

An Interview With:

**COACH TYRONE WILLINGHAM**

**Q. A few weeks ago there was a story in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about the West Coast offense and how it's been diminished in some respects because of the adjustments that defenses have made in the process. Coach Walsh was even quoted as saying that defenses have caught up to it a little bit. What's your perspective on that and what kind of things have you seen defenses do to combat it?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Well, the first thing that would be the natural evolution of football. You know, things go around. You start with one style. All of a sudden the option was very popular and people figured out ways to defense the option. Then you change that, you multiply it, you grow, you improve and that's what football is. It's going to be that constant retooling of offensive schemes to change and adjust when things catch up. That's what you're going through.

**Q. Is there something specific that's been done?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No. Probably the biggest thing that's slowing most people down to pass the football is zone blitz. That's the biggest thing and being able to recognize and deal with that and figure out the appropriate scheme for it.

**Q. *Carlyle Holiday*, I don't he's caught too many fair catches, he wants to be aggressive and he wants to take advantage of as many opportunities as he has. How do you school him on the proper technique?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I could not be more excited with his approach. I think that's the way it should be played. And that it probably fits better with the current rule as we had a couple years with the halo rule. That's the right approach.

**Q. What assets does Maurice Stovall bring as a kick returner because certainly because of his stature he doesn't fit the normal mold. What assets do you see there that have prompted you to put him back on kick returns?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: His aggressive. He wants to be.

**Q. Do you consider him to be the best candidate for the job?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Today, yes. Do you have another candidate?

**Q. I'm asking your --**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I'll benefit from anything you can give me.

**Q. I'll let you make that call. Thank you.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You sure? (Laughter).

**Q. Yes.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I want to make sure.

**Q. No, that will be fine. The sideline warning, they gave you two warnings, and you got a little upset on the return. What happened there and what is it that they are trying to prevent you from doing by giving sideline warnings, is that big of a deal?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It is a big deal and it should be a big deal. The officials need to be able to do their job and you really don't want the officials in most case on the field. You want them in that area so they can work and do their job. And we did not allow them to do that well enough; so therefore, they warned us.

**Q. Your reaction, did you think it was going to cost you a touchdown?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That was my initial thought that either we would be penalized on the kickoff or it could be taken away, the touchdown. And of course I didn't want either one of those.

**Q. You guys had pretty good field position and you got into the other team's territory quite often, yet it seems like quite often you have not maybe got as many points -- I think five turnovers in the past two games and the other teams' territory. Do you think the offense has been better but hurts their own drive at times?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That is always a concern because when you get into the red zone, the goal is to score touchdowns, not field goals,

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but touchdowns. And when you do neither of those, you really put yourself in jeopardy because you feel like you've just squandered opportunities and eventually it comes back to haunt you.

**Q. Is it something that you talk to the team about?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It's something that we work on every week. You work on red zone scoring and making those plays and being very productive in that area.

**Q. It's not just red zone, but I would think that once you get past 50, I don't know what the standard is if you want to score --**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That's all the same. You want to score at every opportunity you can. So you emphasize that. Where it becomes more important is when you get close and you don't do it. You want to score and if we start on our own three we want to take the ball down and score.

**Q. Is there a percentage that you have, though, that you aim for inside the 50, or is it position of the red zone percentage; or how do you measure how successful you're being?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You'd like, honestly, and you've already stated it, you'd like to score every time. That's the goal. You'd like every time that you get close, you want to come away with points. Your preference is touchdowns, but if you can't get a touchdown, you'll take a field goal.

**Q. Do you see overall that the offense is doing a better job? Seems like you're getting a little more balanced in the passing game the last two weeks.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would probably say yes, but we've still got a lot of room to improve. A lot of things we have to improve on our offense in order for us to be the kind of offense we'd like to be.

**Q. Could you discuss Washington, their strengths and what concerns you most going into this week's game?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: What concerns me most is first of all, their record, because it is deceiving. They have played some very good football and that record could very easily be 2-0 as opposed to 0-2. It can often create a mindset that this team is not as skilled as it is; so once we get past that issue, then comes the actual scheme.

