



Bill Callahan

Head Coach | Third Season | Illinois Benedictine, 1978

- ▶ As Head Coach of the Oakland Raiders, led team to 2002 AFC Championship and Super Bowl XXXVII
- ▶ 28 years of coaching experience, including nine in NFL, 17 in college and two in high school
- ▶ One of five coaches to reach Super Bowl and return to college ranks

"A rare find."

Those were the words used by Athletic Director Steve Pederson to describe Bill Callahan upon his hiring as Nebraska head football coach on Jan. 9, 2004.

Less than a year after guiding his NFL team to the Super Bowl, Callahan was hired to lead one of the nation's elite college football programs. Since taking control of the Nebraska program, Callahan has exhibited those rare qualities Pederson saw, working with diligence and focus to guide the Huskers' climb back to the top of the college football world.

Just the fourth head coach in the storied Cornhusker program since the start of the 1962 season, Callahan's lofty goals have not changed as he enters his third season on the Nebraska sideline. He maintains a vision of adding to Nebraska's championship legacy on both the Big 12 and national levels.

Callahan's Huskers enter the 2006 season with great momentum after finishing the 2005 season with three consecutive victories. Nebraska closed the regular season with victories over North Division rivals Kansas State and Colorado. Particularly impressive was the manner in which Nebraska dismantled the divisional champion Buffs, 30-3, on CU's home field on the day after Thanksgiving.

The momentum carried into the postseason where Callahan led his Huskers against a talented Michigan squad in the MasterCard Alamo Bowl. True to the hard-nosed attitude of their head coach, the Huskers rallied from a 10-point fourth-quarter deficit to post a 32-28 victory over the Wolverines. The win gave Nebraska an 8-4 finish and pushed the Huskers back into the national polls for the first time in two years, as NU was listed 24th in both the final Associated Press and coaches polls. It also marked the first time since 1999 Nebraska was victorious in its final three games of the season.

Nebraska's 8-4 mark in 2005 came behind a determined defensive effort and increased familiarity with the West Coast Offense. The Husker special teams also gained national recognition with their marked improvement.

The Blackshirt defense recorded a nation-leading 50 sacks, the second-highest single-season total in school history. On offense, the Huskers posted a single-season record 2,692 passing yards, with three different receivers topping 40 catches in Callahan's version of the West Coast attack.

The momentum from the conclusion of the 2005 season carried into the spring, capped by 57,415 fans flocking to Memorial Stadium for the Red-White spring game. The large crowd at the April spring game is a new tradition under Callahan. In fact, in Callahan's three seasons more than 182,000 fans have attended the Red-White game to get a glimpse of what was to come in the fall.

As a member of an elite fraternity of coaches who have led their team to a Super Bowl, Callahan's on-field coaching credentials are evident. However, since becoming the Huskers' head man, Callahan has shown all the needed qualities to develop a successful program at the collegiate level.

This past off-season, Callahan and his championship staff again produced a strong recruiting haul. The well-rounded 2006 recruiting class came a year after Callahan and his staff put together a class of prospects ranked among the nation's best by every national recruiting service. The 2005 class paid immediate dividends as 13 true freshmen hit the field last season. Two of Nebraska's heralded newcomers, place-kicker Jordan Congdon and defensive end Barry Turner, were named first-team Freshman All-Americans by ESPN.com and Rivals.com.

In his first year in Lincoln, Callahan focused on putting strong systems for

success in place both on and off the field. Nebraska finished the 2004 season with a 5-6 record, but strides were made in many areas. The West Coast Offense Callahan installed accomplished the objective of a balanced attack capable of moving the ball both through the air and on the ground. Nebraska generated 52 percent of its offense through the air and 48 percent via the run, the most balanced offensive attack seen in Lincoln in nearly three decades.

Under Callahan, the Huskers are continuing to build on their tradition of success in the classroom. Callahan's first two groups of seniors have been extremely successful in reaching the No. 1 objective of college student-athletes. At the conclusion of the 2006 spring semester, 39 of the 44 members of Callahan's first two senior classes had picked up their undergraduate degrees. Four fifth-year Huskers will play as graduate students this fall, while 12 of the 20 members of the 2006 senior class are on track to earn their degree by December.

