ball and being very physical. If you can allow them to run the ball and get two dimensional on you, you're going to have trouble. And they're playing field position. And I think you can see the day they sat down and changed their attitude and their philosophy offense, they can still run option, they can still spread out, but if you can't stop the running game and stop them running right at you, you're going to have a long night.

You could see the day they changed it, and since that time they've been undefeated.

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Q. Can you talk about your seniors, the great senior class that you have and how important it is for them to win a Big 12 Championship tomorrow?

COACH BROWN: Yes, it's a tremendous class. They've won 44 games, led by Colt McCoy, who is the winningest quarterback in the history of college football. They're a team that's won three bowl games. They've done everything right for us. They, I think, won more games than anybody during that span.

The one thing they haven't accomplished is winning in this game. And that's why the game to our senior class is very, very important tomorrow night.

Q. Have you made any personnel changes in special teams this week? And specifically your kickoff coverage teams?

COACH BROWN: We changed everybody. We took them all out. We're not letting any of them play on special teams.

In fact, the truth is, none of them played last week, so we've got them all. No, we've got some guys banged up. We missed eight tackles on the kickoff coverage. We missed some tackles on punt.

I really don't think we handled the short week very well. We had some tired kids. We gave them four days off. We let them come back and do some stuff on Monday.

But we were off Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for sure. And had three really good days to rest. We felt like the short week is very, very difficult. It's the first time I've ever been involved with it, especially for defenses and special team, because they have to run, they have to chase the ball and they have to tackle. Then it's an advantage for you when you've got more time to prepare for this game.

So we hope the negative for preparing for both of us will be a positive now.

But we've gone back and looked very closely at our kickoff coverage. Our kickoff returns. Our punt, on our punt block and return. Because we return a kickoff for a touchdown. We had one other decent kickoff, but with giving up that many points we didn't do very well. Nebraska's a very good unit in special teams that will be the key tomorrow night. We need to play better.

The good thing about us going into this

Coach Brown - 12.04.09

game is we're 12-0 and haven't played our best game. We haven't put it all together. Each special teams unit has had a great moment. The offense has been good at times. The defense has been good at times. We've been good for halves. We've still not been good for an entire ballgame, and that's what I'm excited about. Hopefully that will come together tomorrow night.

Q. Along those same lines, I'm wondering if you can talk about the challenge of Nebraska special teams poses for you guys with Henery, and Kunalic and those guys?

COACH BROWN: The punter's unbelievable. He's like a magician that kicks the ball inside the 10. The field position is horrible for most teams that they play. The but they're well-coached. They've got speed. This is probably the fastest Nebraska team we've seen.

Their corners, their linebackers are fast, the receivers are fast, and therefore their special teams are faster. We feel like that's one of the great match-ups in this game. Both have been good at times on special teams.

Q. Your thoughts about what he means to Nebraska's offense with over 1,000 yards rushing?

COACH BROWN: Roy is 6'2, 210, a big powerful guy. All of their offensive linemen are 6'5" or better, they're 300 pounds. They can knock you around. When you go into this game you know you're going to have a physical battle. He's a guy if there's not a whole there, he can make one. He is a key factor in had this ballgame, he and the other two backs as well.

They've got three good backs, but he's been the guy they're going to pound you with.

Q. There's a lot of stock that goes into -- with all the great football in Texas, which is the best team in Texas?

COACH BROWN: And you're from the TCU (laughing)?

Q. With TCU as a threat this year for the first time in a long time, is your team the best in Texas and why?

COACH BROWN: I think that's a great question. Surprised that you would bring it up (smiling). Gary Patterson is a great friend of mine, he and Kelsey. He has done a tremendous job coaching. He's done as good a job coaching as anybody in the country. The way our system is set

up, who knows until we see how it plays out. And we can all sit around and say was Ricky Williams better than Jim Brown? And nobody will ever know. We can all speculate on what is the best team and the ones that like the purple will say they are, and the ones that like the orange will say they are. And all it is is about chatter. That's the fallacy in my mind in our system right now.

