

December 29, 2006



An interview with:

TEXAS TECH

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Coach, congratulations.

COACH LEACH: I'm not a real big opening-statement guy. Go ahead and ask any questions.

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THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Leach.

Q. Was there a specific turning point in the second half when you felt the momentum really shift in your favor?

COACH LEACH: I don't think there was a specific point as much as at halftime. I thought we even started a little bit slow the second half. I think at halftime, everybody sort of recommitted, understood that we had a great opportunity. We didn't want to be behind or anything.

You know, as long as we were, we had a great opportunity to do something memorable. Then everybody recommitted and just zeroed in on doing their job. Then it got to be kind of a body-punch deal. I felt like we did a good job all three sides of the ball. They're up on us. We had a body punch them, see if we could make them collapse. We were lucky enough for that to happen.

Q. With all the adversity you have faced, what does it mean to you to be part of the biggest come from behind Bowl victory in history?

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I felt like our players and our coaches were really committed to win this game, to playing well the second half. I'm proud of 'em to be able to do that. Any time you have to do something like that collectively, it's a great team effort.

At times this season, we haven't played as well as a team as we would have liked. This was one of the greatest playing together as a team that I've been a part of.

Q. You called a time-out after the second or third drive of the game. Did you feel like Minnesota was already getting momentum?

COACH LEACH: Oh, yeah, they were getting momentum (smiling). Yeah, they were rolling along big time. We tried to kind of get refocused. I think our hearts were in the right place. I think sometimes we were trying to make too much happen out there. I'd see guys go out there, try to make too much happen, hoping we could settle in.

Maybe contributed. Doesn't appear to me it did. They kept rolling pretty good at that point, too. I think at halftime is when really everybody sort of came together.

Q. Did it take a big group of seniors to

be able to pull off an effort like this in the second half? Talk about these guys a little bit.

COACH LEACH: I think the seniors were key. There's no question. I think an awful lot of players on our team were really key.

I think the whole group. I think the coaches, the players, the young guys, the old guys. I think even the kid sitting there on the sideline clapping when things aren't necessarily going our way. Some things like that. We had young guys contribute. One of the better throws and catches is when Easy Ed caught that corner out. I think Todd Walker had a key catch. Just contributions from really everybody.

But I think the tempo and mentality that begin to exist on the sideline in the second half was probably the biggest key. It's an intangible thing, hard to describe. You guys love to have little milestones, "This was it." I think it was just kind of the collective group mentality that began to develop.

It's one of those periods in sports that's kind of intangible, try to hang on to, try to keep it as long as you can. I think in the future, it will give us some material to draw on, too, as these younger guys go into the off-season.

Q. I don't think they punted till about two and a half minutes into the third quarter, then all of a sudden your defense was on lockdown. Talk about what changed.

COACH LEACH: I think really it's more of the same stuff. I think it was kind of the same stuff. Then the other thing is, Minnesota was really hot. Some of the best catches I've seen all season Minnesota guys made. That corner out there late in the game, the blonde kid caught. I don't know his name, that was a great catch. Goes up.

The other thing, caught a deal in the end zone, we have double coverage. They made some great plays. They were really hot. I was hoping that we would heat up and they'd cool off. Maybe a little of both happened. We were fortunate enough to come out on top.

Q. They started out the second half with a long 16-play drive, but only settled for a field goal. How important was it to not let them -- hold them?

COACH LEACH: I think it was important. It would have been nice if it was more like a three-play drive, would have taken a little pressure off, maybe could have got this thing over with in regulation (smiling).

Well, we knew we had to make sure that their drives were quick. I thought defensively we did a real good job standing in there and making some stuff happen. We had some impressive tackles for loss I think that aided us. I think our defensive front played better the second half and kind of stepped up as a unit.

I think some individual makes a big play, but I think a whole lot of it comes from secondary locking people down, also coming from the other defensive linemen getting push. Hopefully you can find something you can make happen.

Q. You were able to come back from 31 down without a turnover. How surprising is that? Plus you missed the on-side kick.

COACH LEACH: Well, about as surprising as we had so many early, missed so many. Yeah, I mean, the one thing, this was a game of funny opportunities that were sort of swapped back and forth. I didn't expect to turn it over early. I don't guess Huffman expected to get his touchdown taken away.

I think both teams had the ball roll funny on some of those things. We just clustered them together, decided to get the bad plays out the first half, then stacked our good ones there the second half.

Well, then the fumbled snap, I mean, quarterback did a heck of a job getting that fumbled snap. I would like to have that one. Didn't get that. I would have liked to had it, though.

Q. A comeback like this, a big win in a Bowl game, what does this do for your program moving into the next season?

COACH LEACH: Virtually impossible for me to say. Certainly excited to have it. I think we can draw on it in the future. I think anybody on this team that doesn't believe it's worth the investment to play all 60 minutes, you know, I think it's a clear message for that. I think as a program, we need to draw on it and never forget it.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Congratulations on a great win.

Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Huffman, throughout the whole game, seemed like they were throwing the ball to the right, your way. Do you feel like they were picking on you throughout the game a little bit?

ANTONIO HUFFMAN: To the right?

Q. To the left.

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No, I don't think they was really picking on me. I think it was just the scheme of the offense. I knew they would come to that side just based off what they do. I needed to put myself in position to make plays.

In the first half, I kind of squandered those opportunities. In the second half, I did a better job of it.

Q. Graham, what was on your mind coming out of halftime? What does it say about your relationship with your teammates you're here as a redshirt sophomore, they're trusting, you lead them back to a 31-point victory?

GRAHAM HARRELL: Coming out of halftime, we were down, but I found once we went out for the first drive in the second half offensively, I said let's relax, have fun, we can't control anything that's happen. All we can do is have fun, see if we can't get this thing turned around.

We did get going. It says a lot. The seniors, they stepped up, played big. The offensive line really played big. Every time I feel like, we trust, you we trust you, Graham. That's linemen, they have to look to someone. I guess it's naturally me. I don't really have a choice. I kind of like it, though.

It's just a team. I think it shows more than anything that we just play as a team. Like I say, I think they trust me. Hey, he can lead us back. At the same time, it was a team effort. Shannon ran the ball so well today. He was huge. He was huge in our comeback. We made some plays and got rolling.

Q. Graham, you were so positive the last six minutes. Were you ever afraid you were going to run out of time?

GRAHAM HARRELL: You never feel like you're going to run out of time with this offense. We feel we can move the ball of the length of the field in no time. Right there at the end, we had, I guess, after the false start, 58 seconds or something. We have to go 95 yards. We're on the 5.

Most people probably felt like they're kind of done. Don't have any time-outs, first off. I think we just relaxed, made plays. I don't ever feel like we were going to run out of time. Like you said, I

stayed positive. I think everyone was kind of feeding off of it and felt like we were going to win. I think everyone believed it. Whenever you believe, good things can happen.

I don't think we ever felt like we were short of time. We were in that position before, like A&M this year. Our backs were against the wall. In a big-play offense, you can make big plays.

Q. Alex, did you think back to UTEP this year?

ALEX TRILICA: A little bit. I look back at that kick, I just drew back from the mistakes I made in that game. This kick, I just told myself to stay calm, not get too hyped up, go through your routine like it was any other kick.

I definitely think the UTEP experience helped me because I felt a lot more comfortable out there this time.

Q. Joel, the 31-point come-from-behind, also being in your hometown, any better way to go out as a senior?

JOEL FILANI: I don't really think so. Like they said, it was a great team effort. Defense jumped up huge, offense made plays at the end. It was a great win for us.

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