Two of the players in graduate school – fullback Dane Todd and center Kurt Mann --- continued the Huskers' long-standing tradition of Academic All-America honors in 2005. Todd and Mann were first-team ESPN the Magazine/CoSIDA Academic All-Americans last fall, helping bring Nebraska's nation-leading total of football Academic All-Americans to 85. The pair of native Nebraskans are strong candidates to join an elite group of Husker scholars who have been recognized as two-time Academic All-Americans.

Community Leaders

The football program has continued to make a strong impression in the Nebraska community under Callahan. Husker players spend hours in local communities speaking with youth and visiting Nebraska fans of all ages. Four times under Callahan the entire Husker team has taken a half-day to visit with patients at hospitals in both Lincoln and Omaha. Callahan's strong belief in community outreach and character education led to his team receiving Nebraska's annual Life Skills Team Award in 2005.

The commitment to being an active member of the community comes directly from Callahan's leadership. Shortly after being named Nebraska's head coach, Callahan established Coach Callahan Charities. The mission is to provide financial support to non-profits organized to fight breast cancer and diabetes, and provide services, support and hope to economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth and families. Past beneficiaries have included UNMC Eppley Cancer Center, Breast Cancer Foundation, Juvenile Diabetes Research Association, UNL Libraries, Special Olympics, Red Cross, Make-a-Wish, and City Impact's Backpack Buddies and Child Sponsorship programs.

Callahan and his football staff presented the third annual Football 101 for Women in early June. The event has been a rousing success in each of its first three years, drawing nearly 3,400 participants and raising a combined \$140,000 for breast cancer research.

In August, Coach Callahan Charities will present the third annual 5K Fun Run/Walk for Resources. In its first two years, the event has drawn more than 1,000 combined participants and raised \$23,000 for Juvenile Diabetes and the University Libraries. All told, Coach Callahan Charities has donated nearly \$180,000 to charity in a little more than two years. This year, Coach Callahan Charities hosted its first Coach Callahan Golf Classic, with proceeds benefitting the general fund for Coach Callahan Charities.



Callahan has also given his time as a guest speaker and spokesperson for several local organizations. He is the Honorary Chair of the Make-A-Wish Foundation's "Share our Magic Campaign", and has been the keynote speaker at the Omaha American Heart Association Breakfast and the Nebraska Special Olympics Breakfast of Champions.

The Husker football program under Callahan has placed a strong emphasis of developing the football talents of youth in the state of Nebraska. This spring the Nebraska coaching staff and players conducted the Husker Youth Experience for the second straight year. The event is a free developmental clinic for 500 children from the state.

During the summer, the Big Red Football School again included the Husker Youth Camp, for children ages eight to 13. In its second year in 2006, the camp drew more than 400 youth, an increase of better than 150 campers. The large turnout for the Youth Experience and the Husker Youth Camp is a good representation of the respect and trust Callahan and his coaching staff have earned with parents in the state of Nebraska.

The commitment to the youth and prep programs in the state is also evident in the Huskers' annual Spring Coaches Clinic. Callahan and his staff have opened up a weekend of spring practices to hundreds of coaches each of the past three years. Callahan has also used the vast coaching connections he has developed to enhance the coaches clinic. This past year, Tampa Bay Buccaneers Head Coach Jon Gruden was the keynote speaker at the event, a year after another Super Bowl champion coach, Dick Vermeil, addressed the clinic.

While giving generously to the community, helping youth develop their football skills, and enhancing high school football in the state, Callahan has also embraced the rich traditions of the Cornhusker program, including an on-going commitment to Nebraska's unparalleled walk-on program. Since his hiring, Callahan has rewarded 12 players who came to Nebraska as walk-ons with scholarships, including 10 native Nebraskans.

The plan for a total football program that Callahan has implemented at Nebraska is the product of three decades of coaching experience and expertise. Having coached on every level during his career, Callahan is one of five coaches to take a collegiate head coaching job after previously guiding a team to the Super Bowl.

Callahan brought a wealth of experience to Nebraska from the National Football League and collegiate ranks. A natural leader, Callahan has also worked with young men at the beginning of their formative years, serving as a high school coach and teacher for two years.

A Chicago native, Callahan's arrival at Nebraska not only served as a return home to the Midwest, but also to his first love – college football. Callahan is entering his 29th year of coaching, and his 18th at the college level, while also having nine years experience in the NFL and two years in high school coaching. Highly respected throughout the coaching ranks, Callahan used his ties to quickly assemble a championship coaching staff in Lincoln.

