

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

Brad Underwood

Oklahoma State Cowboys



THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by coach Brad Underwood from Oklahoma State. Coach, welcome and your thoughts about the upcoming season?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm excited. I'm looking forward to the 2016-17 campaign. I don't know. We're 18, 19 practices in, and I've been very, very pleased with the complete buy-in and the transition. I think our players have accepted the change, and are very committed to trying to establish a culture that we want to have every single day, and that's based on work and commitment. Now we're a week away from our first exhibition, we'll find out how that process plays out. But when you're in the best league in the country and you're in a league with arguably the best coaches in the country, every single night's a challenge. And I look forward to the personal side of that and challenging myself in that capacity as well. So I'm very, very excited to be a Cowboy and very blessed to be in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Q. How much of Oklahoma State's heritage and tradition was part of the appeal for you to take this job?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: A lot. I'm an old-school guy from the standpoint of the tradition means a great deal. I think anytime I still get goose bumps and hair on the back of my neck stands up when I walk into Gallagher-Iba every single day. And I did not get to know Mr. Iba. I got to visit with him briefly when I was at Kansas State with Jack Hartman. I know what a great teacher, innovator of the game he was. To stand on Eddie Sutton court every day, there is 806 wins there with Coach Sutton, two Final Fours. Coach Iba won a couple of national titles. That's pretty important. To know just the history. I've always said Gallagher-Iba is one of the elite basketball arenas in all of the country, and that excites me, getting that crowd going and getting that fan base. We have an extremely educated fan base. That excites me. That all plays into it.

As a young guy growing up in McPherson, Kansas, and understanding those Saturday game of the week in the Big Eight back in that day and then getting the opportunity to play in those arenas and then go back as a coach in those arenas, this is very special for me and I'm very, very fortunate and very blessed to be back in this great league.

Q. You're one of four coaches in this league that has a K-State background. There are a lot of fans in Manhattan that followed your career pretty closely at Stephen F. Austin. Have you given much thought into what the emotion will be like for you the first time coaching against K-State or being in Manhattan?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I wouldn't say I've thought about it very much. It seems like a long ways away, yet I know it's right around the corner. I had great, great memories of my time in Manhattan, both as a player, as a coach. When I left Kansas State with Frank to go to South Carolina and after being with Bob Huggins for a year there, Bob brought me back, we left Kansas State with our head held high, and I was very, very proud. I've got dear friends there, and I'm sure it's going to be emotional. It will be different from the standpoint I'm used to walking in the tunnel and hanging a right. Now I've got to hang a left. So it will be a little different. But, again, a lot of dear friends there. I think Bill's had to live it, Lon's had to live it, and I think we'll get through it.

Q. What's been the biggest challenge in these first few weeks of practice for you and your squad?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Well, I think as any new coach would go through, I think you're trying to establish your culture. I've been very fortunate. Our guys are both feet in. They're committed. Understanding how hard you have to work, understanding the nuances of a new offensive and defensive scheme, all those things take time. But I think understanding each other's personalities, that's the first time they've been around me an extended timeframe, so to speak. We have the short 40-minute or hour individual workouts. Now we go two and a half hours, and we did that pretty much every day.

So I think those little things are all part of it. But it's something that I've been really excited. I've been really pleased. We've got really good kids and we've got really good guys who are trying every day to be very successful.

Q. You've inherited a lot of talent, but you've also inherited experience with a guy like Phil Forte. What's he brought to the table in this transition process?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I've said this many times with Phil. I don't know how any coach could be any luckier than what I am to have a guy that works so hard every day at his craft. Here's a guy who shoots 600 balls a day. No matter what our practice schedule is, this guy works. He's committed and dedicated his life to be the best he can be at it. And you know what? He's going to break our three-point field goal record, and I think he's going to have a great year. His leadership has shown our young guys how to do things, and that's helped me tremendously establish that culture.

where we're at.

We've got a group of freshmen that I'm extremely excited about. Part of that reason is because of Phil and the work that he has shown them how you have to be successful. So Phil Forte means a lot to me. And to have a fifth-year senior, to have a guy who has had the career he's had, I want more than anything for him to have the senior year that he's very deserving of.

Q. You've been away from this part of the country. Your thoughts, first of all, on the experience of the Big 12 Tournament, and also your thoughts on the no expansion decision that was handed down weeks ago?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Kansas City's one of the greatest basketball cities in America, and I believe that. We were talking about that last night. It goes back to me as a young person in municipal, going to the NAIA tournament and sitting there all day, and the last game at midnight, the excitement. There is nothing like it. The fan bases from all the schools that come to this town now in this facility, now with what has been done in Kansas City with the Power & Light in the downtown area, it makes it so special. It makes it a great place to be, not just for the players and the coaches, but for the fans. That's what it's about. And that excitement, I think the one thing that the Big 12 Tournament does, it shows tremendous pride that each of these institutions fans have for their school. Kansas City welcomes us with open arms, and every single game there's going to be 18,000 in here, or doggone close to it, and that's pretty special.

In regards to the expansion, I believe in our commissioner. I believe in our leadership wholeheartedly. Being very, very new to the conference, I'll be honest, I've just kind of taken a back seat, so to speak. That may sound like a copout, just because I'm not versed enough in all the things that are going on.

I'm excited about our members. I think we have a great, great league, and we don't have to play second fiddle to anybody. And that starts from our commissioner on down through everybody else in this league and its members. So I'm very, very proud and excited and to be quite honest, I'm very happy with