

Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

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Matt Campbell

Iowa State



THE MODERATOR: We're now joined at the dais with Iowa State Head Coach, Matt Campbell. Coach your thoughts about the upcoming season?

MATT CAMPBELL: First and foremost, let me say I'm appreciative and proud to be here at Big 12 Conference Football Media Days and obviously the opportunity to represent Iowa State and Iowa State's football program. I can tell you, somebody asked me earlier, are you ready for the football season?

I can tell you it's been a whirlwind seven months. I feel like we just got done playing a football season in a lot of ways, and anytime you take over a program there is a lot that comes with that.

You know, really proud. I think I've been able to get a great head start to things and have done a lot in the short amount of time. A lot of credit there has to go to our coaching staff and I think one of the greatest parts of our transition process for us here at Iowa State has been the ability to have so much continuity with coaches that have been with me and we've been together for a long period of time.

I think that unity and unification of not only that coaching staff but people that have touched the program and been involved in our program since the day I've gotten there have really come together to put a vision and lay a great foundation to be able to build off going forward, and I'm greatly appreciative of those coaches and the people that have joined our team since I've been there.

Right or wrong, anytime change happens or occurs, it's difficult at times. A lot comes with that. I can tell you this: I think our team and our football players within the program have really started to buy into the change. You know, that starting point for us was spring practice. Practice 1-15 I saw great growth among our football team and our football program. Our concentration points didn't have much to do with scheme, I'll be honest with you. A lot of it had to do with some core values that I believe in and attitude and effort, really understanding the ability to perfect your craft and the opportunity to come every day and a chance to get 2% better every day.

That's hard enough for us to do, let alone asking 18-22 year old men to do on a day-in, day-out basis, but I felt that our kids made great strides in what we wanted to do and equal I thought our kids did what I asked them to do off the program. When you start to build a program, not just a football team without a football program really in student-athlete experience it's getting those people to value off the field what they do on the field. I asked our kids, please, don't compromise off the field because it will really hinder your ability to reach your full potential on the field and I thought our kids ended the spring semester, we had the highest GPA in 12 years for an Iowa State football program, over a 2.8 GPA. We had 47 of our young men who had over a 3.0 GPA, and I was proud of our young men and their willingness to make those strides off the field equal to what we are doing on the field.

Obviously we move into a critical time and have for the last couple of months for our football team. It's the summer. All coaches come up here and they're excited about their teams, not only here but across the country and you talk about predictions and those things, but unfortunately it's what happens here in the next couple of months, the ability to overcome adversity, to stay healthy, to get better one day at a time that defines our success.

I know myself and this coaching staff can't wait to get back on the practice field with our football team, get out and see the growth that we've been able to make over the summer and see where we're at, and I think we all look forward to the challenges ahead of us, and with that said, I'll open it up for questions.

Q. Matt, you mentioned in the hallway when you first came hear you looked at what caused so many injuries to, I guess, hurt this team over the years. What are some of the things you found, I guess, reasons?

MATT CAMPBELL: You're right. There were a lot of injuries. I think that's been an issue. Our biggest starting point was just the strength and conditioning process. I feel like we've got one of the best strength coaches in the country, a gentleman that was with me for the last five years at the University of Toledo and did an incredible job, and I think there's so much that goes to strength and conditioning and strength training. I thought that was our pillar for us, that our starting point

was how can we be proactive rather than reactive in that process. Obviously that's not a guarantee and we will see the results of that here come fall camp and obviously this football season. But that was our starting point for us.

Q. How much of an adjustment will it be scheming to handle Big XII offense and is that the biggest adjustment for your staff coming from Toledo?

MATT CAMPBELL: That's interesting. Obviously you look at the conference and see the success of offensive football. I think in some ways obviously on a much, much smaller scale I think the Mid-American Conference is very similar in terms of scoring a lot of points, up-tempo offense, trying to outscore people, getting in shootout games and kind of what it made its niche for as well.

So I think we come from a conference and at least we understand the schematic piece and the intangibles, but like I said, we're entering a much, much higher scale and in a conference where you're doing it at an elite level, and it will certainly be a great challenge for us and we certainly look forward to that challenge.

Q. You spent most of your life in the state of Ohio, most of your football life of course in the state of Ohio. There an adjustment when you step out of that comfort zone? We all know about Ohio's great football tradition. What did Ohio do for you as a football player and as a football coach?

