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An Interview With:

BAYLOR COACH ART BRILES

COACH BRILES: Certainly excited and proud to be here. In our profession, if you can show up again another year, it's always a great year. So I'm happy to be back, happy to represent Baylor and the Big 12.

I was at a luncheon a few days ago, actually here in Dallas, and somebody asked me, What's your highlight, Coach? Could you give me a highlight over the last couple of years or something? I said, Hey, a highlight to me is this time of year. This time of year, when there's so much anticipation, so much energy, so much hope and vision, that it just kind of makes you be excited. Makes you be happy. Makes you be fired up because everybody's got aspirations and dreams, and it's our job to help people fulfill them.

So this is the best time of year. I'm, like I said, very thankful to be at Baylor University and be a member of the Big 12. So we're excited about this season. We feel like we've got a unit that understands each other, loves each other, respects each other, and knows how to win football games. That's a critical thing. There's all kinds of experience. Our guys have good experience. They have winning experience. They have championship experience.

That's a big feather in Baylor's cap in our locker room because that's what runs your football team is your locker room. We've got good guys in there that are great leaders. There's four of them here today that represent us in great fashion. So I'm very proud of them.

Q. A lot's been made about the change at quarterback. I wonder how you would compare Seth maybe to where Bryce was at the same point in their careers.

COACH BRILES: That's a great question. Certainly, a fair question. Quite honestly, I felt like

I knew Bryce just a little bit better, what his abilities were, how his mind worked, and I thought how he would perform. With Seth, it's still kind of a process to where we're trying to fill out exactly how to coach him, what motivated him, what his strengths are, and make sure that we give him opportunities to be successful.

He's got a tremendous amount of talent. He's got a tremendous amount of drive. He's a local kid from Garland High School. He's a guy that I really respect his work ethic, his attitude, and his take on how he needs to perform.

So those things are pretty clear. I mean, the thing that we've got to do is make sure that he doesn't feel like he's got too much pressure on himself to perform at an extremely high level because, with nine back on defense and some pretty good people around him offensively, just got to be good. You don't have to be great. You've just got to be predictable, and that's what we'll expect out of him, especially early till we get a feel, and then we'll turn him loose.

Q. I have a question about the other Bryce, Bryce Hager on defense, losing him. What kind of ground do you have to make up then in terms of what he did for that defense, in terms of the leadership and the productivity?

COACH BRILES: Bryce and Bryce, anytime you lose guys that have started for two or three years, middle linebacker, quarterback, center, all those guys are key cogs. It's because they're in leadership positions. So we lost two out of three. We got Kyle Fuller back at center, but we lost Hager, and we lost Petty. Those are big puzzle pieces that we have to fill.

But we like our guys. We like our people that we got there. We feel very good about Grant Campbell, Taylor Young, Raaquan Davis, Aiaivon Edwards. We've got young people that we have a lot of confidence in that have made plays for us in the past. The only way to get an opportunity to have game day experience is to play on game day. Once these guys get a chance to play, then you

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have an opportunity to prove yourself.

RG3, Matt Florence, Bryce Petty, now we'll see what Seth Russell can do. You have a chance to get on the field and perform, and we've got some guys that are going to be given that chance.

Q. What are you doing to combat penalties this year?

COACH BRILES: Penalties?

Q. Yes.

COACH BRILES: You know, I mean, trying not to commit them, first of all, but it's a subjective game, quite honestly, from the players' standpoint to the officiating standpoint. So it's kind of momentum. Momentum works for you and works against you, in the football field, in life, and in the penalty situation.

So it's a situation where it's certainly been critical against us at critical times. I'm flashing about eight or ten examples in my head. But on the flip side, we've fortunately been able to maintain at a pretty high level of performance on the field where we've been able to overcome some of the drawbacks of penalties. It's the nature of the game. You don't have to accept it, but you've got to deal with it.

Q. Since 2010, you've been there and turned this program around. Can you talk about the progress you've made in these past five years that compare to the other teams. You've got to be really pleased with the success you've been able to put together at Baylor.

COACH BRILES: I don't know if pleased would be the right word. I just think that we've kind of been on a mission, and our mission has been to create an atmosphere of excellence, of championships, and of guys that can play at a fearless attitude and a fearless level. That's just kind of been our goal. We didn't jump in it there and say we want to do this and be better than that. We just want to be the best that we can be.