I am really frightened by their running back, No. 7. They seem to be very difficult to tackle and they are playing behind a pretty big

offensive line that seems to be athletic. There seems to be some question about who their quarterback will be and in that rotation and they have done a great job of producing points, even with that instability. And of course the receiver is a big play guy. He makes plays.

And defensively, they have given up some yardage, but they look to be like most Washington teams, physical and athletic. And it just is a surprise that they have given up the yardage that they have given up. So to me this is a football team that is very capable of coming in and getting a victory.

**Q. On the telecast Saturday, it was noted with Brady Quinn he is doing a better job of looking off his receivers and finding the open man. That's one of the things pointed to in his development as a quarterback. What are some of the other subtleties you see in his development?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: The things you look for in your quarterback, you want him to have command of the system. You want him to be able to provide the leadership. You want him from a passing standpoint to be able to get the ball quickly out of his hands and to move it to the open receiver. So that requires being able to go through his progression. And Brady continues to improve and get better and better at those things.

**Q. Could you talk about the decision you made to insert Travis Thomas in the game at the fourth quarter on Saturday and Walker and Grant had been running very well and I think it caught many people by surprise when you put Thomas in the game.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It shouldn't. I think Thomas is a good back and he stepped in and did some good things. It's unfortunate that he fumbled. But **Ryan Grant** was not available to us at that time and I felt like we needed a runner that could take the ball down the field and that's one of the strong areas for Travis.

**Q. What's Grant's status?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I do not know yet.

**Q. When you feel like you have a need to want to tweak your offense or to maybe change systems, how do you get ideas about what you'd like to do in the future? Do you watch other games, do you talk to other coaches?**

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COACH WILLINGHAM: We are constantly gathering information on things that may work, may not work, how you can implement those things. You are constantly trying to borrow from everywhere to see if there are new things that may fit in your system. Whether you introduce it or you introduce it from an outside source and still trying to find what works best and what makes you go. It's a constant change, week-to-week and year-to-year.

**Q. So when you say "week-to-week," is it something that you would consider during a season? I mean, you might see somebody in another conference doing something and you might say, "Hey, that's a great play"?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Absolutely.

**Q. When you're talking with your team and with recruits, do you use the term "West Coast offense"?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I don't.

**Q. But would you call what you're running West Coast offense or not really?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I call it offense. I like your reference, though.

**Q. Thank you. Thanks for going with that. And then when you're talking to recruits, what do you talk to them about the advantages of your system? What do you sell them on about your system?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That it can be very productive; and it can allow not only the team success, but allow them success as individuals.

**Q. Do you talk about NFL?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Some kids you do.

**Q. Now if they say --**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Who are you going -- where are you going? Help me out. What are you trying to get to?

**Q. Well, no, I'm just talking about your offense. The next question along this line is what if they say, well, how come -- how long does it take to get to that, why is it complicated? Because a lot of fans ask that, why is it so complicated, and how long does it take to learn the system.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It depends on the players and their individual adjustments, so you

don't have a timetable. I think Nebraska is maybe seeing some of that right now.

**Q. I wanted to talk about the returns, too. When you see a guy like (Travis) Thomas and (Tom) Zbikowski the way he's able to return interception, let's look at him at kickoffs or punts?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Oh, yes, but you have to be very careful, too, that you don't overload players.

**Q. Then when a guy like Travis (Thomas) comes in, he's a very young player and obviously has a lot of skills, what do you do as a coach at this point to bring him back?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You keep letting him know that at some point, the opportunity will present itself, and that when that opportunity arises we have confidence in him and we will expect him to rise to the occasion.

**Q. Would you talk about the development of Darius Walker?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Darius' development is ongoing, but I think we've been very pleased with what we've seen to date. He continues to learn more and grow within the system.

**Q. Now, I notice that Washington has given up 560 yards rushing in two games, do you feel like that's something that you can exploit?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would hope we would be able to have success in the run game. Again, I think you have to be very careful because this is a very athletic defense. I don't want to walk into a situation believing something will be there and it not be there and we don't execute to our potential.