MATT CAMPBELL: Let's talk transition first. The first part of your question. Again, I was never looking to leave the University of Toledo. I had a great job. We had a great place. I always said if we were going to leave it had to be the right situation for me. One of the great things that I found was that Iowa State, the culture around the program, the leadership at the University, those were things that fit who we were, our coaching staff, and building a program that I really believed in. So that's been an almost seamless transition, a little bit, is moving to Iowa.

That part has been great and about the state of Ohio and growing up, number one, I grew up with a father who was a head high school coach in the state of Ohio playing football there for one of the winningest head coaches, high school head coaches and having a chance to play for Larry Kehres and I think we all know the success he had at his Mt. Union program and being the winningest college football coach of all time, and it laid a fabric and foundation for who I am today in terms of a football coach and understanding the game of football. I've got a great respect for the state and growing up there and the product of football that comes out of that great state.

Q. Matt, welcome to the Big 12. I think the whole nation was sort of awakened when you beat Arkansas last year, Matt, and I was curious, for your players, they're kind of getting to know you. Do you ever talk about that particular game and what you did as a team collectively to beat the Razorbacks?

MATT CAMPBELL: Obviously that was a great win for us, and I think the country found out about us, but it didn't shock anybody in our walls because I think we had built our program to play at that level and to not be afraid of anybody we played.

Obviously what makes the Big 12 really unique is you play those games every week and you have to play those opponents week-in and week-out. We haven't talked about that with our team, but I think it's the mentality and the understanding and the belief that you come into the walls of our football program with. I do think we have to create that mentality at Iowa State and we have to continue to understand that every time we step on the field we expect to win.

You probably say that in this room and people may chuckle, but the reality is that's where we're going and that's what we are building and we had the ability to do that with the University of Toledo with our young men. And a lot of credit goes to our kids. We had great players and great kids and we were so fortunate as we've come into Iowa State that we've got a lot of great character young men that I think want to be successful and know what it takes to be successful.

Q. Championship game coming into the Big XII in a year, format, that sort of thing. Do you have any thoughts on what you would like to see in terms of how teams feed into that?

MATT CAMPBELL: Well, I will say this: Being the new guy and not getting an opportunity to really go through the schedule and certainly the Big 12 for the first time it's probably unfair to have any definite answer to that. What I can say is coming from a conference that did play in a championship football -- have a championship football game to play in, the opportunity to keep teams relevant, the opportunity to fight all the way to the end of the season for an opportunity to play in a championship game, I think that's huge. It's going to be really unique and really interesting to see how that process looks in the Big 12 and how we go there. But I do think it's got a chance to be another great asset to this conference.

Q. College administrators, they don't seem to be afraid anymore to hire coaches under 40 which is good for people like yourself and the profession. With age on your side, as a positive factor, you probably sell to recruits, how do you balance trying

to be hip and cool and relate to them versus putting the hammer down as their head coach and doing it at a place that the previous coach had a ton of energy and it still didn't work out for him.

MATT CAMPBELL: Sure. Well, again, the age piece, I said that in my introductory press conference at the University of Toledo when I was 31. Age is a number. It really is. Really it's about experience and it's about the opportunity of who you learned under and the people that you've learned under. I think it really builds who we all are as coaches and I think every head coach that comes up here today is a product of who they learned the game of football under and the people that they were around.

For me, that's where I'm extremely blessed to be a son of a head high school football coach to have a great high school coach, to have great mentors in this profession growing up. That's unique saying hip and cool, I think if people knew me I'm probably not hip and cool but I am the young guy. I appreciate you saying that. Hopefully my wife will hear this. I think the reality for me is you have to be who you are, though, and I think that's where, you know, maybe the biggest thing I've learned at a young age is I can't try to be somebody else. I have to be me. I have to do it my way, how I believe it can be done and surround myself with people that have the same vision that I do to continue that course. It's a great question, but that's my response to that.

Q. How much does it help the transition you got a young man in Mike Warren at running back, and do you anticipate recruiting the state of Oklahoma quite a bit? You've got a kid from Norman committed to you right now who is a senior.

MATT CAMPBELL: Sure, Michael Warren, first of all it's great to come into a football program and have a kid who has had the success that Michael has, especially early on in his career. He's a tremendous talent. My background with Michael is I recruited the heck out of him and at one point he was this close to committing to me at the University of Toledo. So I was fired up to see that face in the locker room when I came to Iowa State. So I think he has talent and will continue to get better as his career continues to grow and the state of Oklahoma will certainly be an area for us that we focus on in terms of recruiting because I think throughout the state we've already identified that there are extremely talented young people and young men that can have a great impact in our program, so that will be an area that we certainly will concentrate on.