So what we've tried to do, or what we have done is we've just maintained a fence around our program, and we haven't looked at anybody else. We've just worked from within and said, this is the way that we're going to do it. This is Baylor's way. We're going to concentrate on what we do, and we'll see how it turns out.

So we've been fortunate with getting good people, great new stadium, great attendance, great

energy from our fan base, and it turns into great results.

Q. I was going to ask you about your defense, and you brought Shawn and Andrew, and you've always talked about how the defensive line could be the best in the country -- I think I'm quoting you. But what about your secondary? Even though you have a lot of starters back, are those jobs open in August or up for competition?

COACH BRILES: We really feel good about our D-line, and we felt real good about them a year ago. Last year we were saying -- you know, I felt like they had a chance to be the best in the Big 12. This year I certainly feel like they have a chance to be the best in the nation.

That coincides with how your secondary can play. If we do a great job up front, then it certainly lets the secondary play a little more freely and have the offense have less time to make decisions. But on the back end, we feel really good about those guys. We've got four guys back that started last year. Once again, a couple of them have started for a couple of years out there, so they'll be three-year starters. And they've got good experience.

It gets magnified as you progress and get into the big games to where you might say, hey, that might be a weakness or a flaw, but you have to understand that to get to those big games, you have to win big games.

So these guys have all helped us win games. We have a tremendous amount of confidence in them, and there will be some heated competition throughout fall camp and really as the season progresses.

Q. Art, you have the new silver helmet there in front of you. I think they officially call it gunmetal gray. And then what's your impressions of that? But do you have a favorite out of the assortment of helmets that you guys have?

COACH BRILES: That's the first I've heard that, gunmetal gray? That's a little wordy for me. Yeah, we like it. It's something that we dreamed up a couple of years ago. Of course, nothing happens overnight. So we were afraid we were going to have to wait until '16. They got it to us in '15. I think it will be nice. It will be a good change. It's a neutral color that we can fit into our

color scheme.

As far as a favorite, if we got one more point than the other when we've got that helmet on, it's a favorite for me that day. Our guys usually end up picking out what we're going to wear. So I'm kind of neutral on all that.

Q. Coach, I like big people. I'm sort of enamored by them. You have the biggest of the biggest in LaQuan McGowan. I see where he's wearing No. 80 now, Art. So I just wanted to know, I know you've kind of moved this kid now to tight end in his fifth year, and he's just everything that you see in college football, but he's the biggest person in college football. A little bit about the desire and the fact that you've moved him to tight end and what we can expect and what you see from this enormous, great kid.

COACH BRILES: Well, first of all, I'm like you. I like big guys too. I like them. I like them a lot. I respect your football IQ, and I think that's very important for people that are involved in this game; that they have a good football IQ, they understand the game and understand the people and understand the concepts and they understand everything that's going on in the game of college football. So I respect you for that.

To answer your question, I don't think he's just the biggest guy in college football. He's probably the biggest guy in football in general. He's 6'8", 403 pounds right now, slimmed down to that. So he's really doing a good job. The reason that we did move him is that he can help our football team. I mean, that's the bottom line. Everything we do is for the big picture. How can we get our guys in position to help us win?

It's a chance for LaQuan to play 14 to 25 plays a game and be effective. We weren't sure that he could be effective playing 88 to 100 plays a game, which we would like to run offensively at a guard position.

So this is an opportunity for him, with his unique skill level, because he does have a very unique skill level. If he wasn't skilled, if he couldn't catch the ball, if he didn't have live feet and he didn't have a good presence about him, then we wouldn't put him there. But it's an opportunity to put him at a position to where we feel like he can make a difference in our football team and help us win games.

Q. Talking about a big guy, what about Shawn Oakman? A lot of superlatives thrown

around about him. I'm curious from your perspective, is there an adjective or a superlative that you're most impressed with now as he heads into what most people think is going to be a big year?

COACH BRILES: I don't know what the other superlatives are, but the ones that I'm proud of is great leader, great human being, college graduate in December, and a guy that's unwavering in his motivation and his ambition to be great. So those are characteristics that I feel like we all should possess.

And Shawn has done a tremendous job of seeing the big picture, being a great leader for us, understanding the magnitude that he can have for our football team, the leadership ability that he has for our team and for himself.

