

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Boston College Eagles Coach Bill O'Brien

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Coach O'Brien.

Q. It's been 10 years since you've been a head coach in college football. What has been the biggest adjustment for you and what do you have to grow as a coach?

BILL O'BRIEN: It has been 10 years since I've been a head coach in college. I did have that experience at Alabama. That meant a lot to me. I was able to learn a ton in that program obviously from Coach Saban. I think that has helped me relative to the landscape of college football now entering this time in my career at Boston College.

Look, I think the big thing is it comes down - and you'll see this when these guys come up here - we have great guys that care about Boston College. They go to class. They practice hard. They lift weights hard. They do things the right way. I think that is something that's never changed relative to the places I've been at.

When you talk about the landscape of NIL, transfer portal, all those things, yeah, those things have changed. We were able to retain our whole team at spring practice, so we feel really good about that, being able to develop these guys, build the culture that we want to build.

Boston College will be part of the NIL program relative to college football. We're looking forward to the season. We've had a really good summer and can't wait to get started with training camp.

Q. You're taking over a 7-6 team. Pretty good situation. Has there been something you've been pleasantly surprised with?

BILL O'BRIEN: I get asked that question a lot, what has surprised me.

I wouldn't say anything surprised me. I love coaching the

team. I love working with the players. You'll see three of 'em here today after I'm up here. Really enjoy the team. These guys, like I said earlier, they show up on time, they buy into what we're trying to get done relative to offense, defense and special teams. I really like the staff. I've enjoyed working with the people at Boston College from Father Leahy to Father Jack Butler to Reggie Terry to everybody involved on the outside of the program at the university. There's nothing that really surprised me. It's been a job that I love to come to work to every single day.

Q. Boston College has had a connection recruiting-wise with Upstate New York. Over the years there's been a lot of talent that's come through there. You've continued that bridge. What do you see in the state of New York, those diamonds in the rough?

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, look, I think what we try to do is basically draw a 400-mile circle around Boston College. We have to get the majority of our roster from that area, where parents can drive to watch their sons play. Kids have grown up understanding what Boston College is all about. Doesn't mean we won't recruit other areas, down south, out west, Texas.

Our experience, especially now with Doug Marrone on the staff, who was the head coach at Syracuse, the head coach of the Buffalo Bills, that really helps. We have guys like Savon Huggins that have a connection to north Jersey, New York City, which is really helpful to us.

We got a long way to go. We just started out recruiting here. We got hired in February. I think we're on the right track, but we definitely want to recruit those areas, especially that area of New York, and other areas, New England, north Jersey, all those areas that I think in the past have been a decent pipeline to Boston College.

Q. What does the red bandana game mean to you?

BILL O'BRIEN: That is something that I have not experienced as a coach obviously but have heard a lot about and have seen the game on TV.

What it means, let's just start with the Crowther family.



Welles Crowther. What he did on 9/11 was something you can't even put words to it. He's a hero. He's a hero in the sense that he saved so many lives. He did it while wearing a red bandana that he wore as a lacrosse player at Boston College.

Means a lot to alums, but also people around the world. We'll play Michigan State this year. Our guys understand the meaning of the game. These guys have played in the game before, so they really understand it.

It will be my first experience coaching in the game. But it's a very special game and a very special memory of Welles Crowther that we memorialize for that game.

Q. Having coached in the NFL and under some prominent college coaches, what did you take away from those experiences that you want to implement into your strategies?

BILL O'BRIEN: I've been fortunate. I've had the opportunity to work with a number of great coaches. Everybody obviously talks about Bill Belichick and Nick Saban, two of the greatest of all time to ever do it. But I also worked for George O'Leary at Georgia Tech. Ralph Freidgen when I was at the University of Maryland. I've been fortunate to work with a lot of great players, some of the best players to ever play the game. I've learned a lot from them.

What I try to do with these guys here at Boston College, I've already learned a lot from the guys sitting in front of you. I try to impart some of my experiences, my wisdom, I've been doing this for 32 years, on these guys. Hopefully that's a role I can play on this team that can help this team get better every day because I've had a lot of great experiences, I've learned a lot.

We're doing it in our way at Boston College, but a lot of that has to do with what we learned over the course of time, my staff and myself. These guys are doing a great job of trying to do what we're asking them to do.

Q. Pre Deshaun Watson, as a head coach, your teams averaged about 30 yards rushing a season from the quarterback position. With Deshaun, that goes up to about 215 a season. You have a guy in Thomas Castellanos. He rushed about a hundred yards a game last year. What kind of adjustment is that going to be for you? Would you like to see him run a little bit less?

BILL O'BRIEN: Look, one of the things about Tommy, he's not just a runner. He's a guy that has really improved a lot in the six months that we've been around him as a passer. This is something that we've worked very hard on with him.

He's worked extremely hard to get better.

Look, we're never going to try to rein in Tommy. Tommy brings a lot to our offense. He's a dynamic player, a guy that can make a lot of off-schedule plays.

Some of the guys I've had in the past, Deshaun Watson, guys that could run a little bit. At Georgia Tech we had a guy named Joe Hamilton, guys that had the combination of being able to run and throw the ball effectively. That's what Tommy does.

I don't want to put any labels on him. He's a quarterback. He's a really good quarterback. He's our quarterback. We're really excited to start training camp and continue to improve.

Q. Given your history in this conference, what does 'accomplish greatness' mean to you?

BILL O'BRIEN: It means over time, relative to the ACC, this conference has always been associated with greatness, whether it was national championship football teams, top bowl game participants, football teams, relative to where I've been. I was at Georgia Tech, I was at Maryland when Maryland was in the ACC. Won a lot of games at those places.

A great history in this conference, some of the greatest coaches to coach college football coached in this league, and some of the greatest players to ever play college football played in this league.

That's what greatness means to me. I think this year we have a great group of teams, great players, coaches. I've sat in on a couple ACC coaches meetings. The coaching in this league is very impressive. I think it's going to be a great year for the ACC.

Q. Because you've been in the pros, in college, had a lot of experience, but the game is evolving, or the system, every year, how hard is it to get used to things like the transfer portal and roster management? As of yesterday with the House settlement, they've now upped the number of scholarships to 105. How hard is it to make these kinds of adjustments?

BILL O'BRIEN: I think that's what coaching is all about.

Look, I said this outside in another interview. When I was the head coach at Penn State, we dealt with the transfer portal right there, right? When the sanctions came out 12 years ago at Penn State, any guy on our team could transfer. We did have some guys transfer, but the majority of our team stuck together because they knew they were

going to be coached very well and that they would have a chance to win.

To me, like, that's what it's really all about, the connection between the coach and the players, the assistant coaches, the head coach, the strength coach and the players. The players have a trust, have a belief that you're going to do right by them.

I think that's really what coaching is all about. Coaching is also all about being able to adapt. In the guys I've worked for, Nick Saban would say it all the time, Bill Belichick, You've got to adapt. If you don't adapt, the game is going to pass you by.

We're doing a good job of that at BC. We're adapting to the changing times. We have a lot of great people in the administration helping with that. Obviously, Blake James, our athletic director. We're very adaptable and I think we're on the right track.

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