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An Interview With:

COACH LES MILES

COACH MILES: When you represent LSU, you represent a great state and a great school, future years, and a number of professors that would volunteer their time to come over and meet with our prospects and introduce their curriculum. I think the environment is very -- it's a great opportunity for our players.

So the experience, graduation in the 70 percentile, averaging ten-win victories and playing for championships, how they are treated throughout the day, expected to do right and compete in a classroom; the enjoyment of being here and playing ball, and the opportunity to improve their skills and play in the NFL -- all those things lead to a very quality recruiting class.

The first group of people that must say to your prospects that they are enjoying their team and it's important to them that they like it here, your players. They are our strongest advocates.

I enjoy the fact that there are a number of brother teams on our team. Leonard and Lanard Fournette, Blake and Reed Ferguson, and Maea and Sione Teuhema; those guys follow a brother to school here. Tells you that what they think of their experience.

The assistant coaches, dedicated to overnight stays, seven days a week, certainly representing LSU football and the brand as well as they can. Their children, their wives, don't see them. They show up on the weekends and recruit, and those wives and children come along side their program very effectively. Certainly without them, we would not have success.

The recruiting staff, Frank Wilson has done a great job as our coordinator, has great overview, just a tireless worker.

Austin Thomas, a guy that handles our on-site recruiting and on-site video, just is a tremendous asset to us.

Sharon Lewis who handles the recruitment weekends and again, very, very talented people in service of our school.

New staff, Kevin Steele and Ed Orgeron added a lot of energy to this recruiting class. What happens many times in recruiting, it's not necessarily the position coach. It is the overall energy of the staff and the willingness to come alongside somebody that's not in your position.

But I have to be honest, it's just a lot of fun to follow Ed around. He's got a nice want and effort to represent the Tigers. He's from Louisiana and he couldn't hide it in he tried. He did a great job for us.

As you look at some performances by assistant coaches, Jeff Grimes did a great job. We signed five offensive linemen and Grimes was a point guy on all of them. Just really did a great job.

And Corey Raymond obviously handles a lot of our defensive backs and again, he stepped in and just represented LSU team extremely well.

Adam Henry and Cam Cameron came alongside the wide receivers and the quarterback that we signed; Steve Ensminger worked on Maea Teuhema and these tight ends.

Bradley Dale Peveto assisted a number of guys and ends up with our punter from Australia.

Annually we give in this state, the players in this state, the opportunity to play in front of friends and families in our stadium at LSU. We think it's our first responsibility. We took 15 players from the State of Louisiana, seven of the Top-10 players in Louisiana and for the first time, we took consecutive No. 1 players in the state.

The signing class overview: The class is in 24/7 ranked fifth, Rivals eighth, ESPN tenth. Class consists of six five-star prospects, 16 four-star prospects and signed two top offensive linemen from the State of Texas, Teuhema and Weathersby. Signed two five-star quarterbacks, Kevin Toliver and Donte Jackson.

Class consists of 25 prospects from six states, three countries, and Louisiana had 15, Texas five, Georgia three, Florida one, Mississippi one, Ohio one, United States had 23 prospects, Nigeria one, and Australia; that would be southern Australia, had one.

Four mid year enrollees, Kevin Toliver,



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David Ducre, Hanner Shipley, Justin McMillan, the quarterback. Those guys are already on campus. But we filled significant roles and significant needs in the offensive line, the defensive end position, the punter, long snapper, running backs, D-backs and quarterback.

Class included 16 offensive players, five offensive linemen, three wide receivers, three running backs, three tight ends, one fullback, one quarterback, and six defensive players and four DBs, two D-Line and two specialists, punter and long snapper.

The offensive line signees, Chidi Valentine-Okeke, left tackle, and really a very, very talented, very mobile athlete.

Weathersby, a right tackle, again, a big, strong, kind of remind you a little bit of Lyle Collins in his body type.

George Brown, a right tackle, as well, maybe a little more athletic and really a guy that will have real athleticism in the offensive line.

Maea Teuhema who is a dominant, dominant player and really can play in a bunch of places.

Adrian Magee, a 250-pounder from right here in Louisiana, guard or tackle. But the five-stars from Maea Teuhema, Chidi Valentine-Okeke and four stars with Weathersby, Magee and George brown.

At cornerback, we recruited four men, addressed a need there, those guys that would leave early but we signed two five-star prospects, Donte Jackson and Kevin Toliver.

Kevin Toliver was committed since his sophomore year and sets an all-time record for being committed for length of time and then going to the school of her choice.

Xavier Lewis is a four-star player along with Jeremy Cutrer, but there's no finer prospects in America than Toliver and Jackson. And I would expect Jackson to carry some balls offensively, receive some balls as a punt returner, kick returner. Just a very talented -- I think he ran a hundred meters, listed at 10:4:2 but unofficially a 10:3.

