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An Interview with:

**COACH JON EMBREE
DAVID BAKHTIARI
RAY POLK**

COACH EMBREE: Obviously we're excited to start our second year in the Conference. We finished with good momentum last year. Our goal this year is to find a way to get to a bowl game. We had a losing streak last year that was, I think, stretched four years and our goal was to end that, and we were able to do that. We're looking forward to starting our second year in this league.

Q. Coach, Paul Richardson has been optimistic recently saying that he thinks his knee is recovering well, he thinks he might be able to play. Are you anymore optimistic about having him than you were at the end of spring?

COACH EMBREE: Yeah, I am. I'm a lot more optimistic about it. I saw Paul about two days after his surgery and I thought he hadn't had the surgery yet, he was moving around that well.

He's been progressing rapidly, and I think as he continues to work, as he starts doing more football movements, we will have a better feel for it and when he will be available for this year. But I don't think it's something that's out of the question.

Q. What ended up being the biggest hurdle for you as a first-time head coach?

COACH EMBREE: Well, when you go somewhere and you're trying to create a certain environment and culture that takes time. We went through a lot of different things and we're asking them to do different things that maybe they weren't asked to do from practice, accountability, being on

time, so it was a lot different than maybe when they were used to.

We went through five suspensions before we played Stanford, Oregon, all those -- the better quarterbacks in the league at the time, USC, and that. That put us behind the eight ball.

When you're trying to create a new environment, a new culture, you've got to look at it from a long term [position] and stick to your vision. That was difficult and I didn't get to do as much football as I thought I would have been able to. Having said that, this year we have been able to do more football from a coaching standpoint and it's been good.

Q. Coach, your quarterback situation, can you touch on that? And David, the importance of running the football without Paul Richardson and the extra effort that the offensive line will have to have.

DAVID BAKHTIARI: Running the football is an important part of the game, all offensive linemen like when we get a run play. We're excited, we have a good group of offensive linemen coming in, we had to fill spots with Ryan and Ethan leaving but we're all really close and it's going to be interesting for this year, so I'm excited.

COACH EMBREE: Quarterback situation, we have right now three kids for sure that we know will be involved in the competition. Connor Wood and Nick Hirschman were supposed to start the battle in the spring and Nick broke his foot so he wasn't able to be part of the competition.

And actually it worked out good for him, because Nick knew the offense and had been around it and Nick needed to do improve in the mental aspect of the game so with him not being able to participate, it forced him to take on that role and see things from a different perspective.

And then Connor Wood was a kid who transferred in from Texas and he got all the reps in the spring. I thought he had a good spring and we have a kid named Jordan Webb who transferred in

from Kansas. Those guys will be going at it, we will see where Shane is from a health standpoint, he had shoulder surgery so if he's not ready to go we will pick our quarterback from those three.

Q. Ray, after beating Utah and knocking them out of the Pac-12 Championship last year, does it feel like you are building a rivalry?

RAY POLK: As far as rivalry goes, they're a great team and will always be a great opponent. We're still young in this Conference and we're trying to figure out where we want to fit in. So it's going to be exciting. We've got some more games this year and then I think we will find somebody who we want to be our rival.

For me looking at it, you look to the best team and you want to play that team, you want to make that team your rival. You look to the best and you expect the best out of your players.

Q. Jon, you have to replace a quarterback, tailback, tight end, receiver maybe, linemen, are you confident that you can somehow manufacture enough offense to keep up with what appears to be a pretty high-powered conference?

COACH EMBREE: Sounds like that's a question for the offensive coordinator. Yeah, we do. We lose 28 players total in that senior class, so a number of them were major contributors for our program. As you mentioned, we will have a new tailback, Tony Jones played a lot for us, though, and obviously with Paul Richardson being out and losing Tony Clements, I feel good about what we have come incoming and it will help with us condition to move forward.

Like I said, the quarterback situation, we don't know what it is, and we have a good idea of who are going to be those players. We have some young tight ends that are in that have done well in summer workouts that we're excited about. Same at receiver and tailback to add depth behind Tony. So I feel good about the direction we're headed. It's going to be young talent. You have probably heard me say this before, we've upgraded our team speed and it's just whether it goes in the right direction.

