

**July 21, 2014**



An Interview With:

## **BAYLOR COACH ART BRILES**

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Art Briles, the head coach at Baylor University.

Coach, your thoughts on the up coming season.

COACH BRILES: Pleasure to be here. Very inspiring, intimidating. Everything else that goes along with it. I guess we're batting lead-off today.

Well, the thing that's a little different is I don't know what the commissioner expected, but we're not going to try to bunt or get a single. I promise you that. We're swinging for the fence.

So maybe he should have put us fourth because that's just the way we approach the game. But it's been a pretty productive '13. It's over. We're very excited about 2014 without any question, because our guys have learned how to win at the highest level and have worked diligently on and off the football field to keep our name good and that's what it's all about.

You ask me, Coach, are you defending the Big 12 title, protecting it? How can you defend and protect something that nobody can ever tell you -- 2013 is gone forever. That title is ours. We're attacking 2014 just like everybody else. That's our mindset with our players, and that's the way they've been approaching everything.

So we're just kind of geared up and ready to go. It's that time of year. The hiding's over. It's time to come out of the shadows and play.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. You talk about batting lead-off, but really today you guys are the heavyweights here on day one of Media Day. When you think about where the program has come under you**

**the last few years, what do you count as the reasons for that?**

COACH BRILES: You know, I appreciate that perception. And that's something that we're working on, because we certainly don't perceive ourselves that way. We still see ourselves, me, personally, our team, we see ourselves as the guy fighting hard, scratching hard to try to get some recognition and some respect. And so that's something we're having to deal with a little bit as perception, image of Baylor football, it's a little different than what it has been in the past thanks to our players.

We have to learn how to prepare as the hunted as opposed to the hunter. We've always been the hunter. And I don't want to lose that edge and that attitude and that's something that we're working hard to maintain.

So heavyweight, you know what I mean, I try to eat as healthy as possible, so I don't know about all that. But we certainly don't feel that way as a program.

**Q. You said you don't perceive yourself that way, but I think the highest Baylor has ever been picked in the preseason poll is fourth back in '96, the first year of the league. Is there just a different feeling, though, for you and your team heading into this season knowing that people outside of the program in the country as a whole sees the expectation level risen for you guys?**

COACH BRILES: Yeah, it's entirely different and the thing that's really good about it is I don't know what the preseason polls have been. I haven't looked. I did notice we were picked second in the Big 12. As far as national polls, I haven't seen anything. I don't know if they've come out yet.

But the advantage of that is that like last year I don't think we started the top 25. I could be wrong. But I don't think we did. But you get on a hot streak and you start No. 8 to 12 in America.



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**A Briles - 7 21 14**

And you win your first eight games, you're a hot football team. You're hot as anybody in the United States of America. The next thing you know you're No. 2. Might be No. 1.

If you're a hot football team and you start at 27 and you're as hot as anybody in America after eight or nine weeks, you're No. 12 or 13.

So the advantage with our perception, our image nationally is we have a chance to fulfill faster, to get to where we want to get faster, which is getting in the Final Four this year.

I think if you ask any coach in America what would be a pretty good starting place, that would be getting in the Final Four.

So that gives us a better opportunity to get there because of our national image today as opposed to four, five years ago.

**Q. Coach, last year I asked you about Bryce Petty, who of course was going into his first year as a starter, and you said expectation is for him to be the best quarterback in America, set every Baylor record. As he comes back now, a year under his belt, a Heisman contender, what's the expectation now?**

COACH BRILES: You know, honestly, personally and professionally, I'm a little upset about the way it all transpired last year. I certainly felt like he should have been in New York without question.

I mean, your first-year starter you win 11 football games, win the Big 12 Championship for the first time in school history, throw 4200 yards, 33 TDs, three picks, and you sit at home in December? Do those numbers again this year, he'll be in New York. Might win it.

But that's the whole deal. His perception, his image is different than a year ago because he had nothing. Now he's got substance, he's got something people can believe.

What he can bring this year is an attitude of when I talk, people are going to listen a little bit. Like I tell the players you want to be listened to, produce. He's produced. He's got a chance to be heard. When he speaks, now people listen. As far as what he can do this year just win football games, win games with his national name, everything will take care of itself.

**Q. We all know, of course, football is a contact sport so I want to get into some of the NCAA guidelines as far as helping to prevent concussions. What role do you do as the Baylor head coach to help keep those down?**

COACH BRILES: Just follow all the guidelines that are set before us. Player safety is always foremost in our minds from the way we work out to how many days we go on the road to the time we spend on the field to how much contact we do in practice to monitoring every single athlete we have every single day.

