



## Baylor Offense Press Conference

December 28, 2021



**JOHN SUDSBURY:** Thank you very much for joining us. For everyone now, we have Baylor Offensive Coordinator Jeff Grimes. Coach, if you could start off with a brief opening statement, then we'll go right to questions.

**COACH GRIMES:** Yeah. I would just say really excited about this bowl personally. I've never been do it. Been to a lot of bowl games. Obviously, this is a great opportunity for our team. An opportunity for us to, I think, make a statement about the kind of team that we are. And I've always felt that bowl games really say something about the mindset of your team, particularly at the end of the season.

And so we're looking forward to the opportunity to say something about who we are as an offense and the kind of team that we are.

**Q. How is Gerry [Bohanon] coming along? Just can you maybe just comment a little bit about his progression over the last few weeks?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Yeah. I would say it started off a little bit slow for a couple of reasons. One, that hamstring wasn't quite back at full strength when he came back to practice. And he was just trying to work his way back into it. And any time you're an athletic player, especially at the quarterback position, you know, you rely on your legs just to move around and even to throw through and follow through and do those kind of things.

But I think he's at or very close to full speed now. It took him a little while to kind of knock the rust off. But I anticipate that he'll be at full speed for the game. And I anticipate him playing well.

**Q. You mentioned wanting to prove a point about the type of offense you guys are and the type of team you guys are against a team like Ole Miss. What is it exactly that you're hoping to prove with this new-look offense in your first year at Baylor against Ole Miss?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Well, I think it's a great team. So every week is an opportunity to make a statement about who you are when you play against somebody that's good. So I think it's just one more opportunity for us to show that we're a good team and a good offense and that we're for real.

But I think just as much -- and I would imagine that Coach [Dave] Aranda would say the same thing -- the way we play is just as important as playing well or winning the game. So playing clean, controlling the things that we can control, on offense in particular. I think about the turnovers. I think about not having any foolish penalties. I think about playing a physical brand of football, really an opportunity to show one more time what we try to be all about. And that, you know, I think, says something about our personality and our identity.

**Q. First of all, how was your relationship with Dave Forge during your time together at LSU? And what did he have to do to get -- persuade you to leave a good situation at BYU?**



## Baylor Offense Press Conference

December 28, 2021



**And secondly, could you talk about Abram Smith and just how guys don't move over from linebacker to running back? And could you have foreseen what kind of year he was going to have?**

**COACH GRIMES:** I think you worked four questions into two right there, but I'm going to try to answer all of them.

So Dave and I at LSU, you know, worked together and had a very professional relationship. But being on opposite sides of the ball, didn't know each other all that well. But I had a great respect for him as a person and as a coach.

And then in terms of me coming here, there were a number of things that made this a great fit for me. I'm from Texas. My wife is from Texas. Haven't been back to live in over 20 years. So an opportunity to come back home. An opportunity to coach at a great place like Baylor. I think a place that really fits me. And I believed in Dave. I believe in who he is as a person and a leader. So working with him was a real positive for me.

Abe, a great story, I've told this many times. He's one of my favorite players. But almost all the way through spring practice, I felt like we weren't getting what we needed out of the run game. I wanted to have a physical nature to our offense. And we couldn't do that with our wide zone scheme without having a physical presence at running back. And I didn't feel like we were moving fast enough. And so, I was -- well, I was complaining about not having what we needed. And one of our staff members, Dave Wetzels who was a long-time high school football coach said to me, have you ever seen Abe run with the ball? Because Abe was playing linebacker at the time. And I said, no, I didn't even know he played running back. He said yeah, he was a really good running back in high school. And he said, I know what you're looking for. I know how you're looking for a downhill back that will be productive and consistent and physical for you, and he's that.

So I walked upstairs to Ron Roberts, our defensive coordinator, and without mentioning any names, just said, you know, I'm really kind of frustrated with our run game. Is there anybody on defense that you think could help us? And without hesitation he said, yeah, Abe could. And I said, well, I know he's playing for you at linebacker. He said, it doesn't matter. If he's got a chance to be your best running back, then you should take him.

And so I took him the next day. We had four or five practices left in spring ball. And it was evident that he could be really, really productive in what we wanted to do with the run game.

And then he moved over and really has been just, you know, in a lot of ways kind of the heart and soul of our offense. I don't think we would do much without his leadership, without his toughness, without his style of play.



## Baylor Offense Press Conference

December 28, 2021



**Q. I was curious, you had such a background with O-line. And I would say that may be the biggest change from the previous season. And I know Dave [Aranda] had talked about the O-line, he wanted those guys to become the leaders.**

**What has allowed you guys to sort of be able to transform from a really all-time worst run attack to one of the best in the country? I know it all starts with the O-line, but what has that development been like for you to observe and sort of oversee?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Well, I would say first, it's a collective effort amongst coaches and players at all positions. I really believe with our -- the nature of how we run the football, it is an 11-man job. And so, everybody on offense has a job to do, whether you're playing left guard or whether you're playing the receiver on the backside of the formation.

I've got to certainly give Eric Mateos, our offensive line coach, most of the credit because he's the one that's doing all the work in the trenches with those guys every day. And then I would just say it's been a complete buy-in to the philosophy, to the scheme. And I think our scheme is one that allows players to play fast, to play with confidence. And I think because they've been willing to buy into that at all positions, that it's really allowed them to begin to have the kind of success that they've had this year. And I think we certainly honestly still have a long way to go, but I think we're certainly moving in the right direction. And hope that this bowl game is another step forward.

