

**December 5, 2011**



An interview with:

**BRANT RINGLER  
ROSS PARMLEY  
BILL BLANKENSHIP  
TOM HOLMOE  
BRONCO MENDENHALL**

TIM SIMMONS: Welcome to the teleconference with the coaches and the AD for the upcoming Bell Helicopter Armed Services Bowl. This our ninth annual bowl coming up on December 30th. We'll be playing at Gerald R. Ford Stadium in Dallas.

We have Brant Ringler with us. To get started, Brant, give us an idea about the bowl game and how the matchup became a reality.

BRANT RINGLER: As you know, we've had BYU signed with us since April. We were fortunate they got their sixth win to qualify. Now they're on pace to possibly get their 10th win. We're happy to have them on that side of the ball.

With Tulsa, we've been watching them all year long. The way they played down the stretch to finish the season was fantastic. We're excited to have them in our game.

Yesterday with Conference USA selections, how they went, it still didn't deter in any way that we wouldn't take Tulsa.

I'll address this up front. Houston has been in our bowl game the last three years, with Kevin and good friends of ours in Houston, phenomenal team. In our discussions with the conference and the team, we felt it best for their fans that they have a new experience.

Then Southern Miss obviously got to choose where they went as conference champions because they didn't go to the Liberty Bowl and chose to go to Hawaii.

It worked out well for everybody. The Tulsa fans can come right down the highway to our game so we're excited.

TIM SIMMONS: Just to ask you one question, what are the highlights of the bowl game, knowing this is our ninth annual, what are the key events outside of the bowl game?

BRANT RINGLER: We have our Team Announcement Party on the 19th. We'd love the media to be there for that. It's when our local dignitaries and everybody welcomes the teams to the area. Coaches get a helicopter ride to see where everything is for our games, practice facilities, things like that.

In addition, we have a great lineup during the week for the teams to enjoy different experiences. Our luncheon is going to feature several different people. In addition, we have our Great American Patriot Award. This year it is a Medal of Honor Award, Salvatore Giunta will be participating in that at halftime. After the game we have Gary Sinise and the Lieutenant Dan Band performing for all our soldiers and wounded warriors that we'll have at the game as well.

TIM SIMMONS: Brant, knowing that Tulsa played the first Armed Forces Bowl after we changed it from the Fort Worth Bowl, can you explain to the Salt Lake folks how the Armed Forces theme came about with the bowl game.

BRANT RINGLER: The first three years we were known as the Fort Worth Bowl. We decided to upgrade the bowl to have a little more meaning and worked out with ESPN to change the name to the Armed Forces Bowl. Within a week, Bell Helicopter stepped on as the sponsor. They are going into their sixth year, one of the longest-running tenure title sponsors out in the nation currently. We've been very pleased with that.

Texas is known for having a lot of military personnel in the area. It's worked out tremendously in our favor to be able to honor the men and women that serve our nation currently and previously.

TIM SIMMONS: Brant, how excited are you to have two teams that are very hot to end up the season?

BRANT RINGLER: They're 15-2 combined their last 17 games. They fear no one. I think they faced six BCS-ranked teams, four of them being in the top 10. They're well-coached on both sides. The teams are playing at a high level right now, both averaging over 400 yards per game in offense.

I think there's going to be a lot of points put up on the scoreboard. I expect a lot of highlights to come out of it. Looking forward to that.

TIM SIMMONS: Before we get with the Tulsa AD, any questions from the floor for Brant Ringler, Executive Director of the Armed Forces Bowl.

**Q. Brant, how much of an impact did attendance for that Houston-Tulsa game solidify your choice of Tulsa?**

BRANT RINGLER: We just wanted to get a chance to go up there and meet with Tulsa's people. We've been watching Tulsa all year long. The game itself didn't really impact us much. We know they have a good team. Like I say, we've been watching them all year long.

