

# Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

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Arlington, Texas, USA

TCU Horned Frogs

Coach Sonny Dykes

Press Conference



SONNY DYKES: First of all, just want to say how excited I am to be here in the Big 12 and be a part of this league. I had an opportunity to coach as an assistant at Texas Tech in the Big 12 from 2000 to 2006, and just really loved my time in this league. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Big 12 Conference.

Obviously want to say thank you to Bob Bowlsby and his contributions and what he's done for this league. Just excited about the new league, the new leadership that we have and where this thing is going.

Fired up to be in the Big 12. I think the league is stronger than it has been in a very long time. I think there's tremendous stability.

Obviously there's a lot of things happening in college football and a lot of unknowns, but at the end of the day I think we're in a position of power, and I'm excited to be a part of the league.

I'm really excited to be at TCU. I think this is a great opportunity. It's a fantastic university. It's a university that cares deeply about football.

Obviously they've had a tremendous amount of success through the years. I think Gary Patterson was synonymous with TCU football. What he did was really pretty remarkable, building the brand, having the success that he had and his ability to sustain it for as long as he did.

I think at the end of the day the great coaches have longevity, and he certainly had longevity at TCU.

It's a real blessing to be here. There's a tremendous foundation at TCU right now because of the investment that's taken place through the years from our chancellor to our athletic director to our board to all our donors and all the folks that have made TCU such a special place.

At the end of the day, it's really been the players and what

they've done to elevate the program, and it's what made it such an attractive opportunity for me and made it so difficult to pass it up.

It's an exciting time to be here. I'm really excited about our players and our football team. I'm anxious to get started just like everybody else is. We start practice August 2 and play Colorado on a Friday night. It'll be a very challenging game for us going on the road and playing in Boulder.

But it's an exciting place to be. Fort Worth is a great city, and just can't say enough about the opportunity and how fortunate and blessed I am to be the head coach at TCU.

Just fired up about that, and I'll take questions.

**Q. You talk about Coach Patterson and how he built this foundation at TCU. What kind of added pressure does that add to you following a coach that has been here for 20-some-odd years?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, I think that we all have pressure. I think that's part of college football is -- it's a pressure-packed business. That's what I really love about college football is there is a certain level of expectations associated with every program.

But the thing I love really as much as anything else is just there's an accountability. Every Saturday you march your team out there and you take a test in front of 50,000 people week in and week out in front of a TV audience of over a million people, and you take that test, and there's accountability associated with that. That's what makes this business so fun and so challenging, is that.

And so when you follow a legend, I mean, look, there's not many places where there's a statue of that coach in front of the stadium, and certainly not a coach that was still coaching at that institution when that statue was placed there.

TCU is about winning championships. There's a high level of expectations. Obviously I knew that when I took the job. I appreciate that. I want to coach in this kind of environment where there has been that level of success

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and there's that level of expectations, as well.

I think that's what drives us all to be better and is what challenges us. And I think, again, that's part of what attracted me to TCU was just that success and, again, the level of expectations.

**Q. You've been known to develop quarterbacks over the years; can you talk about what Chandler Morris brings to the table for you guys?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, I think that we've been lucky. Look, you can go back to my time when I cut my teeth as a GA at Kentucky. I was Mike Leach's GA. Hal Mumme was the head coach. Tim Couch was our quarterback, became the first pick in the NFL Draft, and it went from there. You look at the quarterbacks we had at Texas Tech.

I went to Arizona as an offensive coordinator, had Nick Foles, who went on to become Super Bowl MVP. Went to Louisiana Tech, had tremendous success with Colby Cameron, set 16 NCAA records. We just had a lot of guys. Then went to Cal, had Jared Goff, became the first pick in the draft at Cal.

Been fortunate to be around good quarterbacks. We think we have had a hand in developing those guys. I think the good thing is coming to TCU we feel like we have some really talented guys in the room.

You asked about Chandler specifically. I know Chandler well, had a chance to watch him play at Highland Park High School when I was at SMU. He comes from a football background that's very similar to mine. His dad was a head coach, is kind of one of those kids that grew up hanging around the Fieldhouse, just one of those guys that loves the game.

I think that when you go back and you talk to Randy Allen, who was his high school coach, Randy had nothing but great things to say about him. When I talked to Lincoln Riley about Chandler, Lincoln had nothing but great things to say about him. Everybody that dealt with him at Oklahoma said the same thing, he's just a great kid, hardworking, loves the game.

When you have talent and you have that passion and you have that football background, that lends itself to being very successful. We're excited to see what he can do.