So, I mean, this game has been going on a long time, and I'm glad the advances we're making to protect our players. So whatever the guidelines are we're going to do maybe and then some. That's what we're going to do.

**Q. How anxious are you to getting to the new stadium and what do you feel like it's going to do for Baylor football?**

COACH BRILES: Anxious, excited, I don't know. My whole deal you can't get excited without preparation. So our goal right now is we're just going to prepare. We can't go over and slap each other on the back and hug necks and smile and grin and then go out there and not perform.

So our goal right now is we're preparing to play 60 minutes to win a football game August 31st. That's our goal, that's our objective, that's the way we're approaching it.

The stadium speaks for itself. What can I say get on the Internet and look, drive down I-35 and look, get in a boat and go down the Brazos River and look. Show me something better.

It's going to be as unique stadium as there is in the United States of America. What it has done in my mind is that those 44 to 60 million people that drive down I-35 every day, some eight-year-old girl or boy is going to be sitting in the back seat buckled up hopefully and look out the window to the right or the left, depending on which way they're going, they're going to say, Momma or Grandmother, man, look at that place. That place is beautiful. Where is that? And she's going to say, Baylor. And then so for the rest of their lives they're going to associate Baylor with excellence. And that's hard to come by and the only way to get it through the production of image.

So our image is good.

**Q. I noticed on your roster you've got a lot of great talent here from the Metroplex. How big is that, because you're going to be able to get the key players from DeSoto and Allen, one of the top regions here in North Texas to come to Waco, like Ahmad Dixon did**



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**from Central Texas?**

COACH BRILES: The great thing about where Baylor is at is the location. We're hour and 15 minutes from Austin and Dallas and two hours 15 minutes from Houston and two, two thirty from San Antonio. Location is a key. Now we recruit DFW area really hard. We go Central Texas really hard, East Texas and we go down in the triangle area in Houston very hard.

So anytime we can score some big guys from this area, it's a big deal because it's just so convenient for the families. And we'll always have a real good influx of Dallas Fort Worth kids without question.

**Q. Coach, of course one of the big keys to your season last season was resurgence of your defense. How do you feel about an inexperienced defense this year? Who do you think is going to be able to step up?**

COACH BRILES: You know, the thing that really helps us last year we played great defense in the Big 12 without question. And I think we had more three and outs than any school in America. Anytime you do that, you give the ball over to defense and you've got a pretty good chance for pretty good outcomes. They did a pretty good job over there.

And those guys really were the catalyst of our football team. We lost a lot of good football players without question, but we got a lot of guys back that we have a lot of confidence in. It's like Petty coming in last year. Only one way to get experience; that's to get on the field and play.

So we've got a lot of good football players that we've recruited that have been there two or three years that have been waiting to play and this is their opportunity.

So I feel very comfortable on that side of the ball. I think up front we'll be as talented and dominant as possibly anybody in the United States of America and those guys can do a great job keeping pressure off the back end.

So feel good about it. I like our style I like our people and I like our concept and schemes.

**Q. To piggyback on the question about the defense, you're talking about Bryce Petty. Who is going to be the Bryce Petty on the defense that steps up? Is it going to be somebody like Shawn Oakman or give us another name.**

COACH BRILES: You hit it right. Bryce, he's certainly a catalyst for us. He went down

about the seventh or eighth game last year didn't get to finish for the season. And he's here today. He's on all the awards lists. And he's got great bloodlines. His dad was a great player in the NFL for many years.

So he's a kid -- Shawn Oakman is -- he's just mammoth. I mean, if you are looking for a friend he's a good one to have, if you like winning.

So I'm anxious about him. But to let him be loose and play but we got a bunch of other guys. I mean, Andrew Billings, great freshman. Jamal Palmer, another defensive end, great player. Our two corners we feel really good about coming in, Terrence Singleton and X-man from Houston. And then Terrell Burt did a good job for us last year. And Orion Stewart, spot player playing a bunch. Terrell started, and Orion, middle spot, played when (indiscernible) was in and out.

We feel really good about the whole nucleus of them without question.

**Q. I wanted to talk to you more about your success in being able to recruit in the east Texas area. You've had a lot of gems come out of this area.**

COACH BRILES: We've always hit east Texas hard every time I was at Houston. They had a pipeline when I was playing back there in the '70s, a lot of good kids, east Texas kids, I saw then these guys are talented and they can play. And most of them are small town kids, and I like small town kids to a certain degree because I like people that are used to having people look at them. So you have to be responsible.