Punter Josh Growden, rugby player, Pro Kick Australia from the southern part of Australia.

Long snapper Blake Ferguson was No. 1 long snapper in the country who followed his brother, Reed Ferguson, to LSU.

Another key piece was when we graduate one and one leaves early at the defensive end spot, you have to have two guys that can come in and play, at least certainly one, and we think that

Arden Key is a great pass rush specialist and a guy that has a ton of potential and immediate impact player.

Isaiah Washington has a chance to be a great player. Lean, long frame and can really move. Will develop nicely.

Running backs, there's always a great need for versatility in the running back position. We had two running backs on campus upon graduation, and we signed two in the state, Nick Brossette and Derrius Guice. Both very talented backs and very capable.

If you recall, Guice went to the Army All-American game and then selfishly moved to wide receiver and then dominated the game from the wide receiver spot.

Nick is the all-time leading rusher and scorer in the State of Louisiana, certainly both of those men will have very bright careers at LSU.

Wide receiver, signed top receiver in the country and the No. 1 player in the state, Tyron Johnson. He fills a great need at wide receiver. Big, tough, physical, really capable, competitive pass receiver. His signing sends a message to the state and to the rest of our young guys that if your best, you need to come to LSU, because frankly, we'll play you.

Kind of overview of the prospects, just kind of looking at the guys. Nick Brossette, a five-year varsity starter running back, a 2015 Warrick Dunn award winner. Tremendous in his last two years of high school; he was 26-1 and was the MVP of the state Championship Game.

George Brown at the right tackle spot would be the No. 8 Ohio prospect and the No. 1 offensive tackle out of the state.

Jeremy Cutrer, a safety, out of Kentwood, Louisiana, again, very capable recover man and a physical, downhill safety, as well, and could play some corner comfortably.

Derrick Dillon, a wide receiver, again, Louisiana's No. 5 prospect, a very, very capable receiver, very talented, athletic man.

David Ducre, our loan fullback is the No. 1 fullback in the country. Listed as a four-star prospect by Rivals and a very, very talented man and very bright student.

Jazz Ferguson, plays wide receiver, tall, very capable, big target, will develop. Great ball skills, great basketball player. Has a great upside to him.

Lanard Fournette, again, has skills and

pedigree. Needs to develop but we are confident that he will do that and produce very comfortably for us.

Josh Growden, the Australian punter, this will be my third Australian punter in a row, kind of like those guys. He is a very athletic man. He played Australian Football, rugby, great club in western Sydney and trained for Pro Kick Australia. I kind of like those Australian guys.

Donte Jackson, 300 meters, track participant and will likely run track on our campus, as well.

Tyron Johnson, a key performer, as well.

Xavier Lewis was the No. 13 cornerback nationally by ESPN, No. 8 prospect in the State of Louisiana and very, very talented.

And then our quarterback, who is already on campus now, is Justin McMillan, a 6-2, 177-pound quarterback, won a state championship. We see him as having ball skills and a craftiness about him that will allow him to compete extremely well.

Bry'Kiethon Mouton, 6-1, 250-pound tight end fullback, big, physical guy that has great ball skills. We graduated a couple fullbacks here in the last two years, and we are looking forward to seeing him play both the tight end spot and the fullback spot.

We took Hanner Shipley, a 6-5, 280-pound tight end, has the ability to block the line of scrimmage but also has real ball skills. It will be interesting to see how he develops. But I would think that he would be that style of tight end that we have been used to having.

Kevin Toliver, again, a guy that's already here, was the No. 1 prospect in the country and currently the No. 6 prospect in the country.

So for him to stay committed through time is just a tremendous thing for him and with his view of his opportunity here at LSU.

Toby Weathersby, 6-5, 303 pounds, again, reminds you of Lyle Collins, big, strong capable guy. Enjoys the right side of the line.

Foster Moreau, 6-4, 240-pound tight end, Jesuit, reverse tile guy with ball skills and plays basketball. We see him as a guy that will really just develop in a year or two. He may well be one of those guys that is just so very productive, you have a very difficult time to get him off the field.

This is the first time in ten years that we have been ranked in the Top-5 back-to-back. Really won't know about this class for a year or two but it's got balance of speed and size and it's a

class where character and quality people, as well as talent, are throughout.

But this is a class that in my mind can help us compete for championships and certainly for the college playoffs.

Your questions.

Q. Was there anyone in this class who caught you off guard?

COACH MILES: No, to be honest with you, I kind of anticipated this class. There were a couple guys that said, no, that I didn't anticipate but I kind of anticipated that these guys were coming.