**Q. When looked at your quarterback, what do you look for in terms of signs of growth, what kinds of things specifically do you look at in terms of what he does and can do maybe better than he did?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It's all about the execution that you continue to get better at that. You get better at understanding the system. You get better in the reads, you get better in the production. Those are the things you look for, to see if you're constantly improving.

**Q. And also, I wonder if you could talk**

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**about the special teams play this past Saturday.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: We let down and in other weeks those areas had been solid for us and had been good for us. We let down in those areas we got the punt block and gave up a kickoff return. You don't like those things to happen. Hopefully we can make all of the corrections so it won't happen again. But those are two areas that we did not perform well.

**Q. Would you talk about the freshmen quarterbacks and their development?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: One has been very limited and has had some injuries and slowed his progress down. David Wolke has continued to grow and improve yet he has not been given an opportunity to get on the field and really show his true progress.

**Q. He was a four-year starter in high school, can you tell that when you're watching him on the practice field?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: He does some very good things. But still, you've got an amazing adjustment that takes place from being a four-year starter in high school to coming into the college game. So I think he is still experiencing that transition, but yet he's made a lot of progress.

**Q. Where is he at on the depth chart?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: He would be behind Pat.

**Q. Third string probably?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: If you're looking for a number, yes, that would be it.

**Q. We saw earlier Maurice had a boot on his foot; what is his status for Saturday?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: We do not know. We'll start to look at Maurice as he comes to practice today, but yes he was with a boot on his foot.

**Q. Is that one of the reasons that Jeff (Samardzija) was put in the game late Saturday?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Jeff was primarily in the rotation, but we did not have Maurice available to us at that time, yes.

**Q. I'd just like to ask you a question about you as a person and where are you spiritually. When you're winning, you seem to be like a burden has been removed, compared**

**to where you were when we were losing, is there a difference in your demeanor, your character, your attitude, your spirit?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: There always is. Winning is a great feeling, a great emotion.

When you lose, you are not very happy. I think the term or the example they've cited over the years is that even the water tastes better when you win, and you know that in most of the cases what I drink is tasteless. So that means there is a difference between those two and being human. You fluctuate with those. You try not to.

**Q. Does that same spirit carry over to the entire university? The other day I was talking with some groundskeepers, and they were telling me about when we were losing, everything on campus seemed to be bitter but now it's sweet. So do you sense that Notre Dame football is kind of the life of the University; if we're winning, we have life, and if we're losing -- ?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would hope that we would have tremendous impact on those emotions. And my preference, of course is to have a nice, sweet environment.

**Q. Talking about Brady (Quinn), he's still a young guy and there's a lot of things he has to learn, whether it's mechanics or just the nuances of the game. During the season how much of development can a quarterback have in those areas when there's so much attention focused on game planning week-to-week that takes up so much time?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It is more difficult without question. That's why the spring is so critical, because it does allow you a little bit more leeway; that you don't have a true game to prepare for each week. So you can spend more time on fundamentals and you hope that the base that you build up from the spring is really carried over to the fall.

But you still can work on things. We try to make sure that every day we work on certain things which don't get too far away from the fundamentals, because if you do that it really adversely affects the way you play.

**Q. With leadership being an important part of that position, how difficult is it for a guy like Brady to take on that role when there's still so much that he is learning about the game himself?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: First of all, I think

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it comes natural with the position. As a quarterback, there's just a natural mantle of leadership that's placed on you, and I most guys in that position readily accept that. But as you grow and have greater confidence and greater knowledge of all of the other facets of the game, then you naturally expand into a greater leadership role.

**Q. What differences have you seen from him in that area this season?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: He's able to lend a more vocal leadership to the team than probably the other year and I think that will continue to grow.

**Q. Inaudible question on Tom Zbikowski...**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That was a spectacular game on Tommy's part and much needed from a team standpoint. To have make that strip and take it for a touchdown was a great play, one that might be one that you write about for a long time. It's exciting and that's what you expect from big-time players.

**Q. Are you surprised he came out; he had shown some good play but that far exceeded what he had done earlier?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No, he will continue to grow as I think there are other players that will continue to grow. As they gain more confidence and more experience and you will see them hopefully be able to expand the things that they do on the field.