Including Callahan, four Nebraska coaches have experience in the Super Bowl, including three as coaches and one as a player. The staff includes coaches who have won championships in seven major conferences.

The diverse background and strong ties to different areas of the country allowed Nebraska to attract a top-25 national recruiting class in 2004 despite Callahan being hired less than a month before National Signing Day. In their first full year together the staff showed its recruiting prowess, pulling together a group of 31 players that was ranked No. 1 nationally by recruiting expert Tom Lemming in 2005. The experienced and charismatic staff again put together a top-20 class in 2006.



The Callahan family (from left): Brian, Cathryn, Bill, Valerie, Jaclyn and Daniel.

Callahan Enjoys "Super" Start to Head Coaching Career

Callahan came to Nebraska after two years as the head coach of the Oakland Raiders in 2002 and 2003. He led the Raiders to the AFC West title and Super Bowl XXXVII in 2002 to become the fourth rookie head coach to reach the Super Bowl. He led Oakland to an 11-5 regular-season record in his first year and went 4-12 in 2003, when the Raiders were hit hard by injuries.

With their Super Bowl appearance in 2002, the Raiders set an NFL record by appearing in Super Bowls in four different decades. In the process, Callahan became the third first-year Raiders head coach to lead the team to an AFC West title and into the conference championship game, joining Art Shell (1990) and John Madden (1969).

Callahan's rookie season as head coach confirmed his leadership qualities and coaching ability and highlighted the diversity of the West Coast offensive system Callahan teaches. For the first time in franchise history, the Raiders led the NFL in passing in 2002 (279.7 ypg), and also led the league in total offense (398.8 ypg) for just the second time. Callahan was recognized for his role in the success, as he was named the NFL Coach of the Year by the Touchdown Club of Columbus and the NFL Rookie Coach of the Year by Football Digest.

Callahan's Raiders operated out of the West Coast Offense and exploited opposing defenses with a multiple attack. In fact, in a three-season span, the Oakland offense went from leading the NFL in rushing (2000) to placing first in the league in passing (2002). In 2002, the Raiders became the first team to win games in the same season while rushing at least 60 times (60 attempts on Dec. 28 vs. Kansas City, 24-0) and passing at least 60 times (65 attempts on Sept. 15 at Pittsburgh, 30-17).

The Raiders capped 2002 with an impressive run through the AFC playoffs. Oakland opened the postseason with a 30-10 victory over the New York Jets and captured the AFC crown with a 41-24 win over Tennessee, before losing to Tampa Bay in Super Bowl XXXVII.

Callahan joined the Raider organization in 1998, when Jon Gruden took over as head coach. Callahan served as Oakland's offensive coordinator for each of Gruden's four seasons as head coach, also tutoring the Raider tight ends in 1998 and the offensive line from 1999 to 2001.

Under Callahan, the Silver and Black offensive line allowed a team-record low 28 sacks in 2000, a mark that was surpassed in 2001 with just 27 sacks allowed. In addition, the Raiders led the NFL in rushing in 2000, averaging 154.4 yards per game. The Raiders won the AFC West title in each of Callahan's final two seasons as offensive coordinator.



Callahan's offensive players at Oakland made regular Pro Bowl appearances. From 1999 to 2001, Raider offensive standouts made eight Pro Bowl appearances, while five Raiders, including four offensive standouts, were named to the Pro Bowl in Callahan's first season as head coach. Oakland quarterback Rich Gannon made four straight trips to Hawaii from 1999 to 2002. He was twice named the MVP of the Pro Bowl (2000, 2001) and also earned 2002 NFL regular-season MVP honors.

Before his six-year stint with the Raiders, Callahan was an assistant coach with the Philadelphia Eagles for Head Coach Ray Rhodes. With Philadelphia, Callahan worked alongside Gruden, who was the Eagles' offensive coordinator. In his first two years with Philadelphia, the Eagles ranked second in the NFC in rushing and made the playoffs both seasons. During that time, former Husker Irving Fryar made two Pro Bowl appearances.

Callahan Boasts Extensive Collegiate Background

Although he spent nearly a decade in the National Football League, Callahan had a strong college background upon his hiring at Nebraska. He spent 15 years in the college ranks from 1980 to 1994, including 12 seasons in the Big Ten at two strong academic institutions. He was regarded as one of the game's best offensive line mentors and developed a reputation as one of college football's top recruiters. Callahan was not only ranked as one of the top 10 recruiters in the country by Lemming in 1992, he was listed as one of the top 10 recruiters of all-time by Lemming in 2001, based on Lemming's recruiting ratings over the past 20 years.