To lose to Houston, they were in the game pretty much through the third quarter. I was talking to some people while I was there. It was a game of inches. There were a couple of passes here or there that were threaded by Case Keenum. Third down early in the second quarter where if Tulsa gets that, they go on to score. That game could have been different.

It came down to plays going each way and unfortunately they didn't go Tulsa's way.

**Q. I was talking about attendance, the passion that Tulsa came out and showed a near sellout crowd. Does that excite you with what they can bring fan-wise to Dallas?**

BRANT RINGLER: No doubt about it. I thought it was a sellout. I didn't see an empty seat. It was packed with the Tulsa blue and gold there. It looked phenomenal.

We fully expect their fans to jump on the bandwagon and come on down the highway. Especially since last year Tulsa enjoyed going to Hawaii, but obviously that's a tough travel for fans, especially during this economic time. Being four and a half hours away, we feel like it should be good, easy travel for the fans to come to our game.

TIM SIMMONS: Thank you, Brant.



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Ross, welcome to the teleconference. Just an opening statement from you competing in the ninth annual Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl.

ROSS PARMLEY: We're tremendously excited. There's three things we're looking forward to. We wanted the opportunity to be in a great bowl. We wanted the opportunity to be in a bowl game that was driving distance for our fans. We wanted a great opponent. We consider it mission accomplished.

The Armed Forces Bowl, we were there in 2006. Great bowl, hospitality second to none. We've had an opportunity to be in a bowl game seven of the last nine years. We're excited. It's becoming a tradition to be in a bowl game every year. Coach Blankenship and his staff did a great job this year to get the kids to an 8-4 status.

We are fortunate to have a basketball game the next day with TCU. We have a great opportunity for our fans and our TCU family to have a great weekend in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

TIM SIMMONS: Questions for Ross Parmley, Athletic Director at the University of Tulsa.

**Q. Ross, what do you see from the long-term effects of TU being involved in these bowls, seven of nine years, or even the immediate effects on recruiting, things like that?**

ROSS PARMLEY: I think the more success, the more post-season competition you have the better.

I think the opportunity to play in bowl games that are within our recruiting base is a great scenario for us. I think our coaches and our fans would echo that.

**Q. The last time TU played in this bowl game, they were coming off kind of a blah finished. They won the last game but lost the three previous, took it on the chin in Houston. It seems like there was a little bit of a disappointing turnout Tulsa-wise for that bowl game. Right now Tulsa is not coming in on such a blah finish to the season. Do you sense more excitement right now?**

ROSS PARMLEY: I do. I think your point is well-taken on the last bowl.

I think the job that Bill and his staff have done, the team, they've created a lot of excitement

locally, not only with the brand, but the type of people they are.

When we went on the little run like we did at the end of the season, I think it generated a ton of excitement. I think our fans are ready to answer the call and come down and support the team on December 30th.

**Q. Ross, can you describe what it was like this past week? I know you probably had a pretty good idea what bowl game you were going to, but still there were some chances things could have gotten changed. What was the past week like?**

ROSS PARMLEY: I thought it was exciting just to be able to go to a bowl. We're very fortunate we have communications with Brant and the conference office. We really narrowed it down. It really allowed us the opportunity to get ahead of the curve. From a travel package standpoint to meet our fans' needs, to get bowl tickets started.

While I was anxious that we weren't announcing it as soon as we would like to, we were at least able to get prepared for it and be ahead of the curve as we move into this week.

TIM SIMMONS: Ross, thank you very much.

Coach Blankenship, can you just make an opening statement about your school, the University of Tulsa, playing BYU in the ninth annual Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl.

BILL BLANKENSHIP: To say we're excited is an underestimate. I want to thank Brant Ringler and all the other folks with the Armed Forces Bowl, to tell you how excited we are to come to Fort Worth. Playing in Dallas is so good for our program and our people.

We really have good momentum coming into this game. We've played very well down the stretch. Certainly had a disappointing loss against Houston for the championship game, but really feel good that we'll come out and play very well.

