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An Interview With:

COACH BILL SELF

COACH SELF: I'm excited. We're obviously a much different team than what we were last year, lost three quality guys, but we recruited fairly well and have four newcomers who we think will all be good players, and our returning guys have improved. So I think we'll be a fun team to watch play, a lot different than what we've been in the past because we don't have the same size we've had in the past.

But certainly a team that will play a little different and hopefully rely on our speed a little bit more than we have in the past.

Q. Good morning, Coach. How about those Orioles, huh?

COACH SELF: They're pretty good.

Q. Every year you are charged with the task of making guys become better, improving their game. How do you reenergize each and every year to rise to that challenge?

COACH SELF: I think that's what -- how does anybody reenergize themselves to do their job? I mean, that's our job. The other thing is it's not really work. It's something that we love, to be a part of what we feel like is the greatest game on earth.

So I don't think that's very difficult, but it is fun to watch guys get better. We take a lot of pride in, wherever they come to us as, whether it's a Wiggins or maybe a Brady Morningstar or Tyrel Reed, our job is to get them as close to their ceiling as possible and as quickly as we can. That's something that our coaches work very, very hard to do.

Q. Coach, going back to your reference to Wiggins, I mean, obviously he got a lot of attention as a scorer, but he was also your number two shot blocker last year, and I think

he was tied for second as a defensive rebounder. In what ways do you feel like the new guys will be able to compensate for some of the void that he left as a defensive player?

COACH SELF: He was -- Joe, I think, got voted as best defensive player in the league, but Wigs was our best defender. Joe blocked the most shots.

I think we'll do it by committee. I think that, as a team, we were probably as poor defensively last year as we've been in a long time. I think this year's team has maybe a different mindset, maybe more capable physically to be better defenders, but we do not have a rim protector like we had last year.

We'll do it by committee, and there's enough competition in the gym, I believe, that that will force guys to become better defenders because of the fact that the guy that they're competing for spots with or competing for minutes with will probably do what we ask them to do.

Q. One of the big stories in college sports right now are autographs and authenticating autographs. What do you tell your guys? How do you deal with this issue?

COACH SELF: We've actually run it through our compliance in the past and have ways to handle it, but it's not ever going to go as scripted. Somebody asks for an autograph, the perfect thing to say, who do you want me to make it out to? If they say, well, don't, just sign your name, well, then, you automatically know it could be for sale. And with you having no knowledge of it.

Our guys sign autographs for an hour, 30 minutes after every game. We try to limit it to one thing and have it be a child as opposed to an adult, but there's no telling how many times you have children come bringing you ten items to sign that isn't for them, it's for the adult that told them to go do it or paid them \$5 to go get it done.

It's a tough deal. I don't understand those cases at all, but it's a little bit different when you're

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signing randomly than it is if you're actually sitting down and somebody's handing you an abundant amount of things to sign. That would be a little bit suspicious to me.

But try to educate our players, hey, if if you want an autograph, just ask who to make it out to. If they say, don't make it out to anybody, then there's really absolutely no reason to sign it.

Q. Obviously, the Big 12 conference has been -- it's been highly contested for years. A lot of people are vying for the top spot. Do you feel like this year there's more parity in the conference compared to past recent years?

COACH SELF: I don't know. The appearance is there's going to be a lot of good teams in our league. Last year our league was fabulous. It was arguably the best league in America, and statistically it was the best league in America.

This year I've seen a lot of the preseason publications, and a lot of them have five teams that are preseason top 25 teams, but to me, that really doesn't mean anything either. A lot depends on how we do nonconference. Let's just face it, we need to play well nonconference because that sets your RPI up for the entire year.

But there's multiple teams that would have a legitimate shot at winning our league this year.

Q. You've got a lot of moving parts in the backcourt, a lot of guys that were highly sought out coming in. How is that competition shaping up? When do you feel you might know who's going to get the bulk of the minutes there?

COACH SELF: I think there's a chance Wayne's going to play a lot. Truthfully, we've got seven good perimeter players -- I didn't say great, but really good perimeter players. There is a lot of competition there because you can't play seven perimeter guys. We'll play five and maybe six in certain situations.

So I think practices are a little bit more heated. I think the guys are competed against each other, but it will probably be at least two or three weeks before I have a feel for how we'll start the season, and how we start the season, I guarantee, won't be how we finish it because we've got some young kids. When they figure it out, they're going to get pretty good.

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