"I've dealt with hundreds of coaches over the past 22 years," Lemming said, "and whenever I've ranked coaches who combine coaching and recruiting skills, Coach Callahan always ended up in the top 10."

Callahan began his collegiate career as a graduate assistant at Illinois under Mike White, who later coached the Raiders. Callahan was promoted to a full-time position in 1981, coaching the tight ends, and stayed at Illinois through 1986, coaching the offensive line, quarterbacks and special teams. The Illini participated in three bowl games, including a trip to the Rose Bowl following the 1983 season when they won the Big Ten with a perfect 9-0 league mark.

After seven years at Illinois, Callahan coached the offensive line at Northern Arizona (1987, 1988) and served as offensive coordinator at Southern Illinois in 1989. He moved to a second Big Ten school, joining former Husker Barry Alvarez (1965 to 1967) at Wisconsin in 1990 to coach the offensive line. Seven Badger offensive linemen earned All-Big Ten honors under Callahan, including center Cory Raymer, who was a consensus All-American in 1994.

The 1993 Wisconsin team captured the school's first conference title in 31 years, defeated UCLA in the Rose Bowl and finished sixth in the final Associated Press poll. In Callahan's final year in Madison, the Badgers finished 8-3-1 and defeated Duke in the Hall of Fame Bowl, marking the first time in more than a decade that UW played in bowls in consecutive years. The Wisconsin staff Callahan served on also included Nebraska's offensive and defensive coordinators, Jay Norvell and Kevin Cosgrove.

Chicago Native Has Roots in Midwest

Callahan grew up on the south side of Chicago playing quarterback as a prepster at Mendel Catholic High School. He was a three-year starter at quarterback at NAIA Illinois Benedictine (now Benedictine University in Lisle, Ill.) from 1975 to 1977, earning honorable-mention All-America honors his last two seasons. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Illinois Benedictine College in 1978, majoring in physical education. Callahan was inducted into his college's athletic Hall of Fame in 2005.

Callahan began his coaching career in the prep ranks. He coached at Oak Lawn High School in 1978 and then moved to De La Salle in 1979, where he also served as an instructor. Callahan and his wife, Valerie, have four children, Brian, Daniel, Cathryn and Jaclyn. Brian was a member of the UCLA football team, and is now serving as a graduate assistant coach in the Bruin program. Daniel is in his third year of school at Nebraska.

Year-by-Year Coaching Summary

Years	Team	Coaching Responsibility
High School		
1978	Oak Lawn (Oak Lawn, Ill.)	Assistant Coach
1979	De La Salle (Chicago, Ill.)	Assistant Coach
College		
1980-81	Illinois	Associate Coach
1982-83	Illinois	Special Teams, Tight Ends
1984-85	Illinois	Offensive Line
1986	Illinois	Quarterbacks
1987-88	Northern Arizona	Offensive Line
1989	Southern Illinois	Offensive Coordinator
1990-94	Wisconsin	Offensive Line
National Football League		
1995-97	Philadelphia Eagles	Offensive Line
1998	Oakland Raiders	Offensive Coordinator, Tight Ends
1999-2001	Oakland Raiders	Offensive Coordinator, Offensive Line
2002-03	Oakland Raiders	Head Coach

College	Head Coach
2004-present Nebraska	Head Coach

Head Coaching Record

Year	Record	.Pct	Postseason
Oakland Raiders			
2002	13-6	.684	2-1; Won AFC Championship, lost to Tampa Bay in Super Bowl XXXVII
2003	4-12	.250	None
NFL Totals	17-18	.486	One playoff appearance
Nebraska			
2004	5-6	.455	None
2005	8-4	.667	defeated Michigan in Alamo Bowl
NU Totals	13-10	.562	

Coaching Honors

- ▶ NFL Rookie Coach of the Year (Football Digest, 2002)
- ▶ NFL Coach of the Year (Touchdown Club of Columbus, 2002)

Callahan Profile

Briefly: Callahan is beginning his third season as Nebraska's head coach and is the 27th head coach in Cornhusker history. Callahan has 29 years of coaching experience, including nine years in the National Football League. He was the head coach of the Oakland Raiders in 2002-03 and guided the Raiders to the Super Bowl in his first season. He previously served as the Raiders' offensive coordinator under Jon Gruden for four seasons and was on Ray Rhodes' Philadelphia Eagles staff from 1995 to 1997. Callahan was a full-time collegiate assistant for 15 seasons, including stints at Wisconsin (1990-94), Southern Illinois (1989), Northern Arizona (1987-88) and Illinois (1981-86). Callahan was named head coach by Nebraska Athletic Director Steve Pederson on Jan. 9, 2004.

