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- S1 00:11 Welcome to the Sports Medicine Podcast, brought to you by the Sydney and J.L. Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance and the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Texas A&M University. At the Huffines Institute, we're always working to facilitate, apply and bring you the most up-to-date coverage of the wide world that is sports medicine and human performance, all in a language you can understand and share with your friends. Now here's our host, the director of the Huffines Institute, Dr. Tim Lightfoot.
- S2 00:40 Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute podcast. We're so glad that you took the time to join us, and we are so excited to have another interesting person from the world of sports medicine and human performance with us. Today, on behalf of the Texas A&M Coaching Academy, as a member of our executive council for the Coaching Academy, we're please to have Coach Terry Price with us. Welcome to the podcast, Coach Price.
- S3 01:03 Thank you very much. I'm excited and glad to be here today.
- S2 01:05 We are as well, and excited to have you here. I'm going to tell the folks a little bit about you, and then we'll just jump right into the conversation. As I said, we're really pleased to have Coach Price with us. He's currently the Texas A&M Defensive Line Coach. He's been busy the last couple years. He played at Texas A&M in 1986 through 1989, played under Coach Jackie Sherrill and R.C. Slocum. We had a 34 and 14 record while you were here.
- S3 01:31 Not bad [chuckles].
- S2 01:32 Pretty good record. Coach Price has coached Texas Tech, Mississippi, Western Kentucky, and was at Auburn for nine years, where he had five of his players that were drafted in the NFL. He's known as an incredibly great recruiter. Played in the NFL himself - he played for the Chicago Bears and for the Miami Dolphins. He does have a bachelor's degree in sociology from here, at Texas A&M. He's done the complete loop, so we're glad that you're back with us.
- S3 01:57 No question, glad to be here [chuckles].
- S2 01:59 You've had a lot of experiences in football. What led you to coaching? What made you decide at some point, "I'd like to be on the other side of this, hollering at the players instead of being hollered at?"
- S3 02:10 It's funny. It was actually a casual conversation I had with an older teammate of mine that had gotten into coaching. He was actually coaching at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas as defensive coach. I was getting close to graduation. We were in there working out one day in the old weight room, and he brought up what he did, how much he enjoyed coaching. He just told me a few details about it. It was something that really, really interested me. I took his advice. I researched a little bit more. At the time R.C Slocum was the head coach, the same guy that coached me and recruited me, so I went back to talk to him about it. R.C. said, "The best way to get into coaching here at the college level is to be a graduate assistant or G.A.," which is just like an intern in any other business.

S2 02:55 That means you work a lot of hours for not much pay [chuckles].

S3 02:56 Exactly right, which is all part of it. It's funny. At the time, I did not-- there were no spots available. I was a long-term substitute teacher [?] stationary for a year. When a graduate assistant job opened up at A&M I took it, and the ball kind of rolled from there.

S2 03:15 So you substitute taught for a year?

S3 03:16 I taught every grade from seniors to kindergartners. Kindergartners, as big as I am, is a unique experience, trust me [chuckles]. I was tying shoes, and wiping noses, and all that stuff. I've seen it all.

S2 03:30 Well it's interesting. You talk about how that conversation with one person changed everything for you. It's interesting. So many people that we talk to here, that's the same thing. They say, "I never really had thought about it, and then somebody had this conversation with me, and it's like wow."

S3 03:44 It's really a unique message, and it's funny because I have former players - one or two a year - call me and say, "Coach, I want to get into coaching. What do I need to do?" I always like to lay it out for them, and a lot of times you wish the message was out there where they could know about it ahead of time and get a head start on it, because it's a great career. It's a great profession. It's challenging obviously at times, but if you have a background of sports or just really enjoy being around the game, it's a great profession for a lot of people out there. I definitely try to pass word on out to just people in general, some of my former players, and help them, lead the pathway for them to get into coaching.

S2 04:19 Off the top of your head, how many of your former players are now coaching, do you think?

S3 04:23 Oh my goodness. It'd be hard to give an exact number because some of them are stuck in with some NFL teams. Some are at high school level. They're kind of all over. I've had some of my guys that are currently coaching and having a great time coaching. I had one of my favorite players about three or four months ago call me, and he wanted to get all of my drill tapes and all of my stuff because he started to coach again. It's fun to see that and get a chance to help these guys as they get going into this profession.

