

# Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

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Arlington, Texas, USA

## Oklahoma State Cowboys Coach Mike Gundy

Press Conference



**Q. Mike, I'm curious the new clock rules that will run the clock a bit more, does that impact anything you do at all, or what do you think about that change?**

MIKE GUNDY: Sure, it'll be a big factor in the games in my opinion. I think we'll see teams that had leads with six to seven minutes in college football over the last, what, 15 years or so meant zero, unprotected.

Now if teams have the ability to rush the ball with a clock that continues to move on first downs, very similar to what you see in the NFL, the game is going to expire much quicker and it'll be considerably different to what it's been in the past.

**Q. What are your thoughts on UCF joining the conference as one of the newcomers? And also your trip to Central Florida in November, your thoughts on that?**

MIKE GUNDY: Well, I'm very excited for the four teams that are coming in our conference, and I think they're all awesome for the Big 12.

As I've said before, many times today, I think that we have a lot of things to be excited about. I think we have the most innovative commissioner in all of sports right now, and I know that UCF is excited, and Coach Malzahn and his group -- I see them play a lot for whatever reason. When I have the ability to watch games, it seems like they're on, and I've always been a fan of his style of play. Offensively he's very similar to what we do at times.

Looking forward to it. I hear a lot about the stadium, hear a lot about the fans there, the students, their excitement about being in the Big 12, justifiably so.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you a couple questions. There was a lot of talk about the culture in your locker room last year and what led to kind of some of the player defections after the season. What do you attribute that**

to?

MIKE GUNDY: I attribute it to the times. We can look across the country in the portal. We've got players that are playing on National Championship teams that are leaving and going to other schools. We have players that are leaving after one year, players that are leaving after five years.

For a while there I thought it was interesting, but I'm almost considering the NIL and the portal like religion and politics where it's not even worth discussing because we don't necessarily have a rhyme or reason for what's happening.

We're very excited about the players that we brought in. I guess you have 10 or 12 go out, you bring 10 or 12 in, and you get your roster set and try to have a good spring ball, good summer, and get ready to play in September.

**Q. On that note, Trace Ford, he did great things for your program, gave a lot to the program. Over the off-season he transferred to your rival, which is somewhat unprecedented. What did you think about his decision, and can you speak on him for a second?**

MIKE GUNDY: I think it's like anything else. Nothing surprises me anymore in college football. He was at Oklahoma State and had a good run early in his career. He was hurt the last few years at our place, so we didn't really get to see him play much.

But hopefully he's healthy and he can finish his career strong.

**Q. Coach, you talked a lot about how you spent weeks learning the different styles of defense, researching. Now that you've had more time, have you noticed more differences in Bryan Nardo's system specifically than other 3-3-5s across the country?**

MIKE GUNDY: I had a pretty good idea what he was doing. I like what I see with where we're at, I guess, in the odd front.

My goal at that time was to give us the ability to play some

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odd front and some even front. I felt like that our defensive staff knew that even front really well, and we had to go find a guy that understood the odd front.

That's why we went and got Coach Nardo. I think his relationship with our staff and where we are now gives us flexibility to play some odd front and play some even front.

I'm excited about getting started up in a few weeks and seeing the direction it takes us throughout the season.

**Q. You touched on the clock rules, and back in spring we talked to you about some of the things you're doing with the run game to get that back on track like you had a few years back. Do those two things work together at all in terms of trying to improve your run game and have that ability late in a game?**

MIKE GUNDY: The clock rules play a factor in ability to run, as you know, and I'm guessing most everybody realizes that at the end of the game if you can't rush the ball and you have to throw passes and the pass is incomplete, the clock stops, if you're trying to run the clock out.

The new rule allows us to effectively rush the ball and use the clock if we want to.

The decisions that we made to implement and improve our running game were before they actually solidified the new clock rule, and the reason for that was we played with inexperienced quarterbacks in the latter part of the season, and our inability to rush the football put the game on their shoulders.

I wasn't comfortable with that.

Years ago, we had inexperienced quarterbacks, and we were a good running football team, and we could still effectively score points and win games. So that reason led to allocating more time into rushing the football.

We're not reinventing the wheel. We went through a period of time from 2010 up until 2021 I guess was the year we played in the Fiesta Bowl against Notre Dame where we're running up massive numbers of yards in points, so as you do that or as we did that, we slowly but surely got away from some of the things that we instilled in our program in my first four or five years as a head coach.

I was along for the ride, so it's not like it was on them. But we now have kind of migrated back to these are things we need to do to be successful, and then if we have this luxury with having these other areas, we're still skilled on the perimeter, we're healthy up front, we're very experienced at

quarterback. Yeah, we can do anything we want throwing the ball.

That's more of a reason why we loved back to allocating more time in the running game than we have over the last eight or ten years.

**Q. You and the other coaches are here to promote not only your school's brand but the Big 12's brand. Is it a little awkward that two of the other schools are not going to be here next year, and are you coming to terms with the fact that you're going to face your longtime rival for the last time this year?**

MIKE GUNDY: Well, it's been talked about so much now, I don't really think that any of us pay much attention to it. I mean, I'm excited about the conference this year and what we have, the schedules that are being played.