Playing Career: High school—Played football at Mendel Catholic High School in Chicago. College—Started at quarterback for three seasons (1975-77) at Illinois Benedictine (Lisle, Ill.), earning honorable-mention All-America honors in 1976 and 1977.

Education: Illinois Benedictine, 1978 (Bachelor of Arts, Physical Education)

Born: July 31, 1956, in Chicago, Ill.

Family: Wife, Valerie; Children, Brian (22), Daniel (20), Cathryn (15) and Jaclyn (13).

From the Super Bowl to Campus

Five coaches have taken a collegiate head coaching job after previously guiding their team to a Super Bowl appearance. In addition to Callahan, Bobby Ross accepted the Army head coaching job in 2004, after guiding San Diego to the Super Bowl in 1994.

Coach	NFL Team	Super Bowls	College
Bill Callahan	Oakland	Super Bowl XXXVII	Nebraska
Bobby Ross	San Diego	Super Bowl XXIX	Army
Bill Walsh	San Francisco	Super Bowls, XVI, XIX, XXII	Stanford
Forrest Gregg	Cincinnati	Super Bowl XVI	SMU
George Allen	Washington	Super Bowl VII	Long Beach State

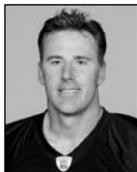


What Others Say About Coach Callahan



"It is a great responsibility for whoever has this job, and I think it is a good fit for Bill. It is a responsibility that he needs and I am excited for him. I wouldn't be where I am without him and he knows that. He helped to develop so many players during the seven years we were together. Bill is a very creative guy, very disciplined and he's got a great work ethic."

► **Jon Gruden,**
Tampa Bay Buccaneers Head Coach



"He's a perfect fit and I think Nebraskans ought to be flabbergasted to get him. He's energetic, enthusiastic and has a real passion for the game. His players will find out he's an unbelievable leader and a perfect fit for Nebraska."

► **Rich Gannon,**
former Oakland QB, 2002 NFL MVP, upon Callahan's hiring



"Coach Callahan is a great leader and motivator. He cares about his players, and the West Coast system he has in place will prepare you for the next level. Personally, he made me a more complete back and helped me grow off the field. With Coach Callahan in charge, great things are in store for Nebraska."

► **Cory Ross,**
NU I-back, 2002-05, Member of Baltimore Ravens



"I wanted to come to Nebraska because of Bill Callahan and his goals and values. He's perfect for this job. It's absolutely the perfect marriage. He's intelligent, decisive and disciplined. He's got great integrity."

► **Jay Norvell,**
University of Nebraska Offensive Coordinator



"Bill fits college football, and he fits our program. I have so much respect for him. People talk a lot in this business, but I've never heard a negative thing come out about him."

► **Charlie McBride,**
University of Nebraska Assistant Coach, 1977-99



"Bill and his staff have demonstrated on the field that our football program is on its way to national competitiveness. At the same time, they have demonstrated through the academic successes of our athletes that they are upholding the Nebraska tradition of academic excellence as well."

► **Harvey Perlman,**
University of Nebraska Chancellor



"Bill was an original member of the staff that started here at Wisconsin in 1990. He was instrumental in helping to turn our program around as our offensive line coach in the early 1990s. Bill is tenacious, hard working and meticulous. He is a tremendous coach and recruiter."

► **Barry Alvarez,**
Wisconsin A.D. and former head coach



"I had the privilege to coach as a graduate assistant with Coach Callahan at the University of Wisconsin. You will not find a more organized and hard working coach in all of college football. Coach Callahan was instrumental in helping turn a perennial Big Ten doormat into a Big Ten and Rose Bowl Champion. I am confident he will continue the tradition of excellence at Nebraska."

► **Dave Rimington**
Former Husker Center (1979-82), College Football Hall



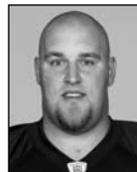
of Fame
"If you are on the defensive side of the ball right now, you are playing a little bit of a guessing game with Bill Callahan, trying to keep up with what he is going to go to next...The thing I think Bill Callahan is trying to sell to recruits is...come to Nebraska, play in this offense and get ready for the next level."