S2 04:49 One of the things that we've talked about here, especially when we've interviewed athletes, is the student-athlete experience. I think one of the things that people don't appreciate is how difficult it is to be a student-athlete.

S3 05:04 No question.

S2 05:04 Because both are full-time jobs.

S3 05:05 It is two full-time jobs, and a lot of people don't realize that. I think a lot of fans sometimes, they see people-- it's funny. I've had that before, "Coach, what do y'all do when it's not football season? What do you guys do when it's not Saturday night in Kyle Field?" A lot of work goes into it, and not just-- our players will get up anywhere from 5:00 to 5:30 for a 6:00 workout or 6:00 [?] session, and workout in the morning time, and they go to class all day long, and practice in the afternoon. It is a full, full day for those guys. That's something I think a lot of the public didn't realize. It's really hard work, but it's fulfilling work because again for our guys, the joy they have on Saturday playing in front of their home crowd, especially here at Texas A&M, is well

worth the long days and hard work that they put into it.

- S2 05:50 Just reflecting back over your own career, how has being a student-athlete changed, do you think, since your time here with the folks now that are student-athletes?
- S3 05:59 I think technology's changed as far as the workout plans are a lot more complicated now. The plyometrics, different way you work your body and different kind of technology used in the weight room, I think it's changed quite a bit. In our weight room now, we have video cameras setup where it videos your lifts and measures your explosion. It counts your reps. Our guys can actually go home at night and log on a computer and watch their lifts from that previous day. We had nothing like that back years ago, so I think that part of it's changed quite a bit. I think it's still about hard work though, regardless of whether it's 30 years ago or today. You get what you put into it. You still have to work hard, but I think technology's definitely helped, especially on the conditioning side of it.
- S2 06:44 You and I played athletics about the same time, and if I recall correctly about that time things were changing where it became-- athletes would go home during the summer [chuckles]. Nowadays that doesn't happen.
- S3 06:55 It doesn't happen anymore. As a matter of fact, for me in my junior and senior year, we were required to come second semester, and we could stay home first semester. It still wasn't full-time. Now obviously, it's obvious. Every school in the country, you've got to spend the whole summer on campus getting ready for the next season. It's definitely changed. Like you said, you used to-- back years ago, training camp, two days, that's when you got into shape. Now you have to be in shape when camp starts to compete for your position and obviously have a great football team.
- S2 07:25 If you're not in shape at the beginning of fall camp, you won't be playing.
- S3 07:28 You'll fall behind real fast [laughter]. It'll take all time to catch up, if you do catch up.
- S2 07:33 That's right. Let's talk. It seems like there's been an increase in the number of coaches for football teams that are out there. We did a podcast with Justin Moore, and we talked about that increased number of personnel. I know you were strengthening and conditioning coach at one time, in one of your positions. Do you do much now with--? I know we have a strengthening and conditioning staff, but I mean do you oversee that? Do you-- or is that, you're just defensive line, and...?
- S3 08:00 I think that the higher level of football you play, it becomes more specialized. When I was assistant training coach I was at I-AA school. We had a limited budget, so I was the D-line coach and weight room coach. We had a guy that coached receivers and also coached special teams. Everybody had two or three roles on the staff because again, you don't have three or four weight coaches like you do here at Texas A&M, at a small school like West Kentucky, like it was back 20 years ago. I think at this level of football, the highest level football in the SCC, things become more specialized. We're able to have a three and four-man strength-coaching staff, have our own nutritionist, have people that work in academics all day and all night for athletes. Back in those days, one of the coaches had to be the academic adviser and help put the schedule together. It's changed quite a bit, become a lot more specialized.
- S2 08:51 I bet you don't miss that part.
- S3 08:52 I don't miss that at all, trust me [laughter].
- S2 08:53 The scheduling. I would guess with that kind of diversification of talent, our coaching

is becoming more and more like the NFL. It's mirroring the NFL in the coaching aspect.