Q. Just in the past month, I know this time last year, you said that offensive tackle was a huge priority when you looked into 2015, just over the past month, you get two guys back on the offensive line and then you get commitments from Chidi and Toby -- how big has the past month been?

COACH MILES: The past month has given us a real strength in the offensive line. Allows us to develop those young guys behind them, behind what would be Hawkins and Alexander.

And with the idea that finding the best five guys this year will be a little bit more competitive and the idea that these guys would step forward in a year or so and be we figure to be one of the best lines around.

Q. The numbers, usually balance out, it's offense heavy this year. Was that planned or were there any misses or pluses that would skew them in the way they fell?

COACH MILES: Yeah, well, it was more of a -- certainly we missed on a linebacker that we thought we had as we went into the recruiting, the end of recruiting.

But you know, when you change staff, there's a point in time where there's some guys who had made relations and relationships with some of our old coaches and when they left, so did their interest in the school.

And so we made our case as best we could but what will end up having to happen is certainly next year's class will have to be a very, very heavy linebacker class.

Q. Tell us more about the quarterback,

and do you expect him to factor into your competition right away or as a developmental player?

COACH MILES: He's a guy that you need to watch him play first. You watch him in his evaluation film, you see him have the ability to make plays and he's competitive as they can be. I watched a game live versus a talented -- another very talented team right there in Texas and it was back and forth and back and forth. And for the quarterback to stay in that game and make big plays, and really have a knack to him, that was awfully important to me. And so to watch him this spring will have to be what we do. You're going to have to see him.

We know he certainly would be a developmental player but we don't know that he might not be a guy that could step forward and play early.

Q. You locked in two of the top receivers in the country in Johnson and Dillon, but major question at the quarterback position. Is it more the receivers are coming here because they see they can make it to the NFL and not what the quarterback situation is with uncertainty at the position?

COACH MILES: I think they see the fact that the young quarterbacks are guys that can come to life. You can see that at times they are very efficient throwers, and you would like to think, as I would, that they will develop and continue to develop through spring and player-led seven-on-seven campaign this summer; that they would come out of this in a very improved position.

We love to throw the football. There's no question that these guys came here because what they want to do is catch balls and what we want to do is throw them. We just need to improve at that spot.

Q. So much is made of national signing day now, all the ratings and stars and everything. Do you think too much is made of the rankings, especially when you see that the vast majority of players in the NFL are guys that were not even ranked or two stars or three stars?

COACH MILES: Well, it's interesting. If you get what you need and you're talented at those spots, then I think that's what you really have to do. And your class does not necessarily have to be highly ranked. It just needs to fit the guys that you have on your campus.

And as I closed the talk earlier, I said this: I said that you're really not going to know for a couple of years how good they are, and here we have played, three years ago, 15 freshmen, two years ago 15 freshmen and last year, 17 freshmen, which led all of college football in playing young players.

I think that we get to find out a little earlier than others how good they are going to be or how good they are not. And I think two things happen. One, it allows a young player to develop to a very, very high level, and again, it also gives the opportunity for them to take three years and out.

I think this class really fits our needs and certainly we have to find out again how good they really are. The ranking is not necessarily the most important piece.

Q. How would you compare and contrast their running styles, and would you expect these guys to get carries as freshmen?

COACH MILES: Yeah I think we're a team that allows for the fact that you want to stay fresh, you want to stay healthy. I think if you looked at the back end of last season, you lost Kenny Hilliard for some time, and you were very fortunate to have three backs that could all play.

I think that that is a very quality recipe for us, and I think we're very talented group of backs; and who has got the hot hand and who is going to go.

I think the contrast of styles is good. I think there's a -- I think certainly the backs will both be very productive but I think when you take Derrius Guice and he makes the suggestion in a national All-Star Game that he could go off to -- that shows you his versatility.

And Nick Brossette is as steady and productive as there is. So I'm very optimistic about both.

Q. Do you see guy catching --

COACH MILES: Yeah, I would think the ball skills are pretty strong, not only is he a fast down the field receiver, but he can catch that ball going away, which is not necessarily a normal running back's spot to catch balls. I think that that's an advantage for him and I think it's something that we'll have to take advantage of.

Q. How rare is it that you see that guy at that level who you could put into the SEC or

a Big Ten program and put him on all three teams and he would be an impact guy?

COACH MILES: Yeah, I want you to know something: Not often. Adoree' Jackson was a very special guy and is having a great career at USC.

If you look at Donte, Donte will have an ability to catch balls out of the backfield, carry balls out of the backfield, return punts, return kickoffs, and be a lack down corner with great speed.

So those guys are rare. They just don't show up all the time, and you have to be -- like, for instance, to be honest with you, probably should used Pat a little more when we got him here. I think we will have learned from that example.