► **Kirk Herbstreit**
ESPN College Football analyst during Alamo Bowl telecast



"The excitement that was generated with the finish of last season and the bowl game is a clear indication of the excitement for the future. If you want to play Championship football, earn a degree from a great university, and play for the finest coach in college football, then a choice to come to Nebraska and play for Coach Callahan should be clear. Those who join Coach Callahan and his staff will experience the next Nebraska Football Championship."

► **Steve Pederson**
University of Nebraska Athletic Director



"Coach Callahan is very goal-oriented and knows how to achieve those goals. He is very disciplined and is a hard worker and expects the same out of his team. That should be attainable knowing how hard-working Nebraska players are. He'll do a great job with eager young men who play with passion and love for one another."

► **Adam Treu,**
Oakland Raiders Center, University of Nebraska 1992-96



"The key to turning any program around is that you must have absolute, fanatical belief in the people who put the program together. Steve (Pederson) is doing a wonderful job. And I am absolutely a Bill Callahan fan. Bob Devaney was able to evoke that belief. And I believe Coach Callahan can evoke that same belief. That's why I know this program is going to be a great program for years and years."

► **Bob Brown,**
2004 Pro Football Hall of Fame Inductee, University of Nebraska 1961-63



"Bill is a man of great character and strong values. He has been associated with some of the most successful franchises in NFL history and is a great addition to one of the most storied programs in all of college football."

► **Bruce Allen,**
Tampa Bay Buccaneers General Manager



"Bill Callahan is an all-around football coach – an excellent teacher, motivator and moreover, a leader of men, both coaches and players. Bill will also stress character and academic excellence in his football players and his sense of standards and discipline will be very evident to the outside community. I have spent several years working side-by-side with Bill and I have tremendous confidence in his ability to succeed."

► **Mike White,**
*University of Illinois Head Coach, 1980-87
Los Angeles Raiders Head Coach, 1995-96*



Q & A with Head Coach Bill Callahan

Head Coach Bill Callahan shares his thoughts on a variety of topics regarding the Husker program, the upcoming season, and coaching philosophies of the Nebraska staff.

Q – What can Husker fans look forward to in 2006?

“Our football team has had a successful off-season, and done the things necessary to have an outstanding football team. However, that is only part of the equation. The next step is execution on the field. We have a challenging schedule in front of us this fall, so we are going to have to be mentally and physically sharp week in and week out. I feel strongly that we have a great foundation in place for our football team, and we are prepared to take the next step forward as a football program.”

Q – Are there specific areas of focus you have stressed in the off-season?

“We are confident in what we are doing with our systems and schemes in all three phases of our football. There are some areas where we need to become more consistent. Offensively, we have to do a more consistent job of running the football, and I think we have the personnel to accomplish that. On defense, we have to generate the same type of push up front that we did last fall. We lost both of our interior starters on the defensive line, but we have outstanding players in those spots heading into the fall. Let’s face it...in college football the teams that are winning championships are the teams that are dominant up front on defense and that is where it all starts.”

Q – How important was the strong finish to the 2005 football season?

“Winning our last three games helped in many areas in the off-season. It gave us the momentum to finish recruiting in a strong manner. Our players were energized by the finish as they went through winter conditioning, then came into spring ball with a great attitude and work ethic. We operated during spring practice with a lot of confidence and a lot of trust because of how we finished. When you go on the road and win in a tough environment at Colorado, then line up and knock off Michigan in a bowl game, it can only help. Winning those types of games is a big step for our program, but we have to re-establish momentum from the start of the 2006 season.”

Q – Do you feel this team is mentally prepared to contend for a championship?

“We have talked repeatedly to our players about three key ingredients to being a successful football team. You have to have the right attitude, a commitment to preparation and you have to execute under pressure. The number one thing in any successful organization is preparation. You have to win the battle of preparation off the field during the off-season and during the week before you get on the field. You can evaluate based on talent, but what you actually do is determined by attitude.”

Q – Last year your team made drastic improvements in special teams. Did you continue the focus in that area during the spring?