So unless the two teams play on Saturday, you don't even know who the best programs are. You have to figure out who the best team on that day is. And TCU has earned the right to be considered as good as anybody in the country. They've done a tremendous job. I'm really proud for them.

Really and truly, we're not here to try to prove who is the best team in Texas. We're trying to prove who is the best team in the Big 12. That's what this is about this weekend.

Q. My question is about the SEC Championship. How are you going to either keep an eye on it, or keep your players from having an eye on it? What is your approach to that lingering?

COACH BROWN: What we've done with our players each Saturday that we've played and even Friday night some when they are not out at the movie, because sometimes we go to a movie. If it's an earlier game, we do not. We tell our players to watch the games. Do not get emotionally involved with the games, but try to put yourself in the position of the player that plays your position in that game and play our game throughout that game and see what comes up and what you think we would do and how you would handle it and how you would handle situations.

I see don't think their game comes on. We'll be headed this way shortly after that. We'll be in meetings all afternoon. Our guys will not see that game.

Q. As far as the result of that game, and the obvious implications that it has for you y'all?

COACH BROWN: The result of that game has absolutely no importance to us. The result of our game is really important. We do our job, and then we can start looking at what's out there for us.

But this is an older team from a leadership standpoint, and they've been around a long time. These five-year seniors saw all the speculation and

people talking about looking ahead in 2005 when we won the National Championship. I can remember playing Colorado at this same time and everybody saying well, are you looking at SC? Are you looking down the road? And I remember playing A & M, and everybody said are you looking at Colorado? So we've been through all this.

Because the seniors are older and they've watched, we even had some of it last year where there was so much anticipation would we be in the Big 12 Championship game, would we not? Should we be? The kids have been through all of that. And they understand there's only one thing that's important, and that is how they play tomorrow night.

Then on Sunday, we'll have plenty of time to go back through all the other stuff.

And it's obvious the way we've played, they've kept their focus all year. This is a team that started out in the top two or three in the country, and if we had not been in this game a lot of people would have felt like the team had not lived up to the standards.

So they've had pressure every game. There's been speculation about a lot of things every week, and I don't think it effects them very much. Of the they just keep playing.

Q. You mentioned 2005, very similar, that game was in Houston, a decisive home-field advantage for you guys. Was it big for you guys then? And do you anticipate the same situation tomorrow?

COACH BROWN: Nebraska has as good a fan base as anybody in the country. And our fans traveled as good as anybody in the country. So I think there's probably been fights this week for tickets, very honestly.

I think we got into the game a week before Nebraska did, so I'm hoping our fans were able to buy a lot more tickets than theirs. The Colorado fan base that year did not travel as well. So we had a large majority of the crowd in Houston. I would think it will be more of a mix tomorrow.

Q. Could you talk about the guys up front for Nebraska? Starts with obviously, Suh. Could you talk about them?

COACH BROWN: All four guys up front on the defense at the University of Nebraska have really impressed us. I mean, Crick's the leading sacker with seven sacks, Suh is the leading tackler on the team with 70, and the two ends are underrated in our estimation by media and people

because they're both really, really good football players.

I think one of the things that helps Suh so much is the other three guys are so good around him. Even though they don't get a lot of credit, you have to put two on him, because he's a dominant player, not just a good player. But then you've got three other guys that are singled up and that gives them an opportunity to make plays.

So I think their defensive front is really, really talented. And I do think the key to this ballgame will be which group of linemen on both sides of the ball play the best, because it will be a real physical game.

Q. I've heard you say because you throw the ball so well, you're not quite as concerned about the running game. But with their pass-rush, is it a little more important to be able to run the ball tomorrow evening?

COACH BROWN: We'd like to be balanced in every ballgame. If someone gets stubborn and says we're going to take the run away and allow you to pass it, we have as good a passer as there is in the country. He also can make yards with his feet. So our running game is different. And Colt can be part of our running game as well as our backs.