Much like what Ross, our athletic director said, the fact we are playing in a great bowl, I think the neatest thing about that is the tie-in with our armed forces. For our players, for me personally, to have anything to do with the true heroes that are out there that are supporting our country and representing us I think is fabulous.

If you get to play a football game to celebrate those men and women, I think there couldn't be anything better to be involved in over the holidays. So, again, I want to thank the folks with the Armed Forces Bowl.

Great opponent in BYU. Just tried to look through and get a glimpse into what we're going to see. Tremendous team, 9-3. If you look through statistically at BYU, what they've accomplished this year, absolutely great defense, high ranking across the board defense, pass defense, total defense. They're playing very well.

Very balanced offense, not unlike ourselves. They don't have a lot of statistical standouts which tells me they're very much devoted to the team concept. I think you see that play off. Cody Hoffman, outstanding player and kick returner. Outside of that you don't see individuals that stand out in the statistical category, which tells me again if you look at their team accomplishments, they're doing a great job of spreading the ball around, spreading the team concept throughout.

Coach Mendenhall has done a fabulous job. Very impressed if you look at what he's accomplished, four out of the last five years, double-digit wins. Maybe 50 wins coming into this in the last five years. I think it says a lot about our opponent, the quality they bring to the table. I can tell you we're very excited to see how we match up with BYU.

TIM SIMMONS: You both played Central Florida, beat the Knights 24-17. Anything to take away from that game for you?

BILL BLANKENSHIP: The biggest thing is we watched their game film when we were preparing for Central Florida and, again, saw a lot of similarities in how we approach the game. Certainly saw them get a win late in the game, much like we did.

I think this has an opportunity to be a really well-matched bowl game and to have some excitement and shootouts that usually are what the fans really like to see.

TIM SIMMONS: If you had to highlight a player or two on offense, defense, special teams, just kind of talk about the players that have really helped you this year.

BILL BLANKENSHIP: Well, our quarterback, G.J. Kinne, was the offensive MVP a year ago in the conference. Third year as a starter. Has been an all-everything guy for us. There's no doubt on offense everything starts with G.J. Has been a really balanced attack guy, dual threat. Outstanding passer but can move around in the pocket and create and see things down the field. So he's allowed us to develop I think a bunch

of other players.

In the backfield, two runningbacks that are really playing well, Trey Watts, who kind of corresponds to what BYU has, a really good all-purpose guy, a good runningback, receiver, kick returner.

Defensively for us Curnelious Arnick is our leading tackler and ranking very high nationally, number seven or number six in total tackles, is really the captain of our defense and is kind of the quarterback for us and the leader.

Those two guys, the team rallies around them. We have several other really outstanding players, but certainly those guys are the ones that really kind of lead this team.

TIM SIMMONS: Questions now for Coach Blankenship.

**Q. Bill, 2007 was your first on Tulsa staff. What do you remember about that Tulsa-BYU game?**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: That was a fabulous game because I believe we were opening up the Case facility. It was a wild shootout. There was an outstanding BYU team defensively. Had some great players on it. Paul Smith had a good game. I remember Charles Clay was a freshman and caught a couple of big passes. It just went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

Fortunately for us we ended on top in what really was a signature win for our program in the new era with Todd Graham and Gus Malzahn as the coordinator.

**Q. What is your schedule going to be like in terms of practice going into the game?**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: Well, our coaches will recruit during the week. We'll pretty much practice on the weekends. We'll do that this coming week, practice Friday and Saturday. The young men on our squad will be focusing on academics. They have finals at the end of this week and also early next week. Then starting about the 16th we'll begin actual bowl preparation.

**Q. BYU has two quarterbacks that are capable of being a starter. I guess they know who their starter is now. Is this a good situation to be in, in general? Does it give you all pause in thinking about how you prepare?**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: Well, first of all, I'll have to admit I have not watched any film on them yet other than having gone through and kind of reviewed what we saw versus Central Florida.

