



CLEVELAND BROWNS TRANSCRIPT

Offensive coordinator Todd Monken
2-7-19

Offensive coordinator Todd Monken:

On choosing to join the Browns with Head Coach Freddie Kitchens calling plays after being interviewed for head coaching positions:

“To me, it is pretty simple. I have always chosen places based on the people and the opportunity to win – at least I thought that with the decisions I have made in the past – and I won’t talk about other opportunities. When you look at the young roster and when I came and met with Freddie, (General Manager) John (Dorsey) and the other people in the organization, it just felt right. I felt like I wanted to be part of this moving forward. In the end, it is about winning. It is about being around good people. It is about moving the football, regardless of who is calling it. I have called it in the past so it is not as if I am not capable of that.”

On his first impressions of QB Baker Mayfield:

“First off personally, I have just met him. That part of it will come. Obviously, on film, it is easy to see his skillset, his ability to make plays outside of the pocket and what he brings to the team in terms of mental toughness and the leadership – he inspires others to play around him and he holds himself and others to a high standard, which is where it has to start at quarterback. I am excited to get started. Unfortunately, it will be a couple months away, but it is an exciting time.”

On his passing game philosophy and how much the ‘Air Raid’ offense has been incorporated into the NFL:

“It is interesting, when I went to Oklahoma State from Jacksonville, it was the ‘Air Raid’ (*makes quotation marks gesture*) as we use our fingers to say that. Really what I took away from it was being able to throw to win. That really to me was the Air Raid. You had a certain amount of run game, you ran a lot of the same concepts and you could throw to win. That was really it. Like any offense, it works a lot better if you have good players. That is really what it is about. It is about having good players and doing things the right way consistently so you do it better than they do it. It becomes a lot harder at the NFL level because you are going against the best in the world, windows are tighter and you are under duress a lot more so you have to be disciplined in terms of what you do on the perimeter.”

On elaborating on ‘throwing to win’:

“Balance is multiple skill players touching the football. To me, it is not always just run-pass (balance). It is do you have enough skill players where they can touch the football. Last year at Tampa, we almost had six guys – if (Buccaneers TE) O.J. (Howard) doesn’t get hurt – with 700-plus yards from the line of scrimmage. That to me is balance. You have a number of guys who can hurt you from a matchup standpoint. Is running the football important? Sure because in order to win, you have to be explosive and not turn the ball over. How do you become explosive? Space players and throwing it over their heads or throwing in intermediate pockets, and running the football adds to that.”

On his specific responsibilities as an offensive coordinator when not calling plays:

“We will see. I have been here seven days.”

On discussing specific responsibilities when accepting the Browns offensive coordinator role:

“Somewhat, but it is always different once you get the job, right? We have all gone through interviews. I am being silly, but the bottom line is like any assistant coach, your job is to do whatever the head coach tells you to do. That is what you do. If the head coach says do this, then you do it. If he says on the field



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today to do that, it is what you do. If he decides that he doesn't want to call it and he says you call it, I will call it. That is what I did last year."

On calling plays last year with Tampa Bay but not in all games, in respect to his previous answer:

"Just one game."

On Kitchens as a person, coach and technician:

"Again, I would say that it is early. From what I have seen and what I have heard, I was excited to be a part of it. I think our personalities match, which is nice to be a part of. It matched with (Buccaneers Head) Coach (Dirk) Koetter. When you start looking at taking jobs, at least for me, in order of what I was looking for was opportunity to win and potentially a franchise quarterback, the right people and third was calling the plays. That is what I did when I went to Tampa. It didn't work out that way, but that is the decision that I made to leave Southern Miss. That is exactly the same decision I made to come here was in that order. With that being said, I think our personalities in terms of as people are pretty close but also in terms of being aggressive offensively. When I watched what they did the last eight weeks of the year and how they went about it and organizationally, it was something that I wanted to be a part of."