Q. On the topic of recruiting out of state, how do you feel about satellite camps now that you're outside of your bread and butter of Ohio? How are you going to go about satellite camps, and how do

you feel on the topic and how it's working now?

MATT CAMPBELL: I think satellite camps are really interesting. I think there's obviously -- there's a disconnect in some ways with where we're at. But I think as you see it, there's certainly great benefit in terms of whether it's Iowa State or whomever going across the country and getting young men the opportunity to earn a scholarship at one of these camps or evaluate young people.

I can also understand the value of where we're at right now it seems to be a little out of control in a lot of different ways. I think there is a happy medium somewhere in there. But I think we have to always remember that these rules can't be put in place. It's gotta still be about the young men and their families. These 16, 17 year old prospects that are trying to -- whether it's get a scholarship by us or whoever it may be. But giving them the best opportunity to be successful and I think that's where it gets skewed somewhere. Sometimes down the line is we think about us as the coaches, but ultimately it's got to be about these young people and their families because they're the consumer in this whole thing.

So I've got varied views on it, different views on it, but I think I'm certainly pro student-athlete and pro opportunity for them to be successful and get as much exposure as they can.

Q. Matt, how did you view the past happy Big 12 from afar, and how does that mesh with your offense philosophy and what you want to do?

MATT CAMPBELL: Well, that's a great question. I think from afar I was always consistently impressed with the skill and the ability of the people and the young people within the Big 12. The players, the quarterback play, the skill play. It's been extremely impressive to watch from a distance.

Again, I always thought there was a lot of parallels, at least with the high scoring, how games ended up as to what we were playing in, but on a smaller scale in the Mid-American Conference, I think, a lot of similar games and outcomes. Now what we have to do is define who we are. What are we? What's your program? Just because it's a high-scoring, pass-happy league that doesn't mean we have to build our program around what our university stands for, what the Iowa State stands for, what our program should look like and feel like.

Again, we have to be us. We can't try to be somebody else. We're going to work hard at that. I don't know if we will be able to be that right away. But our starting point will revolve around our players and what they do really well and what gives us the best chance to be successful and make sure we do a great job of aiding

that as coaches early on.

Q. A year ago, Iowa State did some expansion that opened the stadium. Seems like every year a third or a fourth of the schools in the league have something going on with expansion of facilities. What's your thought on the importance? Why expansion or improvements are important? Is it about the fan base, recruiting, all of the above?

MATT CAMPBELL: Well, I think coming in that's certainly been my first impression even of what we've seen here at Iowa State from the day I got there. Again, we played there two years ago and we come this year as soon as we got the job and the end zone part of the stadium is done. I think it's a little bit of everything. I think it's certainly recruiting today. It's an arms race in a lot of ways in college football especially when you are talking Power Five football today.

The energy that it has put into the fan base in that area, that section for Iowa State has been incredible. It sold out in a matter of days and hard to get a ticket there right now. I think it's the ability and also the vision of the leadership team on everybody's campus to, how can we enhance the student-athlete experience? And how can we also continue to empower our fan base and excite our fan base with what we have the ability to surround and make their experience exceptional as well. So I think it's a continuum that we're on and it's probably going to continue for a long time in crippling athletics.

Q. Matt, I think I read when you got hired that you played a game in Ames a few years ago and you told the people that -- I think you told your wife you could envision this is a place you being. What was it about that trip that peaked your interest in Iowa State?

MATT CAMPBELL: It's funny. We played that game. It was a game that was played in late October, so it was a nonconference game. They had already played Big 12 games and we had already played conference games and we had stayed about 15, 20 miles away, and I'll be honest with you at the University of Toledo we played at great environments. We played at Ohio State and The Swamp, and we played at some great places.

I don't know if I had much knowledge of what Iowa State was or its fan base was prior to that football game, but as we came in that day and I'm the young guy, I don't like to sit in the hotel too long. So I would rather get to the stadium and get out and flow the football and be around our guys and we got there early. The passion, the energy, the crowd, the environment, I was blown away by that experience there in Ames, and if you've been there and people have seen it, it's a

special fan base. It's a special group of people, and, you know, the passion and the energy and the pride that they have for their university is exceptional. I left there that day, getting to Jack Trice Stadium, feeling that environment and watching it throughout that game.

I did go home to my wife, and I said this is a really special place. It's unique. It's got a great setting and something special could happen here. And that was the end of our conversation until we fast forward two years later and with the craziness of our season coming to an end and this was the one school that really peaked my interest because of that experience. But it was that experience that certainly helped.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. Best of luck in the season.

MATT CAMPBELL: Thank you.