Burnham’s blueprint, philosophy built dominant ISU defense
Coaching staff

Burnham builds ISU defense

By Jake Calhoun
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With a hunched back and eyes asymmetrical on his face, one would think 48 years of coaching have taken too much of a toll on Wally Burnham.

Now in his fourth year at Iowa State, however, Burnham is still going strong as the team’s defensive coordinator and linebackers coach. Through five games this season, Burnham’s defense has given up one fewer yard per play and almost 80 fewer yards per game than the past three seasons combined.

In some respects, Wally Burnham is a mad man. That’s why his players love him.

“Coach Wally, he’s an old school coach — one of those tough-love coaches — but he’s willing to help you if you’re willing to get better,” said junior linebacker Jeremiah George. “When you have a coach like that who’s passionate, you’ll do anything for him.”

Despite his modest demeanor and appearance — very rarely will he be seen not wearing shorts — Burnham’s resume contains some eye-popping bullet points.

Burnham served as an assistant to Bobby Bowden, college football’s all-time winningest coach, at Florida State from 1985 to 1993. It was there that Burnham helped the Seminoles win a national championship in 1993.

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**Quick Facts: Kansas State**

- Location: Manhattan, Kan.
- Type: Public
- Founded: 1863
- Enrollment: 24,378
- Student-to-faculty ratio: 19-to-1
- Nickname: Wildcats
- Mascot: Willie the Wildcat
- The school’s town of Manhattan, Kan., is nicknamed “The Little Apple” in reference to Manhattan, N.Y., which is known as “The Big Apple.”
- Kansas State has 14 varsity sports. Unique among them are the exclusive women’s sports of equestrian and rowing.
- Legendary golfer Tiger Woods’ father, Earl, played baseball at Kansas State and was the first African-American baseball player in the Big Seven in 1962.
- Famous alumni include actress Kirstie Alley, environmental activist Erin Brockovich, chief White House photographer Pete Souza and comedian Eddie Griffin.
- Kansas State was an original member of the Big Eight before it became the Big 12 in 1996.
- Coach Bill Snyder has turned the program around in his 20 years there, posting the school’s first-ever bowl victory in 1993 with its first and only BCS bowl appearance coming 10 years later.
- Snyder’s overall record is 163-83-1, which is almost 34 percent of the program’s total wins.
- While Kansas State trails Iowa State 49-42-4 in the rivalry between the two, Snyder is 16-4 against the Cyclones. His last loss to Iowa State came in 2005.
- A common rallying cry (and hashtag) of unity for K-State fans is EMAW, which stands for “Every Man A Wildcat.”
- Kansas State’s main rival is Kansas. The two face each other every year in the “Sunflower Showdown,” which Kansas leads all time 64-41-5.
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<td>Stephen Koengisfeld, sports online editor (23-13)</td>
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<td>No. 3 South Carolina vs. No. 9 LSU</td>
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<td>South Carolina — Wally Burnham coached at South Carolina, and this is Wally’s World after all. #wallysworld</td>
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<td>Guest pick: Tom Hill, vice president of student affairs</td>
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<td>Texas — Hook ‘em Horns. The Longhorns do what UTEP couldn’t for the state of Texas and beat the Sooners.</td>
<td>Baylor — No Casey Pachall, no leader. Baylor has a lot of underrated firepower.</td>
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vs. Kansas State
Editorial

Kansas State serves as sister school

During postgame interviews after Iowa State’s seven-point loss to Kansas State last December, ISU running back Jeff Woody said the two teams were part of “sister” schools.

“It’s like looking at a reflecting pool,” Woody said after that game on Dec. 3, 2011. “One side or the other it’s almost identical rushing yards, passing yards, total yards, first downs — everything is identical. If there are two more evenly matched teams in the country I’d like to see them.”

While their records last season might not have been too reflective of each other — Kansas State went 10-2 en route to a Cotton Bowl appearance while Iowa State made it to the lower-ranked Pinstripe Bowl at Manhattan, Kan., both of which each have populations of roughly 50,000-60,000. The schools are land-grant institutions that house more than 20,000 students each and are leaders in agriculture schools.

Interestingly enough, both schools are famously known as agricultural schools. This, of course, explains the seeds that were planted by Bill Snyder and Paul Rhoads that grew into successful football programs.

When Snyder came to Kansas State in 1989, he took over a program that had an overall winning percentage of .370 and had not won a bowl game in its history.

Snyder has since gone on to set countless milestones while winning 66 percent of his games.

Rhoads’ first year at Iowa State came 20 years after Snyder’s at Kansas State but was capped off with a victory in the Insight Bowl.

With Rhoads, Iowa State has experienced the rough nature of the Big 12 Conference, but the woes of losing records in the conference have been overshadowed by the monumental upsets year after year — Iowa State just recently beat No. 15 TCU, which marked the first time in program history that the team had beaten a ranked team three consecutive seasons.

While Rhoads has Iowa State headed in the right direction, it is still miles behind what Snyder has built at Kansas State simply because of Snyder’s longevity at this point. Kansas State might be a 6.5-point favorite to win Saturday, but expect a close game because both teams are going to be ready to play.

With the implications a win on Saturday could have for Iowa State — a winning conference record, a probable ranking in the AP Top 25 for the first time since 2005 and a 50th victory against Kansas State — there’s no way it’s going to roll over that easily.