**Q. I know you weren't here obviously last year, but what is the sense you've gotten on what this ride has meant to the guys on this roster after the way last season went?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Yeah, without talking about last year, I would just say that any time you have an opportunity to win your conference, that's a really big deal. And our guys have really bought into that. And from day one, we started talking about playing in the championship. And I think it's been something that if you're really focused from game to game, then you give yourself an opportunity to do that. But yeah, I think there's a real appreciation for it. An appreciation for being a part of a team that's winning and has a chance to be in this position at this point in the year.

**Q. Wondering what your bowl game approach is? Do you do what you do? Or do you try to tweak some things and maybe throw some things out there?**

**COACH GRIMES:** I think the bowl game is very similar to what we do every week. I think if you're successful on either side of the ball, it's because you have an identity. And it's because you have something you believe in. Each week, you tweak some things a little bit. So you might do something a little bit differently than what you've done before. You might run this play from a three-by-one formation instead of a two-by-two formation or maybe do it with 11 personnel instead of 12 personnel. And there's a little bit more time in between games. So some guys probably change a little bit more or do a little bit more. And I would say we would tend towards the former more so than the latter. We'll treat this more like a usual game with maybe a couple more tweaks.



## Baylor Offense Press Conference

December 28, 2021



**Q. Coming in you probably have all these ideas and goals of what you want to accomplish with this offense. But what was the thing that maybe you're even a little pleasantly surprised with, maybe even from six months ago to now about what has gone so right offensively.**

**COACH GRIMES:** I think just, it's kind of coach-speak, I guess, but it's true, just the culture, the willingness of these guys to buy into what he asks them to do. It was something completely different. And I think without that willingness, there was a real eagerness right away to say, hey, coach me, and teach me how to be successful in this scheme. And I think without that, you don't have a chance to have success.

And then I think the mindset that has come with that has been one that said, I feel like we can -- from a player's perspective -- we feel like we can go out and score points on anybody. And we've been, at times, really good this year and at other times not quite as good as we would like to be. But I think there's been that belief that we can go out and play with anybody. So I think that belief and that confidence is the source and the evidence of what allows you to have success.

**Q. Along those same lines, you talk about culture, you talk about buy-in. Was there a certain moment in the season that you can point to where you feel like they really turned the corner and you can point to and say that's a moment where I really saw the buy-in happen?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Yeah, I think there have been a -- typically in an opportunity like this where you make a change, there are a few of those. So I can point to a couple. One was actually before the season even started. You know, we have a really good defense here at Baylor. And that had been a real challenge for us offensively to make a turn-around just because we had to compete against a really good, experienced defense in practice every day. And one that's had that system in place for a year.

So there were a lot of challenges during spring ball. And you know, moments when -- I remember my wife after one of our spring scrimmages, I come home and she goes, wow, we got a long way to go. I said, yeah. She goes, Are you sure we ought to actually do this addition on the house? She's been around a lot of football. So she saw and recognized that we had a ways to go.

But in those scrimmages, I think it was a challenge for us that we had to overcome, a hurdle. And then I think it was our second scrimmage of fall camp this year, we kind of had a really good day and the offense, probably for the first time, had a scrimmage where we did what we had hoped we would do against our defense. And there was a difference after that. The guys kind of felt like, okay, we can do this. And this thing is really going to work.

And then I think just a couple of our early season games against conference opponents really helped us take a step forward. Obviously, the Iowa State game was a big win for us. And coming out soon after that, and not only winning against West Virginia but scoring a lot of points and winning big, I think both of those were real milestones.



## Baylor Offense Press Conference

December 28, 2021



**Q. Wanted to ask you a little bit about Gerry [Bohanon]. I know he went through almost the first half of the season without an interception. What have you seen from him as he's grown in this offense? And what are the best qualities that he brings that have made him successful for you guys this year?**

**COACH GRIMES:** Well, I think the things that make him successful are the things that earned him the job. So he's just become more and more of himself. And his confidence, his toughness, his grit, his willingness to work, those are the things that earned him this position. And he was in quite a battle for the starting quarterback job, as you and most people that have covered our team know.

But I remember him way back during fall camp. I'd show up early in the morning, and he's here watching film. Not in a way that anyone would notice, just in the quarterback room, with the door shut, watching film, 6:00 in the morning. And then I'd get ready to go home at 11:00 at night, and he's still in there watching film. And I remember telling him, man, you got to go home and get sleep, this say long fall camp. And he said, Coach, I can sleep when I've won this position. I've got work to do.

And that kind of confidence and work ethic is what has brought him to where he is. And he's a guy that from the beginning bet on himself. When many people didn't think he would be a college quarterback, he came to a place where he knew he could play quarterback and compete. And just kept working even when it didn't go his way early. So that persistence and that belief in himself and that toughness are the things that really make him who he is. And then obviously, he's developed as a passer. He's developed as a leader and all those things have come. But it really starts with what he is inside.

**JOHN SUDSBURY:** Thank you very much for your time this morning, Coach. We really appreciate it. Look forward to seeing you tomorrow here in New Orleans.