So we're blessed that he decided to come back, Drango too, because that's two potentially first-round draft choices from a year ago that hopefully will be able to fulfill that dream in '16.

Q. So he asked about LaQuan McGowan. I just have to ask, what do you think is the biggest improvement he made in the off-season? We saw that video of him making one-handed catches. What's the biggest improvement he made?

COACH BRILES: I think just his consistency. It's hard on a big guy. It's hard on a big guy to get up and grind every day. It's hard on anybody. But when you're 400-plus pounds, you know you've got to burn a little hotter.

So I think he's learned how to burn hot, to see a goal, to chase a vision, to chase a dream, and to work hard to fulfill it. So to me, that's where he's improved over what he was prior.

Once again, we can all look at that and use that daily, but he's done extremely well. We're really proud of him, and we're excited about what he can do for us this fall.

Q. The committee's decision in December, did that make you guys at Baylor rethink your scheduling philosophy at all?

COACH BRILES: Well, those were long-term thinking. Truth be known, I think, if we'd have gone 12-0, there's no doubt we're in there and we're rolling. So that's something, if we win all our games, it takes care of itself.

The scheduling format, these things are made years in advance. We're actually working on

our schedule to maybe make it look better to the public and help us, if it does come down to that, but I've never met a good loss or met a bad win.

So our job is to win. My job is to win. And if we line up and we win 12 games this year, we're going to be in the final four. I think you can put that in ink right now. Because we will have beaten many ranked teams in this conference, and last year we beat more top ten teams than anybody in America.

So we come through there without a blemish, we'll be in good shape. So will be the Big 12.

Q. Coach, I think early on, when you first took this job, I think the motivation was to get to the top was easy, the whole starting from the bottom and we want to get there. Now that you're here, you won back-to-back Big 12 titles, and you're still not the favorite to win the title this year. Do you guys appreciate that as still being able to have that chip on your shoulder, that you've still got work to do? Is that something you relish?

COACH BRILES: Did you really say started from the bottom and now we're here? Did I hear you say that? Never heard that before.

We're never going to lose that. Getting chosen second, I mean, that's okay. Like I said, it's better than getting third. I guess you've got to win it three times in a row to get picked first.

We understand how we've been able to get to this point, and to get to this point has been through trying hard to earn respect, never earning respect, understanding that people don't know our names. So we want to make people know our names by our actions, by our performance on the field.

So that's something that will continually stay with us because. Even if you do achieve what you'd like to achieve, there's always going to be doubters, and doubters are motivators.

Q. Quick question about when Coach Montgomery moved to Tulsa late last year, how you might have got involved and when you found out he was interested, and what role you might have played. Did you try to talk him out of it? And then the quick transition then to Kendall to take over.

COACH BRILES: All that stuff happened -- I'm trying to think of the days, but I think it was about the middle of December around the 14th, 15th, somewhere in there. We were

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actually in Katy, Texas, recruiting. I was in Katy, and Monty was somewhere else, might have been Tulsa, and he gives me a call. I was all for it, all the way.

I've been with Coach Montgomery since '96 or '97, and he's been a tremendously loyal person. He's done it the right way. He's never self-promoted. He stayed under the radar. He's let his actions speak for himself. And he's done a tremendous job, tremendous coach, very intelligent, very innovative, and very caring. So I was extremely, extremely happy for him, as I was Dino Babers, who's the head coach at Bowling Green now, who was on our staff.

The transition to Kendall was kind of a natural transition. We didn't have a lot of time to get ready before the Bowl game, with it looming about two weeks away at that time. Kendall's been around our system and our program ever since he could say mama. So he understands what we're doing, and that's critical, and it's important because we don't have to reteach. We just have to rethink a little bit.

Our players know what they're getting. They understand how they're going to be treated, what they're going to be expected to do, and how they're going to be expected to do it. I like the fact that Kendall is going to be calling the shots. I think that he'll bring a very innovative, fearless type of approach to our offense -- not that we've been extremely conservative, but I think that we'll even be able to escalate that and take that to another level because you don't want to stay the same.

When you stay the same, people catch you, and you get caught. It's called an MO, and that's why criminals get caught, because they do the same thing over and over again. You track them. You look at them. If you hunt, you know this deer comes here every day, or if you fish, you know they get in this fishing hole. So you've got to be a little different.

So I think it gives us a chance to be a little bit different, and that's exciting to me. It's very exciting.

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