We're also very excited about Max Duggan. Had a chance to watch Max play up close and personal at TCU when I was at SMU, saw what he could do. A very tough, tough guy, very athletic, very physical. I think the players really respond and respect the way he plays the game.

Then we've got some good young talented quarterbacks, as well, that I'm very excited about.

That's a position that obviously is incredibly important in today's football world, whether it's seventh grade football or the NFL. You're not going to have a great football team without a great quarterback.

To me, when you look at our team offensively, you feel good about what we have coming back at running back. You love the tight ends. The strength of our offense I think is going to be our offensive line, and the question mark is really the quarterback position.

We've got to get settled, got to do a good job building our scheme around the quarterback's strengths, but I think the good thing is we feel incredibly confident that either one of those quarterbacks that we choose can get the job done at a very high level.

That'll be one of the questions we try to get answered as quickly as possible. People ask me all the time about quarterback battles, how do you know. It's funny, everybody really knows. You know, the coaches are usually the last ones to know. The players start to know. The equipment managers start to know. The trainers start to know. Then the coaches start to go, you know what, maybe this guy is a little bit better than the other guy. You make that decision, then everybody goes, well, you could have done this a week ago. That's normally the way it works.

**Q. Going back to 2017, what was your experience like as an analyst, and what did you learn from that experience, and how important are analysts in modern football programs?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, that's a good question. I think it was a different experience for me, obviously. I had been a head coach for a number of years. Things hadn't gone maybe according to plan at Cal. Walked into a little tougher situation than I thought, and had some things change while I was there that made it difficult.

But, you know, I learned a lot from that experience. And then I had a chance to go work with Coach Patterson, and really what I wanted to do was go someplace that had had a tradition of playing great defensive football and wanted to see what his approach was.

I was fortunate enough to get hired on with Coach Patterson in 2017, was part of a great team. It was an 11-3 team that year that played in the Big 12 Championship game, and just learned a ton.

I think one of the things I learned was just a management style that was different than mine, and it was incredibly successful. So I had a chance to adapt and learn some things.

Also, too, had a chance to learn really about TCU. I didn't know much about the university. I had played against them a little bit at Texas Tech, had coached against them while I was an assistant at Tech, but I hadn't been to Fort Worth in a long time, hadn't been to the facilities, hadn't seen, again, the level of commitment from the university to football, didn't realize the kind of players and athletes that were in the program, didn't really know how great of a city Fort Worth was.

So it was one of those things that during my time there, I fell in love with the program. I saw what it was all about. I really learned to appreciate the buy-in from the city of Fort Worth and the way that Fort Worth supported TCU and the way TCU supported Fort Worth and the synergy between the 12th largest city in the U.S., which is Fort Worth, and TCU, because it feels like a small college town, but at the same time it's a big place.

So that was something that I learned, as well.

I think analysts in a lot of ways provide perspective. When you look around, you look at a lot of the analysts that have gone to Alabama through the years, a lot of those guys are former head coaches, and they go and they have a chance to learn from Nick Saban and they have a chance to probably get their confidence back in a lot of ways. Because there's a lot of good football coaches that go places and aren't successful for a variety of reasons, and those guys are outstanding coaches. Sometimes it's not the right fit, sometimes it's not the right circumstance. So those guys can go and learn.

But I think as much as anything else, they can also learn, hey, what I did before, I was on the right track. I wasn't that far off.

For me, that was one of the things I learned.

The thing that Coach Patterson does so well is he coaches with a passion and has such a strong will, he almost wills things to happen. It was fun to see that and fun to see that kind of energy and that kind of investment in the program.

**Q. Sonny, you've had experience with the Big 12 and the Southwest Conference because of your dad and because of your time at Texas Tech, and with Brett coming out yesterday saying that the conference is open for business and with conference realignment**

**and potential expansion, what makes the Big 12 the next conference that should be involved for potentially expansion in becoming one of these next three or power conferences?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, I think you go back and you look at the success maybe that the SEC has had and you say, okay, why has the SEC had the level of success that they've had through the years, well, it begins with how passionate people are about football in that part of the country.

I think we have the same thing here in the Big 12. There's no place in the world in my opinion that football is more important than the state of Texas. So we have Texas as a base. We have all these great institutions outside of Texas that are very passionate about football.

I had a chance to coach last year against Cincinnati when I was at SMU. I saw how passionate their fan base was. The state of Ohio is very passionate, obviously the state of Florida is passionate. We're adding those teams. BYU has a very passionate fan base. Obviously Houston has had tremendous tradition and a very passionate fan base. Those are all teams that we're bringing into the league, and I think at the end of the day that's what matters is how much does an institution care about being successful in football.