- S3 09:05 I agree. I think just again that the specialization, you have enough-- and really you talk about, even from a coach's point of view. Now the coaches all have graduate assistant coaches. There's interns. There's all kinds of volunteer coaches. There's a lot of people and personnel that can help us now on the football field. There's a lot more personnel in all areas then there was 23 years ago.
- S2 09:30 Now we do play football here at a high level. We recruit the best student-athletes we can. Of those student-athletes, do most of them come in thinking that they want to play professionally, go in the NFL, or...?
- S3 09:43 Every last one of them does. Every last player has-- I go through that a lot of times when I first get here and get to camp. One of the first meetings, "Who wants to play in NFL?" They all raise their hand, and one of things I always follow that with is, "If you want to play in NFL, guess what. You better be the hardest-working guy in the weight room, you better be the hardest-working guy on the football field, because number one it's hard to get there; number two, it's hard to stay there." I tell people all the time. The average NFL career, I think, is 2.8 years. I tell people my story. I was mister average. I got two years NFL football under my belt. Like a lot of people that have that chance, they all think they're going to go play in the NFL for 15-20 years, and retire one day and go fishing everyday. Well, it didn't work out for me like that. I was very average. I've got two years of professional football in. Now you're 23 years old. What are you going to do? That's one of the things I preach to the guys on our team now, "That's why your education is important." Some guys come with the mindset, coming out of high school, "School is secondary. I'm just gonna go play play ball and go pro." I said, "No, it don't work like that. Even if you're lucky enough to play professional football for two, three years, you're 23, 24 years old. You've still got a lot of living to do. So stay in those books. That's very, very important."
- S2 10:51 What are you going to do after that?
- S3 10:52 What are you going to do when you get done?
- S2 10:54 When you're playing? I know we were talking to some recruits, and we said, "After your playing career is over, what are you going to do?" They go, "I don't know."
- S3 11:00 They don't think about it, so I make sure they think about it [chuckles].
- S2 11:02 Well, I can remember being 18.
- S3 11:04 No question [chuckles]. I didn't think about it when I was 18. That's why I take it upon myself to make sure that these guys know. I take it personal. I went to school here. I played here. So when a student-athlete comes through Texas A&M as part of a football program, it's not just my responsibility to make sure he's a great player. I want to make sure they're a great person, have a chance to follow the path I had, and the fact that they get a great degree, play football at the highest level, and they're put in the position to be successful when they get out of here. That's why I put a lecture in making sure that they understand how important education is.
- S2 11:33 Excellent. We have talked a little football anyway, especially since the game's changing. Spread offense becoming more and more prevalent. The role of the defensive line in particular is changing, and linebackers. We've talked to Coach Hagen before about the linebacker side of things. What kind of fundamental changes have you seen, and what's your defensive lineman have to do now?

S3 11:54 Well, I think with the uptempo offense, number one because it's uptempo, you have to be in great shape upfront. You still have big guys out there that have to stop the run, but they snap the ball every 20 seconds, opposed to the good ol' days where it took two or three minutes to get a play off, it seemed like. You got to be in great shape number one. Number two, you have to have two or three deep. You have to have depth because offenses go so fast. Guys get tired because the offenses go so fast, so you got to have more depth to counteract these spread offenses, so you can keep on chasing the ball sideline to sideline. And you've got to have some guys that can rest the quarterback, because when they're throwing the ball 40, 50, 60 times a game, you have to have guys that can affect the quarterback.

S2 12:37 You mentioned the speed of the game. Recently there was an effort to slow the game down a bit.

S3 12:41 Yes. That's not going to happen [laughter]. That's not going to happen.

S2 12:44 We pointed out several times is that a little bit the reasoning that was put out there was a little bit ludicrous.

S3 12:49 That doesn't make sense. There's no documentation that says all the things that some of the old-school coaches in the old-school offenses want to do, but there's no documentation. I think it's just they're trying to make it self-serving to them. Let the game be played as the game be played. As long as you're playing within the rules - which we are, like everybody else is - let's play the game and see what happens.

S2 13:08 There's always been a lot of attention to play to your base set. Is it a four-three? Is it a three-four? At least it seems to me - and again, I'm just a casual observer nowadays - that it's almost a morph between the two, because at some downs you've got guys playing down. You've got four down. You've got three ups, some downs.

S3 13:30 That's true. That's true.