On vision for the Browns 2019 offense when combining Kitchens' and his offensive schemes:

"We are working through that now. It is always fun. It takes time, but it is something that as we come together [we will determine]. Freddie was here one year so initially, (former Browns offensive coordinator) Todd Haley's system and terminology, you have that running around his head. You have what they did in Arizona with (former Cardinals and Buccaneers Head Coach) Bruce Arians for a number of years. Then you have what we did in Tampa and some of the things that the other coaches will bring to the table. You have (offensive line/associate head coach) James (Campen) in the run game and what they did in Green Bay. We are working through that now to make it the Browns offense. That is what you do. Next offseason will be a lot easier because you will have had everything or at least the majority of your offensive package put together and what you like and dislike. Every day, you are implementing things and talking through it, and it is going to become easier."

On if he knew Kitchens prior to the interview process:

"Never met him."

On if he has previously taken a job where he didn't know the head coach:

"That happens. You get a head coaching job, you don't know the people that are normally... Sometimes, that happens or you take a job where – when I went to Jacksonville however many years ago, I really didn't know anybody there. It just happened where you do a good job, someone recommends you and out of the blue you get a call – I wouldn't say it is out of the blue. Bottom line is do a great job where you are and hopefully people will see that. That is all I ever control is the job that I do where I am and what I am asked to do. That is the job of any assistant coach."

On the Browns' talent on offense related to opportunities to win:

"That is hard to say even this early without really even getting on the field because there is more to it than just looking at film. As we all know, even as you are preparing for the draft, what you see on film is just part of the product. It is a big part of it, but how each player is wired and then what you can do to utilize their skillset [is part of it] and what was done before with a certain player and how they will improve and what you can do to help improve players. This is a developmental league. You are only going to get so many draft picks. You are only going to get so many free agents. You have to develop your younger players. It is maximizing players' measurable skillsets. That is what you are paid to do is get the players to play at a high level."



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On if working with No. 1 overall selection Buccaneers QB Jameis Winston will help his ability to work with Mayfield:

“Oh, I don’t know. The one thing from what I hear about Baker that is similar to Jameis is Jameis is a tremendous young man. He loves football. He is very intelligent. He is passionate about it. He owns it. Those are all of the things that I hear about Baker – a guy that loves football, that loves to compete, that loves to be around the building and owns his mistakes, which is a great start.”

On impressions of DL Myles Garrett and DB Denzel Ward when preparing to face them last year:

“Young and talented. I think that is probably the best way of putting it, which is probably a lot to say about the overall roster – fairly young and talented with a chance to catch a franchise ascending. That is what you are trying to do is to get somewhere where you have young, talented players. It is hard for me to think back that long ago other than that we tried to screw it up. That is all I remember about it, but we found a way at the end – thank God – to get that win. That is really what I remember about it.”

On how disruptive it is for an offense and offensive coordinator to oppose a shut-down man CB:

“It is disruptive. That is where we talked about balance before. It is not nearly as disruptive if you have other pieces. It is much more disruptive if you don’t. The fewer pieces that you have, the more disruptive one player on the defensive side can be, the same as an edge rusher. An edge rusher can be very disruptive if your piece that is trying to block is subpar and then you have to create other ways to chip or help, if that makes sense when we are talking about those players. When you are talking about building a defense, it starts with rushers and corners. That is where it starts. Offensively, it starts with your tackles and your quarterback. That is where you kind of work from those ends.”