**Q. Players were saying he's a very popular player among the other players; do you note that?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Oh, yeah, he is extremely well-woven into the fabric of our football team. He is important in a lot of layers, social layers, in terms of leadership and in terms of his work ethic. He is an integral part of our team.

**Q. You mentioned before that you like players who have played more than one sport; how does boxing help?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: The advantages of boxing obviously would be like any of the (martial arts) or anything of those natures, the hand speed, those things help. It's probably a little more difficult for him because of the nature of sport to be involved in boxing and football.

**Q. Can you talk about (Jeff) Samardzija and (Matt) Shelton what they gave you Saturday?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You can just about go to the Stanford game a year ago with Matt. He is showcasing his speed and his ability to get the ball and make plays and that has continued from last year to this year.

Jeff, I said long ago that he is a winner. He's just a guy that makes plays and you put him in a situation and he finds a way to get it done.

**Q. Can you talk more about Matt Shelton, the guys were saying he's pretty well grounded. Yesterday Regis (Philbin) on CNBC was talking about him and the huge plays that he is making?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I am hopeful that he is very well grounded, because you don't want anything that happens to a young man to take away from what he's doing. And you don't want him to get caught on himself or not be able to really move forward.

But Matt has been not a surprise. We believe that he has had the potential to do the things that he is doing and it's just great that he is making those plays and really stepping forward.

**Q. Earlier in the year you talked about swagger; is there a swagger now, or maybe you need to scale it down and say, hey, don't get too much swagger?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: There's always a real thin line that you walk between having just enough and too much. You're always trying to balance that. You do want a team that is very confident and believes it can get something done, but you do not want a team so confident that it forgets how to work or what it took to get where they are at.

So hopefully that's where our other coaches step in; that we can keep them very well grounded and understand what's most important is this next game we play, and that the next team coming in will have no concern about what we did last week.

**Q. You haven't played Washington since you've been at Notre Dame, but at Stanford you didn't have the best record against them.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No, I didn't fare very well against them. There was probably about three occasions that we had them beat and let them slip out. So I'm very hopeful that this will be

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the charm.

**Q. Carlyle Holiday, he said he had a lot of friends and family calling him and asking him where you went during the football game at Michigan State.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I spoke with *Carlyle* yesterday so we had that talk. (Laughter).

**Q. Obviously something came up and it seems to be developing, is the luxury of having a two-back offense, having two guys with different styles that you can run out there, just can you break down some of the luxuries that provides a coach having that kind of duel-purpose attack?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: What it does for us, it can really change our point of emphasis with our offensive attack and based on the skills of those guys. Right now you see Darius (Walker) do a wonderful job of getting to the corners of the defense, which now forces them to expand the field which also has opportunities for him inside; also allowing *Ryan (Grant)* or whoever our next back is to come in and do work inside and outside, changes what they have to do from a pass receiving standpoint.

So all of those things are made more difficult for the defense when you have contrasting styles of back in your offense.

**Q. Is this what you envision coming into the season, having something like this sort of emerge?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I wasn't sure exactly how it could come to play. You're hopeful that you can find two guys that can give you different styles and really two guys that can give you consistent play. Then you can keep your backs fresh and you can always be the aggressor.

**Q. What advice do you give the players when it comes to dealing with the media?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: First of all, you tell them to always be honest. You tell them that our business is not necessarily the business of the public and there are certain things that should stay in the locker room and should only be the business of the team. And to enjoy the experience.

**Q. How involved do you get when it comes to giving advice about those types of matters?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Every so often I'll remind them in very subtle ways.

**Q. Would you care to share the types of things you would do specifically?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You just talk to them and provide them with examples of where you see another player in another sport or the game of football that might have made what you think is a mistake and you try to bring that to their attention so they won't make similar mistakes.

**Q. Getting back to Matt Shelton, at six foot, 175, he doesn't look like an imposing figure. Has he used that to his advantage in fooling people with his ability to make big plays?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would say that is a real advantage, because unfortunately you have a tendency sometimes when you see a little guy to not believe that he can beat you or do certain things against you. When you catch an opponent by surprise, it is a wonderful thing in terms of being an advantage for.

