

Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

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Baylor Bears

Dave Aranda

Press Conference



DAVE ARANDA: So humbled to be here with you guys. Way appreciative. I know Mack Rhoades is somewhere here, and Javan Overshown from our athletic department. So appreciative of their support.

But it's always good to be with you guys.

I wanted to start this with really hard lessons from last year. I have to imagine for those of you so inclined, what happened last year, it's one of the beautiful things about our sport is that personal comes out in the professional, and the faults of just me can -- it can happen there, too. Not only the positive things but the negative things.

I look at the last year trying to save people, maybe trying to change people, and not having hard enough boundaries, and I look at the -- I don't know if it was hubris or what it was that made me think that I could, but I think people are ready to change or improve when they're ready to, when they're ready to do it on their own.

I think that was a big factor last year.

I think the other was not using the transfer portal and not embracing it. I think one of the struggles for me has always been if you say yes to something, a player outside of your team that's in the portal, you're saying no to a player on your team that maybe is struggling from an injury, that's maybe trying to get his class, his schoolwork in order, that's maybe trying to hone the techniques of this new position that he's playing or maybe he's trying to gain weight or any of those things.

I think when you bring somebody in, you almost kind of stunt the growth of that person. I think for me to kind of come to grips with hey, this is what needs to happen for the betterment of the team as opposed to just looking at what's best for that one particular player on your team.

I think we all like to think that there's going to be just a trajectory of taking off like a rocketship, but I think we all

know there's the bumps and the pits and the downward arcing in any type of career or a young person's career.

To say, hey, we've still got you, we still believe in you but this is what we need to do for the team right now has been an area of growth for me.

To take it to this year you know, to start the year really started with person over player and really focusing in on that and talking a lot about that with our team and starting that with hey, we're talking about the whole thing, your body, your mind, your heart, and your soul is to get that into an alignment and to get that to where you know yourself, you can be yourself, you can express yourself, and when it comes time to, you can check yourself.

I think to see that our young people today aren't just a cog in a machine, right, to get wins and take home revenue, but are human beings, fully formed by God. And when we say know yourself, we say, as Paul would say, hidden in Christ with God. You can express yourself so the sport can be that for you. You can express who you are, much like an artist does, have a signature that's all your own.

The check yourself part comes -- I think that's a huge part of person over player to me because you're growing. You're self-awareness is improving. Self-awareness for us is not so much whether something is right or wrong, but is this helpful or is this not.

Yesterday I felt kind of begrudgingly with this person, and I don't want to feel -- I know what that feels like now. I don't want to feel like that anymore. The next time I'm in that situation I'm going to do this differently or I'm going to be better with it, and then you work at it, and then you're growing and getting better.

I just think that these things are way important things, and we spend time with it.

Excited with our new coaches and new staff members coming on board. I think they've brought great energy and great connection to our young people, and just really feel a one team, one vision, and I feel that connectedness.



We've brought in a fair amount of new players, and the new players have been great fits on the field and off the field, and I'm excited to be able to see them express themselves and go on just this journey of self-discovery through the season and really show up when it matters most. I know that's why they came here.

Excited for the eight home games and excited for our schedule. Way appreciative of it. I'm looking forward to playing our best ball when we're at home.

McLane Stadium is very special when a team has earned the right for folks to come in and watch, and we're totally aiming to do that.

With that, wanted to open it up with questions for you all.

Q. First off, I just really wanted to say maybe on behalf of the media, offer my condolences on the passing of your father. Sorry that that happened. Sorry to bring it up. I wonder if you would just reflect on maybe his influence on you as a man and a coach.

DAVE ARANDA: I appreciate that. I went and saw my dad when I first heard that he had cancer, and my dad and I have always -- it's always been a great relationship. He was never really someone that would say openly, I love you. I always knew that he did, though.

I remember when he called me and told me that he had pancreatic cancer and it was stage 4, I told him that I loved him and he didn't say it back. I don't know if he heard me.

So I wanted to go and say it to him face to face. I was able to do that. He gave me a big hug.

I don't know, when you're hugging and everything, you feel like, hey, this is a good hug, and he wouldn't let me go, and he kept really strong and he told me that he loved me. I'm so glad that we had that moment because I know a lot of folks don't have that.

Yeah, we're going to have a celebration of his life coming up on this Sunday, and there's going to be just so many people that are going to be there that my dad touched. Family members that didn't know they were a part of the family, relatives that needed help that my dad was there for, and all these things, and I'm just way proud to be his son.

So I appreciate that.

Q. In the three seasons that you've been a head coach, you've had wildly different circumstances and results, different coaching staffs. What would you say

is the biggest thing that you've learned about yourself compared to year one now going into year four?

DAVE ARANDA: Appreciate that question. There's a lot that I've learned.

I think the best way I can answer your question is that every piece of you, every part of you has to know why you're doing this. Like what's the reason behind this. What's the -- I think we all can see what the short-term goals are, but what's really the long-term goal. What's the legacy you want to leave. What's the reason. Why are you doing this.

I think if those things aren't worked out, then your heart can be a mercenary heart, like C.S. Lewis has talked about, and you just go to the highest bidder, whatever it takes.