“When it comes down to it, this kind of game, it’s a ground-and-pound game,” said ISU linebacker A.J. Klein. “It’s a very physical football game, and I think we’re going to see the exact same thing come Saturday.”

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Burnham has coached numerous players that have gone on to successful careers in the NFL, including Hall-of-Fame defensive back Deion Sanders and perennial Pro Bowl linebacker Derrick Brooks, among others.

In Burnham’s time as a defensive coordinator before arriving at Iowa State, his installation of the 4-3 defense at South Carolina and South Florida paid dividends.

Burnham’s defense at South Carolina saw massive improvements in the highly competitive Southeastern Conference, while his defense at South Florida ranked in the top 30 in six of his seven years there.

All those accolades were thanks to Burnham’s defensive philosophy that paralleled that of head coach Paul Rhoads, who served as a defensive coordinator at Pittsburgh and Auburn, of making the offense work for everything and not conceding easy gains.

This similarity, among others, compelled Rhoads to give Burnham a call when he became the ISU football coach prior to the 2009 season.

“I’d coached against him for a number of years,” Rhoads said. “In doing that, I’d seen the way his defense has played: That’s with energy, that’s with passion, that’s with speed and that’s with effectiveness — namely against spread offenses that I knew we were going to have to defend in this league.”

Upon arriving in Ames, Burnham said the talent level on defense at Iowa State was thin after the departure for former coach Gene Chizik.

Serving as the third defensive coordinator and linebackers coach for some of those players was tough at first, but not impossible for Burnham.

“You had to settle the team down and you had to win their confidence that you were going to be here, you were going to stay with them,” Burnham said.

Burnham made the most with the unit he had in 2009 — which ranked 90th nationally in total defense. Recruiting players with speed, Burnham said, was the first objective of building the defense, which now ranks 28th overall nationally.

“In the Big 12, you play in open space all day,” Burnham said. “You’ve got to have players that can make plays in open space, so that means you’ve got to have speed, you’ve got to have athletic ability — all those kind of things that go into those kind of players.”

One of the speedier players Burnham and Rhoads hooked was Jake Knott, a defensive

=)BURNHAM.p11
back-turned-linebacker who has become one of the standout defensive players in the nation thanks to Burnham's coaching.

Coming from Waukee High School as Rhoads' first recruit in 2009, however, Knott was not very highly touted. "You could probably ask anybody when I first came in here if I was a good linebacker or not," Knott said with a chuckle. "I think anybody would have probably told you there's no chance."

Knott recently amassed 300 career tackles in Iowa State's 37-23 win against TCU last weekend, becoming the first Cyclone to do so since Matt Word in 2002 and the 14th overall in school history.

Knott's counterpart and fellow three-year starter A.J. Klein is another player who Burnham sculpted into a dominant force.

Key among Klein's achievements was his reception of the Co-Defensive Player of the Year award last season. Klein currently has 283 career tackles and tied the NCAA record for most interceptions returned for a touchdown by a linebacker this season with four.

The formula for player development concocted by Burnham has become a blueprint with the development of players like Knott and Klein, but has been applied to everyone he coaches.

"He creates a consistency and love and passion for the game that kind of spills over onto everybody else," Knott said. "When he does that, you come in to work."

"He's a guy that you're trying to impress every single day - doesn't matter if you're a true freshman, a fifth-year senior - you want to impress him or else he's going to make sure you know about it and that you weren't impressive."

The development of Knott and Klein was easy to facilitate, Burnham said, because they were coachable and took the initiative to learn every day since they arrived on campus.

One player who struggled at the beginning was George. However, Burnham said George's development started with making him coachable and thus making him a run-stopping force.

A guy like Jeremiah had to realize that we're here to help him," Burnham said. "That's when you start taking coaching is when you realize when we correct a kid, we're giving constructive criticism and not getting onto him, not downgrading him. You have to win that confidence that, 'Hey, if you listen to me long enough and keep working, things will work out.'"

George's proverbial light bulb turned on this past spring, spurring him to make 23 tackles in five games played — three as a starter — this season.

While 48 years of coaching might seem like enough to many, Burnham said he does not foresee himself calling it quits any time soon. "I have no idea," Burnham said when asked how many years he thinks he has left. "As long as the good lord blesses me and keeps me healthy and Paul doesn't fire me, I might be around for a while."

"Who knows."
Tailgating recipes

Spice up your shindig with these hot flavors

Black Bean Dip

Ingredients
- Two 15-ounce cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup onion
- 1/4 cup cheddar or Colby jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil and coat the pan.
- Add onion; saute for around 5 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Add chili powder and cumin; saute for another minute.
- Place onion mixture, lime juice, oregano, chili powder and black beans in a food processor; process until smooth. You can also opt for a chunkier dip by not using a food processor.
- Spoon mixture into a serving bowl and top with cheese.

To market

Too-Hot-To-Handle Snack Mix

Ingredients:
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- In a large bowl, combine the cereals, pretzels and nuts. Pour into an ungreased 15x10x1 inch baking pan. Combine the remaining ingredients; pour over cereal mixture and stir to coat.
- Bake at 250 degrees Fahrenheit for 40 to 60 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes.

Bacon-Wrapped Jalapeño Peppers

Ingredients
- 1/2 cup crushed walnuts
- Slice jalapenos in half, remove seeds but leave stems. Mix cream cheese and walnuts thoroughly then fill the peppers.
- Wrap bacon around the pepper using toothpicks to secure the ends. Place on hot grill for five minutes on each side or until bacon is fully cooked.