**Q. He was talking after the game that maybe the secret is out now and people are going to start paying more attention to him. Do you see him becoming more of a focus when he gets on the field?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: When you've completed the big plays that he has, I think yes, people have to pay attention to him. And what that does for us is allow that attention to go to him and we can go to another avenue, which forces them to pay attention to that avenue; so you can go back to Matt or go to someone else.

**Q. One of the surprise developments, at least for us in the media, is the emergence of the receivers. You have a talented and deep group, probably more talented and deeper than any of us have thought. Can you just talk about that group overall what they have done?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: For the most part we have been fairly well pleased with the play of our receivers. And we asked them not just to be receivers, but we asked them to make a contribution in all aspects of the football game and they have been willing participants in that.

So with that, Shelton has stepped up when he's been called up. Chase (Anastasio) has had some opportunities and we need to give him some more. Probably going to give *Carlyle (Holiday)* a little bit more but Rhema (McKnight) has stepped up and also Maurice (Stovall). So I've been overall pleased with the group. And I might even have forgotten one guy in there, but it's been a real solid

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group and they worked well together and they seem to complement the things that we are trying to do in our offensive scheme.

**Q. One thing that's been noticeable in the first three games is your kickoffs have been going short, 10-yard liners, the kicks, do you want to see them deeper or what do you think about the kickoffs?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That is something that we're trying to improve because we think we can improve on our kicks, not just in distance and hang time, but also the location. You have a tendency to improve your coverage, so we're trying to look at that and see if we can improve distance, improve hang time and also direction.

**Q. When you are talking about the kids who over the course of a career have a great career in college, whether it's a kid like (Darius) Walker who comes in having been recruited by everyone in the country or a kids like Troy Walters, who comes in not having been recruited by very many people at all, is there a commonality in the guys who go through college and do finish as great ones?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would say it depends on having a very grounded and balanced outlook on themselves and their surroundings; that they never become overwhelmed with high expectations, and that they always continually are driving themselves towards their own high expectations. And those guys usually seem to be successful because they are always hungry, always trying to reach that next level of accomplishment.

**Q. Is that groundedness intrinsic to the players or something they can learn from being around older teammates?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I think you can learn it but human nature is very difficult to deal with. It's always a constant battle within themselves to be able to maintain that balance.

**Q. And could you talk about what you've seen of Casey Paus, he doesn't have a whole lot of experience, but his teammates are very excited about him and they say he's got the intangibles that they look for and they are confident that he can help them turn this thing around.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: First of all, you start with a pretty strong quarterback background, and that gives him a source of strength that some other players might not have.

He also has a pretty good arm. He has good physical skills and if I remember correctly I thought he was a bright young man coming out of high school. He's got a lot of fundamentals that you like to see in a quarterback.

**Q. Was he somebody that you talked to when you were at Stanford?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: We had some initial conversations with him, but I thought he was early on his decision if I'm correct.

**Q. And when you talk about a kid like that who does have, as you said a family background, whether it's a sibling or parent who has played at this level, what do they understand about the college game that perhaps other players have to learn slowly along the way?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: You hope with that background comes some experience that they gained without having to actually experience it themselves that was passed on from a father or brother or someone very close to them. So they can be a few steps ahead of the average guy if they were stepping in those situations.

**Q. And finally can you talk about the University of Washington program, you are more familiar with them having been at Stanford and playing them on an annual basis. Talk about the Husky tradition and the fans. I hear there are a lot of people who are planning to come back to Notre Dame; they have a very strong fan base.**

COACH WILLINGHAM: They really do. I think on the West Coast they have been one of the more successful teams over the last couple of decades. They have a rich, rich history and tradition and high expectations.

I have often described going into their stadium as the only place in the country where they check colors. If you won't wear purple, you don't get in. It's a pretty strong following and I'm quite sure they will be back here in numbers if there are tickets available.

**Q. Wondering if you're any different now as a coach or person than you were back then?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Absolutely. I think with each day you age, you learn more, you're experienced more, you see things a little bit different. So hopefully I've naturally changed in a lot of areas.