I think to really know like who you are, and that takes a lot of work, because there's plenty of hiding spots. And so to really know who you are and to be able to express you is way cool, man. We'll try and get a lot of our team to do that.

Of all the things that we're doing, I'm most excited about that. I appreciate the question.

Q. You mentioned the growth as an individual and with the team this year, with the new coaches and stuff like that. You come into this season with a little bit different expectations than last year. How do you approach that with the new culture you guys are trying to establish, getting back to that mountaintop?

DAVE ARANDA: I appreciate that. I look at today as a great example for that. Our guys are lifting today. Now, we've got five guys with us here today that aren't lifting, and so I think of the guys that are lifting today, and what it needs to be is like hey, here's a day for us to get better. Hey, this was Monday. This was last time we lifted. This is what it was. We're going to get better today.

It doesn't matter who's not here or who is here. We're going to attack this, and we're not looking for, hey, the last week of July is going to be -- we've got a couple days there to kind of relax before the season.

We're not looking at that. We're looking at today, the 8:00 workout, the 10:00 workout.

I think those things, for an individual player, to look at that as there could be a level of mastery that I could have, and it takes me being fully present, those are the things that are going to carry over to the season when there's adversity, when the game didn't start the way we wanted, when the



halftime score isn't what we want.

I think those things don't come on a wish and a prayer in those moments. I think those things are developed and those things are grown. I'm proud of our group for working on those things.

I think for us to continue to try to win the day will help us when those storms come.

Q. Baylor and Texas have been in the same conference for over a century. Baylor is the only school who has been both in the Southwest Conference and the Big 12 who gets to host Texas this year. You've talked about how important winning at McLane is. Do you expect to have a different environment when the Longhorns make their last trip ever to Waco?

DAVE ARANDA: Appreciate the question. Have a great respect for Texas football, for their history, and for Coach Sark and what he's building and how he's recruiting and their style of play. They're right on the forefront offensively and defensively of being creative and innovative, and a lot of their players I know about and am expecting a battle.

A lot of it is we need to bring that battle to them, and so I think anything less with Baylor-Texas is not enough. I'm anticipating a great game there and appreciative of the opportunity.

Q. You touched on your schedule. What are your thoughts on UCF joining the conference and your road trip to Central Florida in September? You had a little experience with UCF when you were at LSU in the Fiesta Bowl.

DAVE ARANDA: Yeah, appreciate the question. A lot of respect for UCF, just the talent on the team, the way that they play.

Defensively I know there's a fire and a great temperament, and then offensively there's explosiveness and everything there.

I've got so much respect for Coach Malzahn, just the person that he is and the thinker in football that he is. Have gone up against him a bunch. Know how formidable he is. He makes a tough league tougher and better.

For us to go there and for it to be -- I want to say it's their first Big 12 game -- I just think it's going to be a tough environment. It's going to take everything with us. We're aiming to bring everything.

Q. Obviously you made a defensive coordinator change this off-season. What made you want to bring Coach Powledge back on to your staff? And what priority was it to also get somebody with a secondary background with some of the issues you had there last year?

DAVE ARANDA: I appreciate that. Coach Powledge is a coach that players can relate to. He's a coach that can be real in the in-between moments.

I think so much can be learned, if you're watching interaction between coach and players, it's not so much during the time a coach is talking to the players, it would be a coach talking to the player and the coach walks off, and if you keep your vision on those players, like what is their reaction. Is it kind of a shoulder thing or is it kind of a rolling of the eyes or is it a joke afterwards or what is it?

I just think there's so many -- I think today is a great example of just the pub and everything. There's all these opportunities for people to put on whatever kind of face they want to put on, and whatever role, if they chose to, play whatever role to play.

But to find people that are real and authentic and comfortable with who they are and don't have to be anybody else, I know players see that. I know it, and I know that they connect with that, and I think Powledge has that. So impressed by him.

The football stuff I think is way strong. He's coming from Utah State, Wisconsin, LSU, then Alabama, Georgia, Oregon, two really good schools of thought. There's a lot of similarities, some differences. Way cool kind of menu to choose from, and so I just think that he's a special one.

As far as the second one, to get somebody that can really see the whole field, see it from the back to the front, relate to all of our people were way strong requirements for it. He hits it out of the park on all those.

Thank you.

Q. I was just wondering what steps you see Blake Shapen making this season and how important his success is for the success of your team in 2023.

DAVE ARANDA: I appreciate that. Very proud of Blake. I feel like I've felt some of the same things. I have to imagine a lot of you guys have, of you step into an opportunity and you just -- it's clicking and you're rolling.

It's not a thought of, man, it's this easy, but it's like, hey, this is pretty good.

Then to go upon hard times and to see there's blind spots the whole time that you didn't know and then to address those things and to come out stronger because of it is such a good story, and to come out of it with like a pure heart, not like I'm going to prove to you or I'm going to show you or this to you or whatever. Not to chase approval but to really work for improvement, which is way cool.

Big fan of his. The team sees that and the guys see that and they want to work hard for him. His growth off the field as a leader and just in terms of just doing all the things has been really good to see, and so I'm expecting big things. I know he is, too. There's been a lot of work into it.

I think when you're in a pit, to climb your way out of the pit and come out stronger because of it I think is one of the beautiful things in our sport.

I want to see him rewarded for that.

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