It's not been an unusual situation for us the last few weeks of the season to have to prepare for two quarterbacks. As we prepared for those guys, you really have to focus on taking care of Tulsa. Each quarterback typically - and I can't speak to BYU's situation - each quarterback typically has some strengths that he brings to the table.

When we prepare, we're going to try to prepare to defend their offense, not a specific quarterback. But we will also be aware of what each of their strengths are.

It will be a little tougher as you get into the bowl preparation. But I will tell you that I do think we've had some experience of that probably three of the last four weeks of the season. We were preparing for multiple quarterbacks.

**Q. Can you talk about the effect of being in all those bowl games, maybe the positives especially on recruiting. I guess there are a lot of kids in the program that were excited by some past bowl success.**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: Well, there's no question. It was interesting in our experiences over the last three or four years. When I would go out and recruit as an assistant coach, it was always rewarding when young men would say, Coach, we loved watching you in the GMAC Bowl, last year in the Hawaii Bowl. It seems like we've been very fortunate that our conference has had really good notoriety when it comes to being in the public eye during the bowl season.

Sometimes you can get caught up in all the bowls. We've been very fortunate. I think Conference USA has been in a good position to get the attention of the nation and we've had great matchups that has helped us certainly in recruiting.

I think there's also a practical advantage to bowls in that we get this additional practice time through the winter break prior to the bowl game. That preparation allows us to prepare some of the young men that are redshirting, that are not on the travel roster normally. It's almost like an additional spring practice.

Teams that traditionally get into bowl games certainly get more preparation time. I think that builds on top of each other so there's a competitive advantage if you can continue to stay in bowl games.

**Q. How many people are you allowed to travel and will there be a lot more guys on**

**your travel roster for this game?**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: That's a great question. Typically we only take 66 on conference games. That's the conference rule. When you get to a bowl game you're able to take everybody that's eligible. All of our eligible players, essentially everybody should be traveling except for the young men who are sitting out due to their transfer status. Guys like Cody Green would not be eligible to go.

**Q. All the redshirts?**

BILL BLANKENSHIP: They get to travel and be a part of it, they just won't be able to play.

TIM SIMMONS: Coach, thank you very much for joining us today. Look forward to seeing you next week at the announcement function for the Bell Helicopter Bowl on Tuesday.

BILL BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

TIM SIMMONS: Tom, thank you for joining us today. Can you make an opening statement about BYU coming to Texas for the third time this season.

TOM HOLMOE: I loved it, Tim. It's been like a little home area for us. We're excited to be able to go back to Texas, a great place where there's great football be playing. Like Ross and Bill were saying, it's great to be in an area where there's so many high school football players, great recruiting opportunities. It's only our second time to play in a bowl game in Texas, the first being the 1997 Cotton Bowl.

I think that it's good. It's always good to be invited to a bowl game. There's a lot of teams right now that traditionally go to bowl games, and this year they're not in a bowl game. It's better to be able to have a matchup against a team where you feel it's going to be a great team.

I've watched Conference USA this year with Tulsa, Houston, Southern Miss, SMU, and we played Central Florida. I've always been looking forward to this game because we, unusually this year, knew if we won six games we were going to be in this game. We could kind of watch Conference USA and see how their season unfolded.

It was exciting to have it come all the way down to the end to see who we were going to get. Either way we knew we were going to get a great team.

So good to be in it, better to have a good matchup and best to go down and win the game. For BYU, we've been in 30 bowls. We haven't won them all. We've won some in the last years and lost a couple. I know Coach Mendenhall, who has

done a great job with the team this year, really intends to go down and continue on the tradition of BYU football in having successful bowl games.

All the things that we're looking for in post-season play came to fruition. Now the only thing to do is go down, have a great time, come away with a great win.

TIM SIMMONS: Questions for Tom Holmoe.