I like what the kids have bought into and with the kids coming back, the direction that this program is heading.

Q. David, it seems to be that the rivalry between Utah [and Colorado] is a little forced on you. I'm wondering if there is a specific team that maybe you haven't talked about that you could see having a great rivalry with in the future?

DAVID BAKHTIARI: Like Ray said, we're shooting for the top. Everyone wants to aim for the top dog and that's who we want to pinpoint as being our rival. Utah, it is a media-forced thing, but it's not 100 percent. They're a great team. We love playing them, but at the end of the day, I see every team as a rival and we want to be the best. You've got to beat the best if you want to be the best. We're going to try to beat all of them.

Q. Question for both David and Ray, after one year in the Conference, what have you learned about the level of competition, the caliber of athletes you see every week in the Pac-12?

DAVID BAKHTIARI: Got this question a lot from being in the Big 12 to being in the Pac-12. I was fortunate enough to play in both leagues. In both leagues at the end of the day there are big, strong guys in each division. Big 12 is a little more bigger, stronger. Pac-12 is a little more faster. There are still the "freaks" in each league. You have the big, strong fast guys at the end of the day that are going to come out and play at the end of the day, so that's the biggest difference in competition I see.

RAY POLK: I would have to agree. From my standpoint, playing defense, there are just so many threats in the Pac-12. You've got so many good players in one conference that it's a different ballgame. The Big 12 was great and it was a great conference. For me, you would see, you know, one great receiver on the team. Here, you know, you have two or three.

It's just different. It's a different kind of offense. We can all agree that Pac-12 football is a great conference and the offensive schemes inside of it, They're some of the best out there. It's exciting to play and I'm happy to be in this Conference.

Q. Coach, we have been collecting fan questions from Twitter and Facebook so we have one for you. Which position or positions do you expect the incoming freshmen to create

the most competition?

COACH EMBREE: Defensive back, we signed five very good players so they will all have a chance to compete with Greg Henderson coming back. Greg, who is going to play next to Ray, tight end and receiver after that, couple of young kids in there that I think I have a chance to be good players for us. They will be difference-makers early so those will be the positions that they can contribute the most and I would say D-line after that.

Q. Talk about the difficulties of having a new recruiting pipeline when you guys were focused on Texas before.

COACH EMBREE: It's not necessarily new to myself and my staff. I always recruited in California, I have had every part of California from San Diego all the way up to the Bay Area. When I assembled my staff, everyone had a piece of California in their past.

I believe seven of our coaches have part of California. We signed 10 days last year out of California, seven out of Texas. I think right now, we have four or five commits from California. So we're continuing to move in that direction. I think that's the best thing going out of the Conference now. It's allowed us to be able to tell kids, you know, we're going to bring them back home and they will have a chance to play in front of family.

Obviously, with the Pac-12 Network and what Larry has done as far as getting exposure for the teams in the Conference, that, again, allows kids in the Pac-12 footprint for their families to see them. It's been great to be a part of this Conference and, especially from a California standpoint from recruiting. A lot of great players out here, a lot of really good players out here.

If you can have success here recruiting in California, that will help your program immensely.

Q. Ray and David can you talk about the returning players who have caught your eyes in summer workouts?

RAY POLK: We're doing a great job. We're working harder than we worked before. And it's not just with the weight lifting and go running. We're holding player-run meetings and we're doing a lot of meeting on our own, so we're getting a chance to get everybody involved in this defense.

For us, though, Greg Henderson is going to be a great returner. We're excited to have him back, Paul is going to be great if he's healthy, but he's looking pretty good right now. The

quarterback situation will pan itself out, but we have seniors on defense, like Doug [Rippy] and Jon Major, that are going to make a huge difference for us. I'm excited, it's going to be a fun season and looking forward to it.

DAVID BAKHTIARI: In the summer, we split up, so he's with the skilled positions and I'm more with the bigger guys. So I can't say for the other guys but with the bigger guys, we're all out. Our tight end, Nick Kasa is working out unbelievably, Will Pericak has been killing on the field and in the weight room. Chidera [Ozu-Diribe] works out with them, and two offensive linemen, Gus Handler and Daniel [Munyer] have been put in a lot of work. I would say those are my top guys excelling in the summer and working hard.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.

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