On how much the ‘Air Raid’ and college schemes have been incorporated into the NFL over the past few years:

“I think everything gets clumped into Air Raid just like a lot of years it got clumped under West Coast offense. ‘Oh, it is a West Coast offense.’ What does that mean? Maybe by verbiage but not by concepts or how they go about attacking people. When you look at what teams are doing now, if you say do I see the college game’s influence on the NFL? Without a doubt. You see that. Probably the team you see it most with is Kansas City. Kansas City’s run game – I wouldn’t say exclusively – is a high number of RPOs (run-pass options) or ways to get it out of that young man’s (Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes) hands, and he is good at it and they have good skill guys around him. If you wanted to match up what some college football teams look like, you would probably say Kansas City. There are some other teams. You could take the Eagles and the Colts, where you are talking about RPOs and different ways for run-pass options, which has been prevalent in college. The rules are a little more advantageous as far as linemen being downfield and blocking downfield, which enables you to do things more in the screen game than throwing in the perimeter. In a lot of ways, you have to be committed to it. You have to look at those plays as one play. I think people get caught up in – that is why when I talked about balance, if you have a run play with an RPO built into it, it is a play. That is not run-pass (balance). The efficiency of the play is what is important, not who touched it. Sometimes we get way caught up in run yards/pass yards. It is efficiency of what you do, being explosive, not turning it over and scoring touchdowns. That is what it is really about.”

On if he hopes to incorporate ‘a lot of RPOs’ into the Browns offense:

“I think ‘a lot’ is probably an extreme, but I think that is where football has been and that has been my background. Hopefully, it is something that interests Freddie.”

On the amount of work needed to turn around Southern Miss and why he left the program to return to the NFL:

“First of all, it was hard. It was taking over a 0-12 program. At some point in your career, you get those jobs and you think, ‘Oh yeah, I am the reason. This will be really easy. I will come in here and I will get this thing rolling.’ I lost my first 11 games as a head coach. It is misery. You take the podium and have a



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smile on your face and you are the face of that program, and it was a lot of hard work and a lot of work went into it with our assistants and the players that we had. I thought our assistant coaches did a great job of developing players. There are eight guys from when we got there that are now in the NFL so there are a number of players that added into developing those players. To see it come to fruition was very rewarding but very difficult to leave the staff and the players at the time I did. It wasn't an easy decision, but at times in our profession, you have to make a decision of what chair you want to be in irrespective of money or comfort. It is what chair do you want to be in to challenge yourself as a man and as a coach, and that is what went into the decision. I went to go work at a place where very similar to here I thought a young roster, a young first pick in the draft quarterback, an offensive-minded head coach and people I believed in as far as choosing players, which is as important as anything as to who you have on your roster is who is choosing those players. It went into the same mindset of when I left there. It was maybe one of the most difficult decisions that I made in my coaching career is leaving a place we spent all that time working to build it, but I wanted to see what was next."

On if he enjoys coaching in the NFL more than college:

"I wouldn't say I like it better. I love coaching. I love the challenge of gameday and doing it better than they do it. It is different, but the rewards you get in the NFL are different than the rewards you get in college. The winning is the same, but the developing of younger people and what you get out of college coaching, the rewards that you get are the same that you get just like you do with your own children. The reward from your own children is the same thing that wears you out (*laughter*). It is a little bit more difficult in that regard, but the rewards you get out of the NFL is doing it against the best in the world and your margin for error is so much smaller."

On the importance of Mayfield's development in his second season and his message to Mayfield about it:

"There is not one singular message. I think the hardest part any young player has – it is hard without knowing him but it is not just him; it is any young player – is how do you block out the noise. He has it the hardest, as does a head coach. Your players nowadays with so much volume, and most of them would be lying if they said they didn't look at it, just like us. You look at it. We all like to be told we are doing a good job. To me, the most important thing is to stay balanced in terms of the good or bad said about you, like all of us. It is what it is. Everybody has a job to do, but the bottom line is how you stay flat lined in terms of the good or the bad that is said about you. I think that is the most important thing. That as much as anything is the hardest part is whether it is negative or positive just believe in yourself and let's find a way to do it. That is all of your players, especially young players because the other time is going to come. There is no time in any player's career where it doesn't come where there is going to be doubt and there are going to be stretches of games where you don't play as well and games with stretches where you play well. You have to be able to continue to keep moving forward."

On if he knew Dorsey prior to the interview process:

"No."