**Q. It's been a wild season for you with all the rumors bouncing back and forth. How nice is it to get to this point where you can focus on a final game and kind of wrap-up the 2011 football year?**

TOM HOLMOE: It's great. It's always nice to be able to play football. It was fun to be able to wrap up our season in Hawaii, regular season, with a win. I think the team finished off with a string of great victories.

It's what college football players and coaches look forward to, the bowl season. You get to play teams you traditionally or typically haven't played. Although we have had a chance to play Tulsa two years in a row in 2006, 2007. It's where you should be.

Like I said earlier, there's certain teams, players and coaches, they've packed it up and are looking forward to next year. We get to play another game.

With all that's swirled around BYU this year with independents and everything, it's really nice to keep on playing. We relish that, eager to get down there and strap it up and get another game in.

**Q. Looking ahead, how big would moving forward as an independent program, if you can get that double-digit win mark, how big would that be for an independent BYU program?**

TOM HOLMOE: I think it's big. One of the things we talked about when we went independent, if you're not good as an independent, it really doesn't matter. You got to be able to stand out as an independent. There's only four schools that are. You all know if an independent team has a tough season, you kind of get forgotten. You can become irrelevant very quickly.

To have 10 wins this year, if we can win this game against Tulsa, would mean an awful lot. It means a lot for this year for what we've

accomplished in our first years of independence. It was a little unusual. Played a crazy lot of road trips. We traveled a lot of miles. We didn't have a conference. We lost a couple games that were tough. But we ended up with a great win streak. Now we have a chance to get 10 games.

That will bode well for now and the future so there's a lot riding on this game.

**Q. Tom, could you kind of take us through the process. You were invited to this bowl early. How did that get started and work out?**

TOM HOLMOE: When we became an independent, one of the issues is you don't have tie-ins with your conference affiliation. We had to get together with ESPN who we had our TV contract with. As we started to speak to them about them holding our rights, one of the issues was, What to we do about a bowl game? They talked to us about some bowl games that were possibilities. Since it was the 11th hour, we really didn't have a lot of possibilities.

So when they suggested the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl, we jumped. It was a great opportunity. We'd seen the history of the bowl game. We knew the opponent was going to be a Conference USA team. We figured, let's go. We signed on and knew that, first things first, we have to win six games. The more games we win, the better opportunity we're going to have to do our end of the matchup.

TIM SIMMONS: Tom, thank you very much.

Coach Mendenhall, can you just make an opening statement about playing in the bowl game, your seventh straight as a coach, and playing Tulsa.

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: I'm very excited about the chance to participate in this particular game. I've been the head coach for seven years. We've just been blessed by tremendous young people in our program. This will be our seventh bowl game.

What I've learned to continue to advance programs and to continue to build reputations, it's not only participating in bowl games, but it's playing well and winning bowl games.

We are very excited about the matchup as well. Tulsa's season and our season have been very, very close in resembling one another with 8-4, 9-3, losses to some good teams and stretches in between. I think it's going to be a good matchup with two hungry teams, two teams that would like

to add one more win to their season, not only for their seniors and this year's team, but for the continuing building of reputation and competency, just how the programs are viewed in moving forward.

We're looking forward to learning more about our opponent through film work, getting our players in shape and ready to go. Hopefully we'll be able to do our part of the partnership in this matchup.

TIM SIMMONS: You have one common opponent in Central Florida. You played them first. Do you think Tulsa has an advantage of playing Central Florida second and seeing a lot of film?

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: I'm not sure. There's so many games that were played after Central Florida. Really you become so exhausted in each opponent and only exclusively focusing on them one at a time, it might be a slight edge. But really when it gets down to week 12, then a bowl layoff, really all that will matter is what kind of research both opponents will do, the practice you'll get in, the mindset you can develop on your team, and hopefully executing at a really high level. I think by then probably any advantage would have been lost.

