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An Interview With:

## NEBRASKA COACH BO PELINI

PETER IRWIN: At this time we'd like to welcome Coach Pelini from Nebraska. Coach, welcome, and if you'll make yourself reasonably comfortable up here with all these folks and make an opening comment. He's going to introduce his players, I think they're not in the room, but he can make a comment about each of them.

COACH PELINI: It's good to be here. Looking forward to the upcoming season, and we've had a good summer. The kids have been working out well. And today we have with us Joe Ganz, our quarterback, one of the core leaders of our football team.

And he came in and really finished up the year very well at the quarterback position. And held onto the job during the spring and really think he's preparing himself to have a really good year this coming year.

Mr. Slauson, one of our offensive guards, once again, heck of a football player, a couple year starter. Is really a core leader of our football team. Also really a good group on the offensive line and we think that he's going to have a heck of a year.

Barry Turner, Mr. Turner, from a defensive side, once again, a kid who started a few years for us and Barry is somebody who has really stepped out and had a good spring. He's going to play defensive end for us and we think he's going to be one of our leaders on the defensive side.

It was really a hard choice who we were going to bring. We have a good group of seniors on our football team and kids who have really bought into what we're trying to do. And we think that we're going to have a good core leadership group going into this year and really excited about the upcoming year and who we have.

So we're excited about the year. There's been a lot that's happened since I took over. And

we've had a lot to do. And the process is ongoing, and we're not a finished product yet. I don't think anybody, any coach here in front of you over the next couple of days will tell you that they're a finished product yet. We have a lot of work to do.

But up to this point the kids have bought in, worked hard, and really set themselves up to have a good camp and get ready to play football here come the end of August and into September.

So just ready to open up for any questions you might have.

PETER IRWIN: We'll take our first question.

**Q. Coach, could you kind of expand on the things that make you confident in Joe Ganz?**

COACH PELINI: Well, once again, he's very intelligent. He's more athletic than I thought when I first got here, he's a drop-back style guy. And he shows he can run and move his feet and do a lot of things.

And he's a dynamic leader, somebody who plays with a tremendous amount of confidence and has that toughness about him, attitude. The kind of guy you want leading your offense. Being a significant core leader on your football team.

And I think he's somebody who is going to have a very good year. He can make all the throws and he can also do some things with his feet. So I look forward to having him.

I feel real comfortable having him as our starting quarterback and think he's set up to have a really good year.

**Q. I was wondering, is there anything that you see in the Big 12 that has changed from the last time you were a part of this conference?**

COACH PELINI: Well, I think it's not just the Big 12 but it's college football in general. You see all the spread offenses that are happening. And it's really gone to a lot of the quarterback-run things, and a lot of the -- it's changed. It's gone from option football to zone read and spreading the

field and fast break type offenses.

And trying to really extend the field. Use as much of the field as you possibly can. I've seen a lot of that over the last few years, and really all of college football is going to that.

And, you know, I was really taken back when I first got back to Nebraska seeing the numbers, the offensive numbers that were happening in the Big 12.

You see that the leaders in the Top 10, I believe we had about six of the Top 10 in the country came out of Big 12.

For a defensive guy, that kind of woke me up a little bit. But I think it's become an offensive league to a certain extent. But I think at the same time, again, you've got to understand, I think all the coaches understand, you've got to be able to play good defense to win football games. But there's been some big numbers over the last few years.

**Q. Bo, you talk about the evolution of football since you've been gone. But how much confidence does it give you that you also had Marlon Lucky around and he can run the ball and that's kind of an endangered species in this conference, a big tailback like him?**

COACH PELINI: You know, my belief is there's two things you have to be able to win football games right off the bat. You have to be able to stop the run. You've got to be able to run the football on offense.

Having not just Marlon Lucky or Helu and Quentin Castille and a good solid offensive line. We want to play physical football in Nebraska. We want to be able to run the football when we want to and not let people dictate to us but dictate to the defense what we want to do and impose our will on the opposing team.

If we're able to do that, you're able to control the clock, you're able to control the pace of the football game and it's going to make you better not only on offense but on defense as well.

And I think that's something that you have to be able to do and something we're going to be committed to doing at Nebraska. And having a good stable of running backs really helps.

**Q. As a former defensive coordinator, when you look at your defense now, how far away is it from being the kind of defense that Nebraska fans expect with the black shirts?**

COACH PELINI: You know, I don't know that yet. I know even, you know, when I was at LSU the last few years we had a lot of success.

But did we ever reach -- you just gotta keep raising your standard. You can never be satisfied no matter how good you get, you keep getting better.

I think that our kids right now are at the stage of just learning. They're trying to learn the system. We're trying to get it taught. I thought we accomplished a lot in the spring. We're nowhere near where we want to be yet. But we'll get there. There's plenty of time. There's 29 practices and then on through the season.

And I think that we have some talent on the defensive side but there's a lot of learning and a lot of things that we need to get taught. And I think that kids are committed to doing it and we're just going to keep measuring ourselves against ourselves right away and just try to keep getting better every single day and try to get prepared for that first game and then keep that improvement going throughout the year.