“If anything, we increased our emphasis on special teams in the spring, and we will continue to do that in the fall. Last season is a perfect example of the impact special teams can have on the success of your season. We were much improved in several areas—punt returns, kickoff coverage, punt coverage, blocking kicks—and that had an impact on the success of our season. This staff is committed to having great special teams and our players quickly learn the importance of winning the battle of special teams. Championship football and outstanding special teams go hand in hand.”

Q – Last year you focused on improving your turnover margin. Were you satisfied with the progress in that area?

“We improved both in reducing our turnovers on offense and creating turnovers defensively, but we need to get better. Offensively, our number one focus is always securing the football. We have a lot of players back on defense that we think can create turnovers and be disruptive forces for opposing offenses.”

Q – Should fans expect any major changes in your offensive philosophy this season?

“We will not make drastic changes, but each year our offense evolves and adapts based on the talent and composition of our personnel. The West Coast Offense is flexible and adjustable and geared toward the talents and strengths of our players. The West Coast Offense is unique in today’s college football because it gives a player great exposure into the details of a pro system. This type of exposure can really give a player an edge in his development and assist him in his dream to play in the NFL.”

Q – How important is efficient quarterback play in your offense?

“Everything we do on offense is centered on the quarterback. Our objective is to give the quarterback confidence in his own decision-making ability and to give him the confidence he needs to function at a high level. Efficient quarterback play is tied to making fast, quick decisions and the discipline of progression reads. Another attribute of an efficient quarterback is a player that plays through and overcomes adversity. I want to believe that our quarterbacks have the leadership ability to inspire their teammates to reach a higher level.”

Q – With the importance you place on quarterback play, how confident are you heading into 2006 with an experienced quarterback in Zac Taylor?

“Zac did everything we asked of him last season. He performed efficiently in some tough conditions. In spring ball, I thought he elevated his game to the next level as a quarterback. He knows our offense in and out, and he is a leader. We are confident that he is poised for a big season, provided he continues to improve on a game-to-game basis.”

Q – Defensively, what can we expect from the Blackshirts this fall?

“Coach Cosgrove has done a great job with our defensive schemes and systems. I feel we have a comprehensive system that gives us flexibility in all situations. Our core philosophy on defense will not change much this season. We have a lot of experience returning on defense, specifically in our front seven.”

Q – You had another huge crowd at the spring game in April. What are your thoughts on Husker fans turning out in huge numbers the past three years?

“Our fans have really embraced our football program and our spring game and that is reflective of the passion of Nebraska fans. We have drawn more than 180,000 fans in three spring games which is truly remarkable. That support is very much appreciated by our staff and our players. It has a huge impact not only on our current team, but also prospective recruits. No other program in the country gets the type of support for a spring game like we do here at Nebraska. It speaks highly of the fan commitment, loyalty and passion for football. The spring game is turning into an annual event that Husker fans mark on their calendars.”

Q – Husker fans have a tradition of traveling as well as any group in the country. How does that affect your football team on the road?

“You don’t have to go back very far to see the impact our great fans can have. We had a great fan following at the Colorado game. The reception our team got when we came onto the field was unbelievable, and it was a special feeling late in the football game when there was more fans in red than in black and gold. The Alamo Bowl was unbelievable. Our fans were there the whole week and it felt like a home game when we took the field to play Michigan. I can’t imagine a football program with better support on the road, and I think that will be evident again this fall.”

Q – Your team is moving into a new facility for the 2006 season. How will this impact your program, not only from a recruiting standpoint, but also in terms of your day-to-day operations?

“I think people will be impressed by Steve Pederson’s vision and what he has accomplished in this facility. It is a modern, state-of-the-art facility in every facet. We have already seen an impact in the area of recruiting and that will only continue to grow. From an operations standpoint, everything will be more efficient. It is on the cutting edge in terms of technology. We will have great meeting areas for the





staff and players and everything will be in close proximity. Our student-athletes will have a one-stop shop, with access to everything they need—the training table, locker room, weight room, Hewitt Center, athletic medicine, equipment, coaches' offices, you name it."

Q - How does your practice style help prepare the team for a game?

"Each practice is designed to give our players an exposure to situational football. As a staff, we zero in on specific scenarios that will arise on game day. We practice these situations and call this "special category" football. Our players receive a real appreciation and understanding of these situations—Red Zone, short-yardage, third down, goal line, etc. This way in practice our players can isolate their focus and energies on one area of the game that is crucial to our success."

Q - Nebraska has a reputation of being a hard-working, physically dominating team. How does this fit with your coaching style?

