

**January 2, 2009**



**An Interview With:**

## **OHIO STATE COACH JIM TRESSEL**

COACH TRESSEL: Our kids are excited about being here and playing against a good opponent. Life is good. It is an honor to be here at the Fiesta Bowl and the wonderful venue in Glendale. What we understand, Glendale has changed a great deal in the two years since we've been there and we're anxious to see what's gone on.

**Q. Is there a chance that Todd will start the game? I understand Terrelle might not be here today.**

COACH TRESSEL: No, that is probably -- that's probably not why Terrelle -- Terrelle will start the game, just so you know. But Todd is going to contribute to our cause and we're excited about it.

**Q. What about Terrelle? Were the starters mandated to be here? What was your decision in maybe not bringing them?**

COACH TRESSEL: Not that I was aware of. There was a little change in plans from the original venue of being at the stadium due to play-off games and so forth and they asked that we limit it to 30 players. And as we've said quite often, this particular game is in large part about our 28 seniors.

And so we put together a list of 30 people that we thought would be good to come over here and another 75 are over watching film and getting ready and preparing, and we got a good group here.

**Q. Are you fearful that he would not be able to handle himself in this situation?**

COACH TRESSEL: My feeling is he probably had something that would be more impactful on our cause and that was to spend time in the meeting room.

**Q. He is in meetings right now rather than being here?**

COACH TRESSEL: Absolutely.

**Q. The Fiesta Bowl encourages all the starters. What kind of conversations did you have and did you have to explain to them why you weren't going to make him available?**

COACH TRESSEL: No, really we were asked for bring 30 players and we sent in a list of players and I did get one call asking, Did you happen to miss any? (Laughter).

And I said you might be talking in terms of Terrelle and Brewster because they are starters. But they are freshmen. When decided when we were counting to 30, there were 30 others that afforded the opportunity to be here.

**Q. Do you think that the fans want to hear from the starting quarterback one time before the Bowl game?**

COACH TRESSEL: Well, I think we owe a lot to our fans and unfortunately you can't do everything that you would like to do. I would like all of our kids and coaches to be able to sign every autograph that every fan has and all of those kinds of things.

You can do so many things. You have to make decisions. Some of them are well thought of, some of them aren't. But we work very hard and I think our fans appreciate how much we know that they are a major part of what we do.

**Q. Do you think Terrelle has been treated unfairly by the media?**

COACH TRESSEL: Not at all. I think he has done a nice job every weekend in his visit with

me. He has been very forthright and honest and it was a decision we made.

**Q. You want him doing more homework?**

COACH TRESSEL: We want him doing more homework. That's what we're here for. I hope he has a very nice visit after the game.

**Q. Can you just explain, he was available after the games but he was never made available during the week, was there a thought process behind the fact you never got him out there?**

COACH TRESSEL: Preparation time. Getting through a season of what all it takes to prepare for a ball game, it is tough to be the starting center. It is tough to be the starting quarterback. It is tough to be in your first year of having study hall and tutors and mentors and advisers and all the different things.

When you can use some time elsewhere, we've just felt that that's the growing process that we would use.

**Q. Do you get to the point when you are answering questions so often for so long to build up to a Bowl game in the past few years, how do you avoid -- you want that message to be fresh. How do you avoid getting stale and trying to get these guys to understand that that task is coming and it is going on three days now?**

COACH TRESSEL: The good thing about when you get out to the Bowl site is you can feel the energy. They have had a chance now to watch Texas on film for a long time and they know how good Texas is. So it is not hard to stay fresh about that.

You can feel the activities as they get rolling and now here we are -- I guess this is like Wednesday for us. I don't know what day it is for real, but it is like Wednesday for us.

You can kind of feel the anticipation, a lot of ball games on TV that they got to see bits and pieces of that, you talk about the impact plays and you talk about what you have to do to be successful. You add all those things together.

But you want the right blend of this being fun and experienced along with keeping that message front and center and getting great preparation.

**Q. You know you change it up from time to time. Anything out of the ordinary to change the routine or anything?**

COACH TRESSEL: We were a little bit different back home in that we took the last 20 minutes every day and did a competitive scrimmage-type situation that we have a scoring system as you know. We did a seven-day ongoing scoring system which was kind of a fun, competitive thing.

Outside of that, we didn't do much real different. But it wasn't real hard for our guys to be excited when they were named to come to the Fiesta Bowl. And then they get to know it will be against Texas who could be the best team in the country. They wanted to go to work.

**Q. You said you were getting up there, you're not that old. What did this mean to you?**

COACH TRESSEL: Age, I guess, is relative. When I was in college, I probably thought this age was very old. But there was something magical about the makeup of this team with so many older kids, so many kids who had been through so much, whether they were playing or not. Just to have them have this final opportunity toward the Bowl experience, number one, and play a team like Texas, number two, to me, it made it extra special.

**Q. The big game, how excited are you defending -- I don't know how anybody can get on Jim Tressel about your big-game success.**

COACH TRESSEL: I think because there has been so many volumes of experiences that we've had with these kids, the juices might be flowing maybe even more so than at other times because every guy you look at, you look out around the ball game, there are stories about what they have been through, what they have meant to you, how you have gotten to know them and then add to it we are playing Texas.

Growing up in Ohio, this is Texas. It was pretty special.

**Q. Carrying the banner for the Big Ten, how important is it for you knowing what happened this year in the Big Ten?**

COACH TRESSEL: I don't know what's happened this Bowl season makes it any different. We take it very personally to carry the banner, number one, of Ohio State, number two of the

Big Ten, and number three the game of football. We know a lot of people will tune into this game and we want to have the game of football take on a stage where people enjoy it, respect it, gain something from it. But I don't know what the other Bowl games really have to do with it because of course we were rooting for the Big Ten, no question about it.

One of my guys, Mark Antonio, was up 6-3 at the half.

We take it very seriously, period.

**Q. Mack was talking about the parallels between your two programs and you both came into places where there is a legend in the background and the expectations are off the charts. What are some of the parallels between those two and that you and Mack have been able to navigate where maybe some predecessors of yours didn't understand those expectations?**

COACH TRESSEL: You are talking about two of the greatest institutions that are huge that have alumni reaching all over the world that have a football history that's in the top five, both of us in the entire country. As Mack mentioned, you got in the shadows there the Darrell Royals and Woody Hayes and the expectations and so forth.

I think the thing that I have learned from Mack -- I remember studying Mack when he was at North Carolina, you go about doing things with a plan, and you go about doing things right, and if you are fortunate enough to make good decisions in recruiting, you will have a chance to have some successes.

Maybe if you are at Ohio State or Texas, your opportunity to get an even better football player is greater and if you do things right and if you have a plan, you can handle the ups and downs. There are ups and downs everywhere. I think that's what we both believe in. We both believe that the game is bigger than us.

We both believe that the schools we're at filled the stands long before we came and we'll never be the Woody Hayeses of the place, but we are the people that have the responsibility to try to maintain that type of excellence.

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