As I said earlier, I think that we have the most exciting conference right now because it wouldn't be fair for any of us to say that we actually know what's going to happen in Big 12 Conference play this year, based on the last two or three years and how the games have gone and the teams that have had success and the teams that haven't had success.

I'm excited about that. I'm a very traditionalist when it comes to conference rivalry games and such. I'm sure you're referring to the Bedlam game, this being the last one. The Bedlam game is over because Oklahoma chose to leave the Big 12, period. It's not nothing to do with Oklahoma State.

Do I like that? No. Do I like that conferences have broken up in the past? No, I don't. But I also know that we have to control what we can control, which is conference realignment is there. It's probably still going on. Wherever we all end up and whatever schedule they give us to play, we all play it and do the best we can.

**Q. Mike, obviously you said back in the spring that this quarterback competition was going to carry over into the summer. Is there anything new you can share about that at this moment?**

MIKE GUNDY: Not really. They've worked hard. They're out there. We're rotating guys with ones, twos, threes. They're getting a lot of work. We'll run this thing through half of fall camp, somewhere in that area, and if we feel like we know what direction we want to go, I'm going to be for making that decision at that time. If we don't feel like we know, then we won't make that decision.

I can't really tell you right now, and nothing has really



changed over the summer because they're essentially training on their own.

**Q. Just want to follow up on that question. Is there something specific about starting quarterbacks that you like to see from the quarterbacks before you name a starter or something you're expecting out of these guys in the fall?**

MIKE GUNDY: Oh, not really. Fortunately I've done this a long time, and I have faith in Coach Rattay, I have faith in Coach Dunn, and I'm guessing that once we get halfway through the August practices, we should have a good idea.

They have to be able to lead the team and be effective to throw the football and what we're asking them to do, basic things that we all know, and we feel comfortable with their ability matching up with our style of play with who we are personnel-wise, to have the best opportunity to score the most points in September.

**Q. Do you think Texas is and deserves to be the clear favorite in this league, and anybody else who impresses you on paper?**

MIKE GUNDY: Oh, are you basing that -- it depends what we're basing that on. Are we basing that on history? Are we basing that on the last five years? Are we basing that on the last 50 years?

I'm not sure how anybody really comes up with who's a favorite right now. I'm going to go back to what I said earlier. I think one of the fun things about the Big 12 is we don't really know who's going to win based on what's happening in the last few years.

However many years ago that Baylor won, I think they won one game the year before. I might be wrong. My math is not real good at times. Then last year TCU went all the way to the finals, and I don't think anybody picked TCU to go very far.

I said I wasn't going to bring it up, but the portal has contributed to a lot of instability in roster management that's more difficult now than ever, and it's created teams to play not as good as what people thought they should or play better than they thought they should based on an influx of a certain number of players that could play key positions.

Like at Oklahoma State we had 28 new players in spring ball, and I'm fairly certain we'll have 37 new guys in August. You've covered college football for 100 years; that's a lot. So it can change a team.

With all respect with the 100 years. You and I have been here this many years.

**Q. Coach, the Bedlam game is going to be laid to rest because of the happenings, but would you entertain the idea from your perspective and Oklahoma State to play them as a non-conference game?**

MIKE GUNDY: No. We have nine conference games scheduled, and then we have, I think, through 15 years, we're scheduled all the way up, and we're full for the most part, and we have Power Five teams.

I'm going to go back to what I said earlier. Oklahoma State is not going to change what we do because Oklahoma chose to go to the SEC. They need to change what they do because they're the ones that made their mind up to go to the SEC.

So with all the talk from administration and people saying that Oklahoma State needs to do this and that, all Oklahoma had to do was not go to the SEC. So it is what it is. We can cut right to the chase.

For me, I want to listen to the board. I'll listen to the president. I'll listen to the AD if that's something they want to do. I'm good. But I don't think it's going to happen based on the way the scheduling is.

Everybody needs to realize, it didn't have to happen if they didn't change leagues.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned that you think that Brett Yormark is one of the most forward-thinking commissioners in all of sports. What kind of makes you say that? Can you expand on that a little bit?**

MIKE GUNDY: So I've been fortunate enough to have really good conversations with the commissioner since he took the job, whenever that was, throughout the fall, throughout the spring, as recently as five days ago. We have good phone conversations. We talk about things that in my opinion are smart because he's new to this. His background in all the different things he did provided him with a very thorough resume for taking this conference to a new level.

When I listen to him, I think people that listen to other people and then make decisions are smart, versus just making decisions. I think that he listens and wants information, and then he makes decisions based on information he gets.

I think that he understands marketing. He took our conference and tied it in with ESPN and FOX all the way

through 2031. That's the most important thing in my opinion that I could have gotten accomplished, to solidify our conference financially, because without that, we don't have anything.

Now he's been involved in a lot of other things, and I think that in the foreseeable future, we'll see different groundwork he's laid, and he wants to work daily to make this conference stronger than ever five years from now and 10 years from now and 15 years from now. He's not just thinking about tomorrow.

I like that. I think that's smart. I think in his business, and I don't know jack about his business, but I think you have to be on the move all the time and you have to have your eyes peeled and you've got to be a wheeler and a dealer, and I think that's what he is. I think he's the most innovative conference commissioner there is right now. But I've been wrong before. Just ask my fans.

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