And it's an ongoing process we're going to be faced with. But, fortunately, I've been in this situation a number of times over the last couple of years where we installed a defense and we're trying to get a group ready to play football and get game-ready.

So I've been through it before and I feel that we're right on track where we want to be. And I think that we'll be ready to go come August 30th.

**Q. Following up on what you said about spread offenses. What will it take for college defenses to catch up to what the spread's been over the last several years?**

COACH PELINI: Well, I hear a lot about spread offenses. And the bottom line is every spread offense is different. And there's not one -- there's very few that are the same. Everybody features different things and they obviously have different personnel. Defensively you have to be very multiple to be able to effectively deal with everything you're going to see on a week-to-week basis.

And you can't just line up and have one base defense and expect to stop everything that you're going to see over the course of 12, 13 games.

And you have to be multiple. You have to really teach your kids conceptually and teach your kids to be able to react and adapt on game day, because things are going to change. It's ever-evolving on offense and you have to have the same flexibility on defense. You have to be very

flexible and multiple and your kids have to have a good understanding of what you're doing so they can make the changes on game day and easily make adjustments.

**Q. Bo, when Nebraska got off track and you're back to get it back on track, is the bigger reason for it getting off track that the right athletes weren't recruited or was that how they were developed when they were there? What's a bigger challenge for you, upgrading the recruiting or the development in the athletes?**

COACH PELINI: Well, I think those two things in my opinion go hand in hand. Part of being a good recruiter, it's one thing about being able to recruit and bring in guys that have three stars, four stars, five stars, however they rank them.

But it doesn't do you any good, because most of the time if you're not developing them once they get on campus -- because at the age you're getting, no matter how good they are in high school, they really can't fathom how much more there is for them to learn, grow and develop as a football player.

So you want to get very good player and as good of players as you can, the guys that fit your system athletically, but at the same time once you get them on campus it's our job to make those kids the best they can be and keep pushing them to grow and become and to really get outside of their comfort zone and understand that they've never arrived.

And the bottom line is this: Kids at this age, once they graduate from you, they probably still haven't reached their potential. And there's just a lot more for them out there. And the group we have understand that and are working to keep getting better every day.

**Q. Bo, you brought up a need to be multiple and flexible. How can you do that when offenses are increasing the tempo of how they operate the way they are now?**

COACH PELINI: Well, the role changes are really going to be interesting this year as far as how the tempo sets up, the roles with the 40-second clock and the play clock. That's also going to be a challenge.

But you have to have it within your system. I know defensively there's never been a defense created -- every defense has a weakness and has strengths. And you have to have enough in your system so you can match up and do the things you

need to do and create different problems for the offense.

We try to be very -- have an offensive mentality on defense. We want to attack. We want to dictate to the offense as much as they're trying to dictate to us.

And if you're always in a reactive mode, then you're going to get beat. And you're going to have some problems at the end of the game. We try to be very -- on the cutting edge, I should say. But we try to do many things and have enough multiplicity in our defense that we can give a lot of different looks at the same time that the offense is trying to give us a lot of different looks.

And we teach accordingly. We try to get our guys to have enough understanding of what we're trying to accomplish, that we can make week-to-week adjustments and create new problems for the offense that they don't always know where we're going to be either.

And that's part of the beauty of the chess match that goes on every Saturday.

**Q. Bo, is it all scheme on the defense defending the spread option? I keep hearing defensive coaches saying the most important thing is to find corners, to attack on space, trying to develop hybrid players, play linebacker, can you speak on that?**

COACH PELINI: Expand kind of on your question. Are you asking like is it more the scheme --

**Q. Is it all scheme or what is the key, the one thing that you have to do to stop those offenses, maybe one or two things?**

COACH PELINI: As I said, I think you have to evaluate what the offenses are. And what they're trying to accomplish. Florida's spread offense is different than Missouri. And Missouri's is different than what Kansas is trying to do.

I think the key to playing good defense is evaluating what exactly an offense is trying to accomplish and what their strengths are and you have to develop a game plan to offset what they're trying to accomplish and take it away from them. So they have to get out of their comfort zone.

And I believe this. Defensively it's not just what you do, it's not all about scheme. You can -- everybody wants to -- every coach out there wants to have the pencil last. When you're playing on Saturday, you don't have that luxury. You're

playing, in this conference, there's a lot of good coaches and they're very well coached. You're not always going to have the pencil last. It's not just what you do but how you do it. You can't just go get so wrapped up in outsmarting the opponent. If you do that, you'll forget how you do it and forget about technique. Technique and fundamentals are essential.

And if you're playing very sound technique-wise and you have good fundamentals and you teach them, you have your guys understanding your scheme, you'll be able to match up and deal with any problems that offenses can associate or going to make you deal with a particular Saturday. That's something we've been able to do over a long period of time. And we'll have that challenge ahead of us here no doubt.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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