TIM SIMMONS: Can you spotlight a player on offense, defense, special teams that was a difference-maker for you.

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: Our team and identity started to change when we changed quarterback. Riley Nelson became our starting quarterback. He's not one of those players that when you look at all the specs for an NFL quarterback in terms of height, arm strength, et cetera, that you'll see he matches up well with.

What he does do is he finds a way to win. He's very elusive, very creative. He allows plays to be extended with his feet. He's just a gritty and absolutely tough, tough, tough mentally and physically person that our players follow.

Riley Nelson on quarterback would be the one I would highlight on that side of the ball.

Defensively we basically have a young player, a true sophomore, in Kyle Van Noy, an outside linebacker, that makes about every type of play you can make from a defensive position, whether he's sacking the quarterback, whether he's tackling players behind the line of scrimmage, intercepting passes, he is in coverage, in the run prep, does a lot of things for us, has a tremendous upside. When anyone watches us play, their eyes

are drawn to him.

Then on special teams we have two. We have a kick returner in J.D. Falslev that's also a slot receiver that's really tough, a punt returner. We have a guy that runs down on kickoff from Ghana names Ezekiel Ansah. This is only his second year of football, period. The way he runs down on kickoff is fun to watch.

TIM SIMMONS: You have two kids from the Texas area that stand out this season, a freshman redshirt Ross Apo, then your junior linebacker, Ogletree.

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: As well as a receiver in McKay Jacobson. They're excited to make their third trip back to Texas. Anytime you recruit a Texas player, you get a player that's been raised really well and taught very well in fundamentals and the importance of work ethic. Texas has been a nice area for us in terms of getting players that can contribute.

It's also fun, just like we came back from Hawaii this past week, we had so many players from the islands to see them with their families, it's always fun to see, and will be fun to see, those three reconnect with their family members as well.

TIM SIMMONS: The band the brothers, when you watch on ESPN on the sidelines, you have the gray shirt with the band of brothers. Can you explain that a little bit.

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: Well, it really isn't perspective specific to this year. It started seven years ago when I became the head coach. I inherited what I believed was a splintered and fractured team, not only with individuals being separate, but sides of the ball being separate. I didn't view that being the model for success.

Simply from Shakespeare, there's a great quote that talks about, We few, we lucky few, we band the brothers. That theme really tied into what does it mean to be a brother from the literal sense, but also from an historical sense. A lot of them were fighting forces that considered themselves brothers, and other of us have brothers in our families. It's been a theme we used, have embraced, really taken to heart.

A year ago when we were struggling, we were 1-4. I wasn't accustomed to that as a coach, nor was our team. Basically I took off all the given gear that I was assigned to wear from Nike and put on the gray T-shirt letting our players know, after changing staff members midyear, let them know that I was willing to roll up my sleeves and get to work.

The T-shirt was a symbolic return to how this all started. I wanted them to see me on game day and I wanted to show by example that's really what would be our success.

Not to draw attention to myself, but really to draw attention to what is going to be helpful to our team. That's why I wear it.

TIM SIMMONS: We'll open the floor again for questions for Coach Mendenhall.

**Q. You talked about Riley Nelson. I know you have another good quarterback. Heaps has played well for you before. Is it an advantage to have two guys that are capable of starting the game? Are we likely to see Heaps at all?**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: Not likely to see Jake. I learned a year ago when I believed we could have a two-quarterback system. The worst thing is we won our opener against Washington with a two-quarterback situation. What I learned is how difficult it is to have a game plan, get chemistry, have your team united around a single leader.

While Jake is capable with a bright future, and I said many times he will be an NFL player, for this particular team, this particular year, Riley will be our starter.

Last week as Riley was hurt, Hawaii had a little bit of a quandary in that they didn't know who they would be preparing for until basically the game started. So that could affect an opponent. But I don't use that as a ploy. Riley will be our starter. He's healthy and will play as many plays as he can play if the game.