S2 13:30 It almost changes play by play.

S3 13:33 A lot of it's based on personnel. Back in the old days you had two tight ends, two backs, and everything was played within a 10-yard box. Now, because you're playing with four wide receivers, five wide receivers, you have to match it up by personnel and defense. If the team is in more of a run-looking offense, you've got to play with four down. If they spread it out and go four or five wides, you usually go three down, so you get more guys in coverage, to cover all those wide receivers.

S2 13:56 Wow. For somebody that's not in this on a day-to-day basis, how do you manage all the substitutions?

S3 14:02 It is something that has to be practiced over and over again. I can promise you that. It's not easy, because you may go first down a certain personnel. Second down they change. They go from two backs to five wides, and you've got to send another person out in the game. Then on third down, they may change it again, and now you've got to send another person up in the game. We have probably four or five personnel groups on defense that are ready at all times to go out there and play.

S2 14:27 Is that your call, as the defensive-line coach, during the game, or is that the DC's call, or is it--?

S3 14:32 Well the D.C. obviously. The defensive coordinator obviously calls the personnel group. That's according to formation and what call it has. But as position coaches

we've got to make sure if it's three down, we've got to right three guys in there. If it's four down, we've got the right four guys in there. If it's a short-yardage or goal-line situation, we're going to have the right five guys in there. It's on us to make sure we substitute and get the right people in the game.

S2 14:51

It's really about personnel management?

S3 14:53

A lot of personnel management, a lot of personnel management. If one guy goes down, he gets some ankle turned. Now there's a-- you've got to pull up the ol' sheet. "Now, you that are a second-teamer, you go to first team in this position. You move over to this position." There is a lot of things that happen when one or two guys go down. You have to juggle that and keep that maintained as well, because again one or two injuries, you still need to have five guys out there when you go goal line. You still need to have three guys out there when you go penny groups. It's a lot of management on the sideline.

S2 15:21

How much videotape do you spend watching per week? because I think that's another change is that there is so much more information now available.

S3 15:28

So much more, yes. Even though I remember the old days, people used to have to send game film by FedEx, or truck it, or drive it, or whatever, to get it. Now it's all online. Even in our league, every game in our league is online. We just go to a website and pull it up, and it's there. That's changed quite a bit as far as game film is concerned. A lot of our time is spent studying game film, tendencies, what they do offensively, what they do in a run game and pass game. That's how we formulate our game plan. A lot of our time is spent watching tape.

S2 15:58

I know the philosophy is: we focus on the game that's front of us; we don't think about what's going on down the road. But surely you guys prepare for the stuff that's happening down the road. About how far out in advance do you start looking at tape for upcoming opponents?

S3 16:11

As full-time coaches, we truly take it one game at a time. We go one game at a time. What happens is we have graduate assistants. We have student-assistants. We've got interns. They always go a week or two ahead of time. We play a game on Saturday, and when we get in there Sunday and start grading the film from Saturday night, and then starting on our next opponent, all the information we need, all the statistics we need, it's all ready for us. The film's already broken up, how we need to watch it, so they always get ahead of schedule, so when we start on Sunday, we don't have to take all day or two days to get the information organized.

S2 16:48

You can just focus on the upcoming opponent the next week, and you've got other people that are doing that.

S3 16:53

Exactly.

S2 16:52

You must have a lot of trust in your GAs that are breaking that film down in advance.

S3 16:57

You have to have a good GAs. Without a doubt you have good GAs. And that's a thankless job. I've been one. There's not very many full-time coaches at this level that haven't been GAs. It's a thankless job, but it's a job where you learn a lot about the profession, and it helps to become a better football coach when you do get a chance or an opportunity to be a full-time football coach.

S2 17:12

It's that apprenticeship thing, isn't it?

S3 17:13 No question, the same thing. Same thing.

S2 17:16 I've talked with other folks, other coaches, and one of the things they've said, especially in football, it helps to know people.