I think the great thing about the Big 12 is that they're incredibly committed. These institutions understand the value of football, what it can do to further the experience, the student experience at that particular university, and just how important it is to be able to connect with alumni and raise funds and do all the things that universities and university presidents and decision-makers have to do.

You know, that's where it begins for me. It all begins with investment and passion and how much you care about being successful, and as I said, that's what's going to make this league successful as we move forward is that the investment is unparalleled. You go and you look at what teams are doing now from a facilities standpoint in this league, they're doing nothing but continuing to invest at a higher level.

As that happens, the league will continue to improve. And, again, I'm excited about the new leadership in the Big 12, and I think that we're going to be very aggressive and cutting edge in the way we approach preservation and also, too, expansion.

**Q. You kind of just touched upon it right there before, your father, of course, Spike Dykes, a legendary figure in Texas Tech's sports history. What do you think he**



**would think of you coaching in the same conference where he made a name for himself and made Texas Tech football what it is today?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, it's a little bittersweet. I think when -- it was fun to have my dad when I was coaching in California. He made as many games as he could. His health was starting to fail a little bit more at that point. That's why when I was coaching at Cal, we had an opportunity to play Texas in Austin, and it meant so much for him just to be able to drive over from Horseshoe Bay to see that game.

I have those memories, and they're great memories, I'll cherish them forever.

I think he would have gotten a kick out of me being at SMU. I know he had a lot of respect for that program and certainly would have now that I'm at TCU.

We used to talk all the time about what a great job TCU was because of the access that we have to the metroplex. Look, we're the only Big 12 college football program in the metroplex. So there's a lot of opportunity that goes along with that.

Especially in the NIL world now with all the different ways that corporations can get involved with your program and your student-athletes, there's tremendous opportunity here for us in this league, and it all begins with talent and acquisition and recruiting.

We've got the best talent base in the country to recruit from. I truly believe that. We can get those kids on our campus, we can get to know them better, we can build relationships, and really recruiting is about that. It's about building relationships and it's about establishing trust, and the way you build those is by investment, and you invest by spending time with somebody.

We can do that with these student-athletes at a very high level.

I think he would have got a kick out of it. It certainly would have been easier for him to get up here than it was to get to Berkeley. That was a tough travel for him, but at the end of the day I know he's looking down and excited about this opportunity and certainly gets a kick out of it.

**Q. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the defensive coordinator search. What were you looking for? How did that process go? And how did you make that decision?**

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, I think what happens is when you

sit down, you say, okay, look, we're going to go to TCU, this is really the first opportunity I'd had as a head coach -- it's my fourth head coaching job, but it was really the first opportunity I had to go out and be able to get really who I wanted, to have the kind of resources that we needed to go hire the best defensive coordinator that I thought in college football.

The great thing about, again, being at TCU is we had that opportunity to go do that.

So we started looking at names, started talking to people. Obviously I'm paying attention to trends all the time. That's one of the things that I do as a head coach, is watch trends. I had an opportunity to play against Tulsa four years. Did not enjoy those experiences of playing against that defense at Tulsa.

So Joe Gillespie was certainly on the radar from day one, and had a chance to talk to people that had worked with Joe. Had a chance to talk to people that knew him. It became pretty obvious to me that he was the right guy. Just loved his coaching style.

The way you measure a defensive coach in my opinion is how hard does his team play for him. What's the effort that that defense shows down in and down out. To me that's all coaching.

When we played Tulsa, they played harder than any defense we played against in college football. They had a great scheme. Loved what they do. It's going to be very similar to what you see Iowa State do every Saturday. Felt like the scheme was good, felt like it made sense in this league, felt like it had been successful in this league.

Joe is a west Texas guy from Stephenville, knew that he was going to really relish this opportunity and appreciate the opportunity to be at TCU and feel the same way that I do about it. I just think it's one of those opportunities that you can't pass up.

As we set out and began talking to him and he outlined his philosophy from recruiting to hiring coaches to developing players to being able to adjust, it became pretty obvious that he was the guy for the job.

I hired him and I was excited about it. Felt good about it. Then I had a chance to work with him and watch him work every day, watch him interact with our players, and I feel even better about it today than I did the day I hired him. I just think he's the right guy for the job.

He's a teacher at the end of the day. He knows what he's teaching. He does a great job of staying a step ahead

defensively in the way he thinks, and he makes people better.

He's just an outstanding person. Anytime you can surround yourself with those kind of people, then that improves your chances of being successful.

We were fortunate to have him. It's just going to be a tremendous asset to our staff, and I'm excited to see the defensive product he puts on the field.

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