On if he had simply seen enough of Dorsey's production to believe in his ability to select players:

"I felt good about it and his past. When someone shows an interest in you, you do a little research on them, as well. They are researching you. You do more research if you have some other opportunities. When you meet somebody and you take a look at the roster, you kind of go from there."

On if it is unusual to accept a job when not knowing the head coach or GM:

"Not in my mind. It is not about who you know. You get a little bit of a feel for it. You would be amazed at the head coaching interviews and how much time they actually spend with you to make a decision. I am not saying it is the right way; I am just saying it in general. The bottom line is no matter what job you take, whether it is an hour meeting or a three-hour meeting, you have to do your research from people who really



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know who they are because anybody can fool you. Just like when I was interviewing for a couple of head coaching jobs, I had hoped they would ask people about me and not just take my word for it because anybody can stand up there and tell you what you want to hear. The proof is in – do you want to know what kind of coach I am? Ask the guys that I have coached. Ask the guys I coached with. Don't ask me. If you want to know what kind of husband I am, ask my wife. If you want to know what kind of father I am, ask my child. That is what really matters. The rest of it, you do your research and find out who the people are. Sure, there are going to be times when it gets tough. That is when you find out how people really are. Right now, this is the honeymoon. Had a great run here the back half of the year, and we will see. We have a good young roster and I like what I see so far, and hopefully, they do in me.”

On Kitchens joking about not knowing what the Air Raid offense was at the Senior Bowl and if he feels Kitchens is open minded and collaborative to it and other offensive philosophies:

“I think the interest starts with my past, not particularly always just with the Air Raid because when I left Jacksonville and went there, I had to learn that. (Houston head football coach) Dana Holgorsen had been there at Oklahoma State. You take a system and the terminology and you make it your own. Hopefully, we did a good job of that. (Former Oklahoma State/Browns and Texans QB) Brandon (Weeden) came here. Brandon was a big reason we won. We did some good things there, but we also incorporated things we did in Jacksonville, things we had done at Louisiana Tech or things we had done at Eastern Michigan or places we had done before. Things we had done in Jacksonville, just like here, there are certain things you do at Oklahoma State that you like and there are certain things that we did at Tampa, and when you get to do it, you get to decide. Did I feel that Freddie was open to what we had done at previous players where I had been involved? Of course. You certainly don't take it with the idea of ‘Hey, I won't have any input into what we are going to do offensively.’ Ultimately, it is always a head coach's decision. It doesn't matter if you are calling it or not. The head coach has the last say in everything that you do. Obviously, me coming here was a part of it being a collaborative decision in what we did. Ultimately, someone has to call the plays, someone says, ‘Well, is there anything in terms of when you would call it?’ No, when he decides he doesn't want to call it, then hopefully, I am the guy he decides he would want to call it. I wanted to be at a place when I did get a chance to call it, I would feel good about the place I am, which is where it was at Tampa.”

On his Oklahoma State connection and Mayfield's Oklahoma connection, as well as Mayfield's comment that the Browns may have to convince him to hand the ball of to RB Nick Chubb, given rivalries:

“Oh, I don't know about that (*laughter*). I think that is a little bit of a stretch. I like scoring points so however that is, I think that is a little misnomer. At Tampa, we did throw it. I did like to throw it of course, but if you take first quarter stats, if you take first half stats and if you take one-score games, you will find we were right there with other teams [in run-pass balance] that made the playoffs and it wasn't that extreme. The more often you are in two-minute at the end of the game and you are down, the more often you are going to throw it. Yeah, it does absolutely think that he is from Oklahoma (*laughter*). That was probably the negative that almost stopped me from taking the job. The first thing I said was in 2011, we won the Big 12 and beat Oklahoma. He goes, ‘Yeah, but you had like a 38-year old quarterback.’ It didn't take him long to bite back. I said, ‘Really, you are just a Red Raider. You are just a Red Raider that was a transplant.’ He didn't like that very well either. We will be just fine.”

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