S3 17:21 No question. That's how I got my first really big, big job. I was actually here as a graduate assistant in 1994. Tommy Tuberville was the defensive coordinator, and I left. My first full-time job was at Western Kentucky University. The head coach was Jack Harbaugh. His son, Jim Harbaugh, who was coaching out for the 49ers, was a teammate of mine with the Chicago Bears, so there was a connection there. Then when Coach Tuberville took the job at Ole Miss as the head coach, we've worked together when I was a GA here at Texas A&M, so again, those connections obviously helped get me involved in the coaching profession, and helped me get started. So it's a lot about the who you know in this business, really is.

S2 18:07 If someone is shy and introverted, that's going to be tough for them?

S3 18:11 It's a struggle. I'm going to be very honest with you. I'm not going to lie to you about that. I've seen some guys, and I've had to-- I'm not going to say counsel some guys, but I got some former players that are kind of low-key. I just tell them, "You've got to have a little personality about yourself." Part of the job is coaching. A big part of the job is recruiting - going into homes. It's just like sales - selling yourself, selling your program. And you have to have an energetic approach. You're not going to buy a car or a house for anybody from somebody that's kind of real low-key, real slow voice, doesn't really make for a selling atmosphere. You've got to be excitable. You've got to have some-- as we say in football term, we have some juice about yourself, where you're excited. That's all part of the presentation. So you have to have a little bit of personality to be good at what we do in this business.

S2 19:00 I would think that one of the things that you can sell when you're on the recruiting trails is the fact that we have 38,000 students at our games.

S3 19:07 Yeah.

S2 19:08 What kind of affect does that have on the team during the game?

S3 19:12 Well, I think just the 12th man here, just the addition that we have as far as that's concerned. We have the largest amount of students in the country that comes to games to support us. It means a lot. It means a lot. Our guys understand that. They know that. I think we just broke a record for having the most students at a football game. It energizes our players. It gets them fired up for the game. Again, the crowd, the students, the yells, the cheers - it makes for the best of environment in college football.

S2 19:44 Well, it certainly helps, I think, our college-student body feel like they're more of a part of the team.

S3 19:49 They are a part. Especially here more than anywhere else - we're the home of the 12th man. I think our students understand that, and that's why we have more students than anywhere else in the country come support our players and come support our football team.

S2 20:00 Coach, it's been great having you here.

S3 20:02 Thank you. I appreciate it.

S2 20:02 We're going to start wrapping up here. As we do with all our guest, we give them an

opportunity to tell us their-- a take-home message. What do you want everyone to remember from this podcast?

S3 20:11

Well, I think the most important thing to remember for a lot of guys out there that want to get to coaching is understand, number one, it's been a great profession for myself. I've enjoyed it. It's given me a chance to stay close to the game I love. It keeps me young. For all the young guys out there that are thinking about it or want to get into it, I want to, without a doubt, say something - you ought to pursue it. I don't care whether it's middle school, high school, college, pro. Whatever your desire or whatever the level you want to coach at, get involved. Research and talk to some of your former coaches. If you were a high school player, talk to some of your former high school coaches. If you played in college football, talk to some of your former college coaches. If you're a former college football player, think about becoming a graduate assistant and getting involved in the coaching process. It's a great profession. I think that a lot of people don't realize or understand how to get into it. Research it, look into it, because again for somebody that's been involved and played the game, I think it's a great, great profession for a lot of young athletes out there.

S2 21:12

Just go say hello to people.

S3 21:14

Go say hello.

S2 21:14

That often helps.

S3 21:15

The door is open up for you, once you go research and check on things.

S2 21:17

That's right. Well again, thank you for being here with us.

S3 21:19

Thank you.

S2 21:20

It's been a pleasure to have you.

S3 21:21

Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

S2 21:22

You're welcome. As regular listeners of the podcast know, this is the time that we also have the weekly podcast question. And here with the podcast question is Ayland.

S4 21:33

How is the defensive line changing to fit new-age offenses?

S2 21:37

Great podcast question. Please be the first one to send us the correct answer, at huffinespodcast@hlkn.tamu.edu. If you're the first one to send us that answer, then you'll win one of those nifty podcast t-shirts. It's never too late to win, so send it in. Again I want to thank you all for taking the time to download us. Let's thank our guest again, Coach Price. I hope that you all take the time to download us next week, when we have another interesting person in world of sports medicine, human performance and coaching. Until then have an active and healthy week.

S1 22:11

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have an active and healthy week.