But, yeah, we've hit it hard. One of the big hits just since I've been at Baylor is Kendall Wright's. He's kept that name alive out there. This guy came in here played high school quarterback, 20th pick in the draft, had a phenomenal season last year over Tennessee, over a thousand yards receiving. So he's a big name out in that area, and like I said those kids all keep up with each other. And we've got some big-time players from east Texas. There will be more Kendall Wrights on the table before it's over, too, I promise you that.

**Q. Coach, last year you had a chance to get comfortable at home with a couple of games before you hit the road, Kansas State game you mentioned, one of the bigger wins. This year you have three road games early in the season. How important is it, you and**

**Buffalo and then Iowa State and Texas, to knock out three Ws early on to get some momentum?**

COACH BRILES: That's a great question. Of course, as a coach, our mindset is not looking past August 31st. I mean, the one thing I do know is that we played three games in 13 days to start the season.

So we've got to do a great job monitoring how our team is from the physical standpoint, the mental standpoint, that early in the season, because that hits pretty fast and furious.

And that's our first little band of games that we're looking at, because we got 13 days we're going to play three games. So that's forges your season right there, get it going.

So after that then we'll settle down. We've got a week off before we get into conference play and we'll start gearing up for that then.

**Q. You talk about '13 being over. Does the Bowl game motivate you? What did you learn from that game? What do you take from that loss?**

COACH BRILES: Appreciate you bringing that up. (Laughter) the last couple of words there are pretty strong. But I guess truth hurts. That was actually '14. So that's still with us. No, I mean, it was a definite out. We played a good football team. That's the thing that is paramount over anything else. But I think what we got to see is maybe how we got viewed when we weren't viewing ourselves that way.

And so we've talked about it. We certainly hope that we've learned from it. And that's -- like I said, the only way to get experience is to go out there, feel it, touch it, have a taste for it. And that taste wasn't very good. So it's been very motivating for us all spring and summer.

**Q. If you've answered this -- because I missed a little bit of the beginning and you don't have to answer it again, but can you talk about Shock Linwood and what sort of season you think he'll have? He was pretty darned good last year in his limited playing time.**

COACH BRILES. Shock is a great player, another east Texas kid. Just got great balance. He's got great vision, he's got great heart. He's just a really, really good football player. And he's a very passionate guy about being great.

So we're very fortunate to have him. He came in there and really helped us last year when Seastrunk got hurt and kind of carried us two or

three games there. Got a little overused. Got beat down just a little bit. And so that's what's really -- you gotta watch your running backs because those guys are trying to hit them, trying to hit them pretty good every play.

So he got a little bit beat down. But he's a tough kid. He's a great inspirer and he plays with a tremendous amount of passion. He's an excellent player.

**Q. With the improvement of your program, the success you've had, any plans to upgrade your nonconference schedule, your nonconference schedule is very similar to what you were when you were at the outset trying to build it up.**

COACH BRILES: You know, I mean, plans, I'm sure there's plans in the makings. The way I've looked at it is, I mean, you want to get in the Final Four and win the Big 12 and go unscathed. You do that, you go 9-0 in the Big 12, you're going to be in the Final Four because you're going to beat probably two top 10 teams, probably two others in the top 20, and maybe another top 25, which is what we faced last year.

That's a resumé that's good enough to match any other conference, because other conferences with the cross-over games aren't getting that kind of competition week in/week out like we are in the Big 12.

**Q. To follow up on that, are you at all concerned the lack of a conference championship game might cost the Big 12 when it comes to the playoff selection?**

COACH BRILES: You know, I think time will tell. Honestly, I'm not. I think it's just going to be down to how the season plays out without question like it would be every year.

But like I mentioned, if you have the ability to go through this league undefeated, which I'm not sure when the last time it happened was, quite honestly.

I know the last previous five champions might not have done it. I don't know. I know we didn't. Kansas State didn't. Oklahoma State before that, I don't think Iowa State beat them right at the end in there. And then prior to that was Oklahoma probably in 2010. Did they go undefeated? Did you say you're from Oklahoma, sir?

**Q. They did not.**

COACH BRILES: Then Texas the year before that. So I don't know. I think they did? Yeah, they ended up in the National Championship game. I think that kind of speaks for itself.

I mean, with what you do going through this league, no, I don't see that as a problem at all. But who knows. I mean, that's why they formed the committee. We'll see how the committee thinks because we can't think for them. All we can do is do our best on the field.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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