So what we pride ourselves in is not being stubborn, and not going in and saying unless we have this many yards rushing and this many yards passing, then it's not a successful game because we're in the points. So we don't care if we throw it every play or run it every play.

Most teams will go into ballgames and try to stop the run, and make you throw it. Try to make you one-dimensional. It's what everybody tries to do in college football. Because if you allow somebody to stay balanced, you're going to have much more trouble stopping them than if you know what they're going to do.

But I do think our protection of Colt, their man-to-man match-ups with our receivers will be the key in the game.

Q. There are so many stereotypes about what quarterbacks should look like, how big they should be, what they should do well. Colt's obviously got a well-rounded game. Do you think physically even though he doesn't fit the old stereotype of the 6'4", 6'5" type of guy, he's kind of the stereotype of what you'll see

quarterbacks look like for years to come at this level?

COACH BROWN: We feel like as long as your quarterback is mobile, none of the other matters. You take Todd Reesing, for example, you take Chase Daniel last year. Those two young guys were great quarterbacks at their respective schools. They were quarterbacks that broke records. And both of them were smaller than we think quarterbacks should be. Both of them were considered passers but they can both run.

I do think when you have a quarterback that can do both, it's like being balanced with the run in the past because between Vince Young who was 30-2 as a quarterback at Texas, and Colt's 44-7, those guys have won a lot of football games over the last seven years. When you go back and look at their production, a whole lot of their success even in the passing game was their ability to make the pass-rush miss them, start toward the line of scrimmage where they are a threat, and stop and be able to throw the ball down field when people come out of coverage.

So we do think in the future, as well as right now, the toughest quarterbacks are the ones that can do both.

You know I didn't prepare anything. So if you see me after 2:30, I'll have time to think about what I was going to say.

Q. Colt was saying earlier this week, and you said it probably since halftime of OU that he was pressing earlier. Now with all that's on the line tomorrow, and he's going to be the last guy with the shot, the Heisman contenders. How do you make it for him still to be fun and keep him from pressing?

COACH BROWN: We told our team -- we used a Bill Parcells quote that basically your record is what it is, and it shows who you are. And Colt has played so well for 44 wins to stay healthy. Hasn't had bad games, really. He's had probably the five of the best games in his career the last five weeks. And he's got a great feel of what's going on the football field, especially offensively. At the first of the year we weren't playing consistently well, the receivers weren't in the right places, we weren't settled in our positions, the running backs weren't rotating. They were in and out with injuries, the offensive line was hurt. And I think he felt that. He felt things weren't right.

When we did a better job as coaches getting kids settled and getting them to have some

experience at the same spots, he has played just lights out. And since that time he's had a lot of fun.

Colt, honestly, he will not watch any of the ballgames tonight or tomorrow. He does not watch TV. It's the weirdest thing I've ever seen. I ask him questions to set him up and see if he's seen it.

Last year Coach Holt supposedly made a comment about him once that wasn't good, and Coach Holt wrote him a nice letter and apologized. And Colt came up to me and said, Coach, what is this about? Because he didn't know he had even said it.

I've been in Greg Davis' office when he walked in and Sportscenter was on, and he said, Coach, do you mind turning that off? Because he wants to play. He wants to be a young man that is in college football with a little time left. He's living a dream. Obviously he'd like to win the Heisman. Our team would love to help him win the Heisman because we treat that as a team award.

But I think he is so excited about the possibility of winning a Big 12 Championship that that definitely overrides any of his individualism when he's looking at the Heisman.

Q. Do you think we'll see Mark Mangino back in coaching?

COACH BROWN: I hope so. I like Mark. I don't know Mark really well, but I knew him as an assistant at Oklahoma. And then to see the job he did at Kansas was phenomenal. Obviously we played them two or three weeks ago, and I had a good conversation with Mark before our game and briefly after our game. And talked to him on the phone next week.

Jim Tressel and Mike Godfrey are both very good friends of mine, and they think the world of Mark. So I do want to congratulate him on the great success he had at Kansas, and I know that he'll have another chance somewhere.

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