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**Q. Can you expand on that, as a coach how you may be different?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I just think the background when you're put in a different environment you have to respond to it differently. You have to make adjustments for it. You're coaching a different team, different mentally, live in a different part of the country, I think all of that is very natural.

**Q. Has this all been what you thought it was going to be when you got into it?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Yes.

**Q. That's the extent of your answer?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Yes. (Laughter).

**Q. Do you remember the circumstances, you were here when -- you guys played in the Seattle Bowl and then you ended up getting the job a couple of days later. Did that all kind of happen while you were here at the Seattle Bowl?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No, it didn't. There was absolutely no contact while I was at the Seattle Bowl.

**Q. Couple questions about (Tom) Zbikowski in relation to how you project during the recruiting process that a kid might be an option quarterback, what did you see from him on tape that made you fairly certain that you do drive him into the backfield where he really had not played at all?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It was really his athleticism and his history we felt like he had enough toughness to make that transition. I originally thought he might be able to play corner for us because I really liked his feet. But it turned out that I think probably the safety position is probably a better position for him.

**Q. Could you talk about that process, in general terms, projecting a player to play at a different position in college and what goes into that, how you make those kind of evaluations?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: Well, you try to look at him as an athlete and try to envision those qualities you need at a position and then try to project them and believe that they will have the ability to get those things done. I don't know if I can say it's that scientific.

**Q. In terms of boxing specifically, you've talked about in the last couple of years**

**how much you like guys that have played other sports. Boxing in particular seems unique in terms of not only the physical nature, but the fact that it's a one-on-one type sport, not dissimilar from wrestling. Is that a big advantage, that it is boxing, for Tommy, opposed to maybe another individual sport that he could have played?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: It is, because if you were talking with almost any coach one of the things that would jump out at you that we would request of a player would be toughness. And it's hard to be a good boxer if you're not tough. So that is a quality that we all seek and it's a quality that is very much in demand on all football teams. You want tough players, very physical approach to the game.

**Q. Lastly, someone asked earlier about you offering advice when players are dealing with the media, as Tommy was going through his recruitment, he was keeping a diary on ESPN.com or something like that, did you read that at all and did you give him any advice on that?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No. That would not have been the proper thing for me to give him advice on, on that diary. And yes, I did read it.

**Q. What were your impressions of the entire recruiting process being laid out in front of a national audience like that?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: (I am) probably not in favor of it. Because I do think there are conversation that is take place between a player, coach and coach and recruit that are more personal and don't necessarily involve public announcement.

**Q. You didn't feel like it was your place to advise him to do one thing or the other on that?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No, that is not my responsibility nor should it be my place to do that.

**Q. With Washington's record aside, considering the extremes that have marked their season this year, does this team present more of a mystery than the usual opponent?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No, I don't think so. You look at the things they have done and the way they have played and it's not a mystery.

The only mystery would be the fact that they don't have a win yet. But if you look at the way they have played, you see that this team is

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very capable, and I've been really impressed with what I've seen. And I think our coaches will say that after our players have an opportunity to look at them they will agree also.

**Q. They have a number of quarterbacks that have played, and now on the defensive end, he's threatening to overhaul his entire front line and maybe other players as well. Does that cause you to wonder about what you're going to see actually?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: No. Because changes in personnel will dictate some changes in the scheme, but for the most part I think they feel pretty good about the things they are doing schematically and trying to plug in the right people when and if they say they are making changes.

**Q. You mention your concern over their 0-2 record, uncertain that it properly represents Washington; do you worry about your guys underestimating them?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: That is always a concern. But again, hopefully what we will be is an experienced football team that can look at the videos that we'll receive on them and understand that this is a very capable football team.

**Q. How does the defense that you have compare to ones that you've had in the past?**

COACH WILLINGHAM: I would say that they are probably similar; that we are creating a great deal -- or we are creating turnovers, which is it something that we try to press each day with our football team, to be aggressive in that area and practice those skills that will allow you to create turnovers.

We are always focused on trying to stop the run, because we believe from the defensive philosophy standpoint that it reduces the game down and gives you a better opportunity to win if you only have to face one dimension.

So I would say that it's very similar in terms of what we are trying to get accomplished with the defenses that we have had in the past.

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