"My staff and I totally embrace the traditions of Nebraska football. This team will reflect the nature of Nebraskans. We will strive to be as hard-working and humble as the many successful teams that have preceded us. This is a style that I have believed in throughout my coaching career and continue here at Nebraska. We will always work hard to be a physical football team."

Q - You have said it is your intent to build a national championship team. What are the most important components of a national-championship caliber team? What will it take to achieve that goal?

"Our goal as a team is always to win the national championship. We are moving in the right direction, but there is a lot of work in front of us. Our goal as a program for the 2006 season is to win the Big 12 and return our program to national prominence. We strongly believe in our profile for a national championship team that includes character, athletic skill and academics. We can only achieve these goals with hard work and diligence."

Q - You and your staff have a reputation as strong recruiters. What makes a great recruiter?

"Number one, we have a staff that has excellent communication skills. Secondly, they care and have a genuine concern for the players they bring to the University of Nebraska. Additionally, each individual coach must have the eagerness and the energy to seek out and recruit great players. We have always followed the philosophy that players don't really care how much you know until you show them how much you care, and this staff cares deeply about its players."

Q - What do you look for in a recruit?

"We have a specific profile that a player must meet. This profile is based on a championship formula. We evaluate each recruit on character, academics and athletic skills. We are looking for players who are committed to excellence in all aspects of their lives, who want to be a part of a team concept and genuinely

care about the team. Additionally, we want players who want to compete, and at Nebraska, we attract players that love competition at the highest level."

Q - You and your staff have extensive coaching experience at both levels. What does that mean for the program?

"There is no substitute for experience especially on the collegiate level. We have a good blend of experience from the professional and college ranks that allows us to function very efficiently and effectively. The players have a real edge from this perspective and it should allow us to progress more quickly. Our team has a very diverse background with players from 23 states, and we have a diverse coaching staff that fits well with the makeup of our roster."

Q - How important is it to build a recruiting class by utilizing the top players in the state of Nebraska?

"Without question it is a priority to keep the great in-state players here at Nebraska. We have a tradition of All-Americans and of our 92 first-team All-Americans, 40 of them are native Nebraskans, including two of our three Heisman Trophy winners. That alone tells you about the talent in this state."

Q - How important is maintaining the walk-on tradition at Nebraska?

"It is a vital part of reaching our championship aspirations. Since I took over this program, we have awarded 12 scholarships to walk-on players, most of those native Nebraskans. We will continue to do that. We understand the tradition and great legacy with the walk-on program here and plan to continue to build on that. We want to make sure that when a player comes to the University of Nebraska, he is going to have every opportunity to succeed to maximize his talents and abilities. I want them to understand that not every player can start, but we are committed to making each player become the best they can possibly be. I have admiration for walk-ons. At Nebraska, we treat our players in a first-class manner and walk-ons are no exception."

Q - What role do you feel the head coach plays in the personal development of a young man during his college years?

"As coaches, we definitely have an impact on a player's career and his life. College years are a very formative time in a young man's life. I look forward to helping each one of our players maximize their academic and athletic talent as well as character. Our goal is to have the players leave the program as better people and more prepared to live life."

Q - Nebraska has a strong history of academic excellence, leading the Big 12 in graduation rates nearly every year and leading the nation in Academic All-Americans. The team has had great success in the classroom under your leadership. To what do you attribute this success?

"Our number one goal as a coaching staff is to have a 100 percent graduation rate for each of our senior classes. One of the reasons I came here was because of Nebraska's strong support systems for the student-athlete. One of Nebraska's most impressive support units is its academic support system. The program that Dennis Leblanc and his staff have put together has historically made this athletic program one of the most successful in terms of graduation rates and academic honors. We have a strong obligation to this University to make sure that academics come first and that each of our student-athletes graduate. We have high expectations of our players both in the classroom and on the field and expect that success in both areas of student-athlete life."

Q - Both you and your players have made a concerted effort to making a difference in the community. Coach Callahan Charities has contributed nearly \$180,000 to various causes in the past two years and your team is extremely involved off the field. Why is community involvement stressed in your program?

"We are totally committed in giving our players a unique and special experience here both on and off the field. We educate them on the importance of being well-rounded, and reaching out and giving back to their community. Our players have embraced the opportunity to spend time in the community and have represented Nebraska in a positive way. That type of commitment and dedication reveals the character of our football team and hopefully will leave a lasting impression on them."