**Q. He basically played two full games prior to this Hawaii game, is that right?**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: Yes, and did very well in terms of moving the team. He is extremely capable. Last year in our turnaround season, Jake as a true freshman quarterback at BYU, which is unheard of, helped us turn around our season, get back to a bowl game and win it.

It's not a matter of competency or ability. Sometimes it's just chemistry. That's what the issue is this year.

**Q. A lot of fans here remember the '07 game. I wondered if you have some thoughts on that game still. Anyone on your roster still playing from that '07 team?**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: I don't know if there's anyone on our roster. Is that the game we played in Tulsa?

**Q. Yes.**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: I certainly remember the game, had no idea what we were defending quite frankly. That was one of the most explosive offensive schemes we'd ever seen. I hadn't researched it very well. I was serving as the defensive coordinator as well. I remember the first three series where Tulsa was not very successful and BYU, we were scoring points. All of a sudden Tulsa became unstoppable.

Really as a staff we had a hard time figuring out what to do about it, as I think most people that season did. That particular coach moved on to Auburn, had a lot of success. We were one of the early trophies that went on the wall.

It was one of the most valuable learning experiences I had as a coach. I usually take a lot more away from the losses than the wins. We've done a lot of research and played great defense since then. I attribute a lot because of what happened during that game.

**Q. A lot of the websites have this bowl game ranked pretty high. One has No. 11. Is that a testament to what both these programs have been able to accomplish?**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: When you look at number of games won, I asked our sports information director to pull up a statistic when I saw the matchup would be against Tulsa, and there's only been, since I've been the coach here, 15 teams, we're 15th in terms of number of wins over the last seven years. I think Tulsa is right up there as well.

So what's happening is you're getting these two programs that are thirsty, hungry, fighting for the next tier of exposure, but they're doing it through winning a lot of games every year, and they're doing it with unique and fun styles of play to watch.

To have them both in the same game at the same time, I think that's why the ranking will be what it is. I wouldn't be surprised if it climbs higher than that.

**Q. When you look at Tulsa and schedule, four losses to teams ranked in the top 10, what is your thought about playing a schedule like that?**

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: It's good. If you're looking to move your program forward, how better to measure where you are than to play those teams. Tulsa has a good enough team to sustain those four losses then go on and win eight more games. Our one point loss to Texas, our 10-point loss to TCU, certainly bitter defeats for us. But the learning to go on to help your program move forward is essential. I think it's great to play those games.

TIM SIMMONS: Coach, how difficult has it been playing an independent schedule as to playing the previous six years in a conference?

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: The real difficult thing is just trying to obtain, from an architect standpoint, balance in the schedule. We traveled so much early and had a lot of real tough opponents early, then have more regional opponents later, it was almost like two separate seasons.

But I really was expecting more of a drop-off without being in a conference as a season went on. Really what it shifted to, which has been our program emphasis from the beginning, we're trying to reach our potential, which we haven't yet. Our players have chosen to embrace that and play better each and every week regardless of who we're playing and what's at stake. The focus has had to shift more towards that as an independent than it would be saying, This will put you second in conference, this will be a conference championship, this bowl game. We already knew which game we were playing, so we are just trying to get as good as we can get, not only for this year's team but for the future.

If we were able to get 10 wins again, I think that would be five out of the last six years. That's a strong statement for consistency and quality.

TIM SIMMONS: Is it helping you recruiting-wise? When you played in the Mountain West, the TV package is a different thing. Have you noticed a change in your recruiting?

BRONCO MENDNEHALL: The recruiting has been the number one difference to independence. As of two weeks ago there would have been 1.2 billion people that had a chance to see us play. There have been more people that have been able to see BYU play this year alone than the six years combined. That's been on an ESPN format. That's been just phenomenal.

TIM SIMMONS: Coach, thank you very

much. We'll see you next Tuesday at our announcement party.

Thank you very much for the teleconference. Look forward to working with you over the next month.

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