Q. You've been the head coach at a major program for a number of years now but I imagine your recruitment of Nick Brossette was different in the personal nature you probably had with him and his family. You found out on Saturday. Can you talk about your emotions and how disappointed it could have been if that kid left?

COACH MILES: Yeah, I want you to know, there was a guy, there's only been one recruit that in the eighth grade could sleep on my couch, right.

I can tell you this: I did not see him as a prospect when he was sleeping on my couch in the eighth grade.

When he was sleeping on my couch as an 11th grade, I saw him as a prospect. But again, I'm so happy for, certainly, our class, but a guy like Nick works hard and does the things he's capable of doing, plays a team style of ball.

The coach calls his number time and time again, and he says, just give it to me, whatever you guys need. I think it's a great opportunity for him and the rest of the guys we are recruiting.

Q. The early signing period that's been proposed --

COACH MILES: I think it's the only way to go. I think I would not ever change the calendar. Like for instance, if you were to just look at us as an example, when we took the field in August, we probably had 14 or so committed.

By the time we got to -- and someone would have to check me on this. I'm just giving you what my memory would have. I would say that when we got done, we were real close to 16, okay, 16 or 17.

I think that all those guys have taken a number of unofficial visits, all those guys have come to a number of our games as well as opponent's games that a number of those guys saw themselves always going to be LSU Tigers or Missouri Tigers or the Georgia Bulldogs or whoever they were; and that at that point in time, they have the opportunity. They are already committed. They have committed. So then why got give them an opportunity to sign and be committed officially. And to me, to then be able to take their official visit any time they want to thereafter, in what would be the normal official visit contact period.

So I am absolutely for -- I think it makes sense. I think the commit/decommit stuff that happens will be minimized. A player says I'm coming, I'm committed; and now, instead of decommitting, he's got the opportunity to sign and be a part, or, he says, no, I'm going to take my official visits and I'm going to go on and I think that's exactly the way it ought to go.

Q. Talk about the process of telling a kid, listen, we want you, don't have a spot for you yet, you're going to have to wait. How tough is that on you or the kid? Foster seemed pretty stressed out this morning.

COACH MILES: I certainly understand. You think he's stressed out, you know, what happens is you have an opportunity for a young guy, and he's talented but your numbers are promised to defensive players. It's not another tight end. It's a defensive player. And you wanted all the defensive players that you can get as you saw.

And then what happens is, the defensive players do not come and you have an opportunity for a guy like him, and you have had to tell him in a very honest way, it's not skill set or ability. It is, you know, where we need to spend our grant and aids.

But you have the potential to be with us. We would encourage you to hang in there, and at that point in time, I generally tell them that it's okay if they throw a small rock at the coach and understand the difficult nature of what I'm asking them to do, and you know, some guys do it. And some guys don't.

It's a risk that we take. But the good news is, there's a guy, and you can watch him develop. He will develop extremely well right here, get a

great degree, live in the State of Louisiana during his college years, and he'll develop very nicely at the tight end spot.

So we are thrilled he did it and I'm glad that he overcame the anxiety that for those moments that he didn't necessarily have it in his hand, okay. Because what we ended up having to do is wait until that other guy, a defensive player that did not sign or sign with another team and then we could quickly get it to him.

But what happens is that morning, you wake up itchy, you know what I mean. You're that player that wants to sign himself to a great college opportunity and you have a difficult time saying, whoa, slow down. I'm glad he did. I think he'll be a great contributor to us.

Q. How did your new coaches do?

COACH MILES: To me the key piece is in a year, you're going to see how good they recruit because they will have relationships that they will carry over for a solid year and then they will have an opportunity to have those men sign with us, first and foremost. But both of those guys know the brand at LSU. Both of those guys played against us. Both of those guys had an opportunity to grow up in and around this program, and Ed Orgeron is having a blast being an LSU Tiger and coaching for us, and Kevin Steele is, as well.

It really was a very natural fit in recruiting. Both guys, professional, know how to do it, and again, very happily Tigers.

Q. You did very well in the New Orleans area this year. Just talk about locking down the New Orleans area and the prospects that came from there.

COACH MILES: Well, it's so close to -- it's really the perfect spot to go away to college from, and I go up the road 90 miles, and suddenly you're in Baton Rouge and it's still close enough to get home even after a Saturday night and sleep in your own bed and wake up in the morning and go to church with mom and dad; if you want to.

And it feels this way to me, there's a certain style of man that grows up in Louisiana and says, are you kidding me, this is the only place I want to live. I think the degree that comes from LSU, the experience in that stadium of 102,000 that are wildly rabid and very faithful LSU fans, there are those men that just can't have it any other way. And so we present just a tremendous opportunity for those people who want to stay in this state.



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