

July 21, 2008



An Interview With:

TEXAS TECH COACH MIKE LEACH

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Mike Leach from Texas Tech. Welcome. If you'll give an opening statement and identify the players you've brought with you this afternoon, please.

COACH LEACH: All right. Well, since I know all your names, I guess we can just open it up for questions.

Well, the players that we brought was Jamar Wall, who plays corner, who has really done a tremendous job as far as developing as a player. Really took kind of a dominant role as the season went on last year, and through work and things of that nature has steadily improved. Really a guy that leads by example. Won the state of Texas in the high jump when he was in high school. As a result, splits out all his shoes because if you're about his height and you win the state of Texas in the high jump, you know something has got to give and generally it's his cleats.

And then we've got safety, Daniel Charbonnet. He came to us from Duke, transferred from Duke, did a tremendous job, earned a scholarship. And the thing that's amazed me about him is how sharp he is but also there's very few big games that we've had somewhere along the line. Charbonnet doesn't have some key play that doesn't go unnoticed, or how did he know to do this or do that.

The other would be Eric Morris who plays slot receiver. He's from Shallowater, Texas. And we call him the elf, because he kind of looks like an elf. (Laughter) there's a little magic to him. He can catch the ball, outmaneuver the people around him. Real heads-up guy.

And I would have to say, if you were to say offensively who has had the best effort in the off season, I would say that probably Eric Morris has.

Okay. Questions.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. A lot of us were wondering why Harrell and Crabtree aren't here?

COACH LEACH: Harrell and Crabtree get a lot of attention, deserve a lot of attention and will continue to get a lot of attention and the important thing to us and our team is the fact that football is the ultimate team game. And our effort this year, really any team, is going to be how every member does as far as fulfilling their role and that being the case I've got three guys that I think are team leaders that are emerging. So I wanted to have the three I brought go to the forefront.

And then the other thing is I think a lot of times, because there's so many guys that play football, there's a temptation to isolate the emphasis around a couple guys and create an identity of an entire team around a couple of guys.

But our team is far more than a couple individuals who really play well. And everybody on the team is important. And anybody that wants to talk to Graham or Michael Crabtree or Darcel McBath or those guys, you can do it in their natural habitat in Lubbock, Texas. I recommend Love Field because DFW can be a confusing mess. Love Field, about every hour go to Lubbock, Texas, where we have some great steak places. And we'd love to see you, and we all know you by your first names, so it'd be good to renew our friendship.

Q. Mike, a lot of excitement about your defense. Can you talk about how much better you got on defense after September last year, and can you keep that going in 2008?

COACH LEACH: Well, I think a couple of things. I think Ruffin McNeill, our defensive coordinator, creates a lot of excitement. And if he's out on the field, doesn't matter if he's happy or upset. When he screams and yells it makes me excited and creates energy for me, and I'm sure he does for the other players in defense.

We were the youngest team in college football last year, so I think as our players gain

confidence and rally together as players, and the coaches over there, I think we steadily improved and some of them -- you know, maturity, which is really kind of a word I don't like, besides the fact that I'm immature. I mean, where is this benchmark.

But I do think we got older and more experienced and improved. And I think a lot of it was confidence, energy and excitement that Ruffin and the defensive coaches generate in some key players over there on defense.

And our defensive line, I think they got better and better as the year went on.

Q. There's probably also more enthusiasm and more national awareness about your program coming into this season than there has been in recent memory, maybe ever. I just wonder if you could talk about that and maybe even extra excitement you had. Because seems like people are starting to notice Lubbock and those steakhouses you're talking about.

COACH LEACH: I'm always excited about the season, and as a team and as individuals and coaches and players we always have high expectations every year. We have high expectations. And every year you go to play a game, and I've never coached in a game in the Big 12 that before the game started I didn't think we were going to win.

And so our expectations are already high. So what that means to me is we just need to ignore expectations and everybody needs to do their job, improve on their role and just do their job within the scope of what it is. And if everybody does that together, has the ability to fulfill their role and sustain a level of focus, not just in camp but throughout games, for the entire season, we have a chance to continue to improve and could have a season we're pleased with.

If we don't, then we're going to fall short. But the biggest thing that we can control is improving every day and that's what we need to do.

Q. Can you talk about where you expect Harrell to get better this year, Coach, and what do you expect out of him?

COACH LEACH: Well, he led the nation in passing. He led the nation in offense, because I think he's a great player and he does a lot of great things as far as utilizing the other players around him, which is the biggest compliment in my mind a quarterback can have. How good of a quarterback is he? Well, how good is the guy making the players around him better. I think Graham is really good at

that. I think the biggest thing with him, his father was a high school coach.

And I think just his ability to improve overall. I think one of his strengths is he really doesn't have any weaknesses but just overall steady improvement. He's one of those guys, well, initially you go down to the hall and you'd have to kick him out of the office because the building was going to close.

Now that we trust him and know him pretty well, we just leave him there. For all I know he lives there. (Laughter).

Q. Is it going to be a running back by committee this year and how do you see that position and are you comfortable with all those guys?

COACH LEACH: I'm curious about that myself. We've had in spring we had -- we've got three really good running backs right now. Aaron Crawford, Shannon Woods and Baron Batch. And spring, going in, I can tell you real strengths that this guy had, that guy had, weaknesses and so it went.

And what I expected to happen was we'd rep them all and then one would start to separate himself and he'd get most of the reps. But what happened instead was that it was very competitive. Guys tended to improve on their weaknesses and develop more strengths.

And so then we had really good competition going there and it was kind of a healthy competition besides trying to whip the guy that's also competing for that position there.

They're fairly supportive of one another. So then our emphasis became give them all relatively equal reps so in the off season they can be equipped to prepare themselves and improve as much as they possibly can, become the best player we can be as we go into camp.

Now, are we going to have to play with just one? I don't think so. I think there's enough room for all three of them to have a role. Eventually, what will develop there will probably be some fine distinctions on this situation, this type of a block or this type of a route and so forth that we'll personnel around it.

But if it remains as competitive as it is right now, I would have no problem playing either of the three or all three of them.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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