Interview with Coach Billy Mitchell
Assistant Head Coach of Wake Forest University’s football team
by Hannah Berkowitz

HB: If you want to, tell me about your job and what you do?

BM: Ok. Well, I’m the associate head football coach, and my duties [include] also coach[ing] the running backs and all the specialists – kickers, snappers, and holders –

HB: Oh, wow, ok.

BM: All the special teams – that’s the coaching duties. And then also as associate head coach, I have to do all the administrative things when the head coach is not here. That’s [to do], you know, with the supervision of the other coaches, and also doing things with paperwork and all that; I am also the liaison to the compliance office, so we have to make sure that we’re in compliance with all the NCAA rules.

HB: Ok, what’s – oh, so that just makes sure you’re following… Ok.

BM: Yeah, we have to make sure we’re not in violation. I’m their liaison to the compliance office from the football program.

HB: Ok, awesome. And how did you get into this role you have now?

BM: As the liaison or the coaching?

HB: Everything.

BM: Well, I’ve been with Coach for about twenty-six years now, so we’ve been together a lot. And so when I left – I’m retired military –

HB: Oh, wow!

BM: I spent twenty years in the Air Force, so when we were at the Air Force Academy, he and I were on the same staff there. And so when he left and he took a head job, I retired from the Air Force and was hired as a civilian, and I went with him to Ohio University as his assistant head coach. And then I came up here when we left there, and after I got here we changed the title to associate head coach. So I’ve just been doing those duties with him for a long time.

HB: Awesome – were you coaching with the Air Force?

BM: Yes. I was coaching at [with] the Air Force as a duty assignment, but as a profession in the Air Force, I was in pilot training and was a navigator.

HB: Wow, did you ever see combat?
BM: I got in, not combat per se; I got in at the end of the Vietnam War, where we had to take the fighters out of Vietnam at the end to get them back over [here]. Because I was flying the air refueling tanker.

HB: Ok.

BM: And so we had to refuel the fighters to get them out with the guys to bring them back home.

HB: So you were there during the pullout missions; when was that, the seventies?

BM: Yeah, it was ’73.

HB: Ok. So you’ve had a pretty wide span for your career.


HB: Ok. From official military duties?

BM: From military duties, yeah. And I said, one of the special duty assignments I had was while I was in was at the Air Force Academy coaching. I was there initially – I went there for four years as running backs coach, and then I had to leave for three years to go get some more flying time to stay current. And then I came back--after I got my upgrade--I came back and was there until I retired.

HB: So you can fly planes! That’s pretty cool.

BM: Yeah, it was interesting.

HB: I’m sure. Has that in any way informed the way you do your job now? Does it –?

BM: Well, the military – the discipline part of the military has something to do with my coaching.

HB: I’m sure!

BM: And out there, because of the discipline, as a military thing, there are just certain things that are non-tolerable[sic], and the education background out there is pretty much similar to here. And so it’s a good fit, because we make the kids accountable for themselves, for their whole actions. Those things, [those] philosophies, we’ve brought with us from there.

HB: Yeah, absolutely. So along the lines of your background, was this kind of position where you saw yourself when you were growing up? Did you want to get into football coaching?

BM: Well, actually, when I was growing up, my dream was to fly.
HB: Ok, well you got that covered then!

BM: Yeah, I got that, and then I played football and I loved it.

HB: Did you play with the Air Force?

BM: I played at East Carolina University.

HB: Oh, ok fantastic.

BM: Yeah, in North Carolina. I’m back home now. But my ambition, what I wanted to do as a career when I was growing up, was fly, because I used to see the news at night, they’re be flying – touch your hand out and touch the face of God, that kind of thing. I got excited about flying, so that was one of my aspirations. And then I found out I could do it in the Air Force…fly and coach, so that was the two.

HB: Best of both worlds – I’m actually really scared of flying, so I really respect you for doing that!

BM: You’re afraid of flying?

HB: I’m really scared of planes – they don’t totally work for me. So what brought you to Wake, then, was [it the fact that] you had a relationship with the coach at the Air Force Academy and you guys came together from Ohio?

BM: Yeah, we went from Air Force to Ohio, and we were at Ohio for six years, and then we left Ohio and came here. We’ve been here – this is our eleventh year here.

HB: And what seems – or if anything, what seems different to you about working at Wake versus at other places where you’ve worked?

BM: Well, Wake and Air Force are similar in the way that they’re small schools. It’s more of a student body. Air Force had a little less – about four thousand students, and the difference there is the military part. And then Ohio was a bigger school, but academics are important, like all schools, and so the similarity between Air Force and here is more the students – it’s pretty much the same. But in football and athletics, it’s pretty comparable – a little higher here than at Ohio.

HB: Ok. Where did you work in Ohio?

BM: Ohio University.

HB: Oh, so that’s a huge school then, right?

BM: Yes, about twenty five, twenty six thousand students.
HB: Ok, so much bigger than here. And do you feel sort of a part of the community here at Wake? Do you feel connected with different groups – whether students, faculty, staff?

BM: Yeah, that was one of the things that – well first of all, the people as a whole, when you work, the people that you’re dealing with. I thought that here, because of the small student body and all the support, the difference I find here versus some of the larger places is the connection between the teams. Everybody supports everybody else. Our guys will go watch the volleyball games, the volleyball team will come watch football, we’ll all go watch basketball. And there’s a sharing of that in athletics. And then I’ve found that everybody here has a stake in the success of the students. The professors that I’ve met all have an interest in the students doing what they should do, and making them accountable. That’s what we try to do, and it’s a good working relationship. And also, the administration and the athletic department, that’s very important. All the administration, especially the top of the leadership in the athletic department is the best I’ve seen since I’ve been in this.

HB: Oh, great, ok.

BM: Yeah, and that comes from the top-down. You start with the president of the university down to the departments, and the department here is great, and my immediate boss – who is Coach Grobe – is great, so all of it works out that way.

HB: So you find that you have a pretty big support network with the administration?

BM: Oh, yeah. And we talk about things not on top – everybody on the periphery, the people around you, people other than the coaches. There’s a lot more to running a football team than the coaches. I’m talking about everybody from the field maintenance to equipment, everything that has to do with running the program. All the people, I think, are really supportive, and everybody has an interest in seeing the success of the program.

HB: Yeah. Tell me more about that, actually – sort of what goes into making the program work.

BM: Ok, well you’ve got your coaching staff – they’re actually hands-on with the kids, coaching, putting in the system for football. But then you also have the facilities people, you have the grounds people, you have your equipment people, you have administration as far as football operations, you have to plan the trips, hotel arrangements, and all those sorts of things. And then you have your academic support system, which is directly involved with the students, making sure that they’re in the study halls, making sure they’re doing what they need to do to make that work. So there’s a whole organization of things that have got to work hand-in-hand to put out the product. We try to put out a successful football program with a student that’s very successful in the classroom, and with community involvement as well. So all that has to jive and work together, and I think in the situation here, it depends on the people in those other positions to make it work. I find here at Wake that it’s a very good relationship in that respect.

HB: So everyone sort of works together to get the best –

BM: Yeah, yeah.
HB: Awesome. So when you’re off recruiting, what does that entail? Is that – when you’re looking at students, are you looking at them from a strictly athletic perspective, are you doing athletics and academics?

BM: Well, we have a big – first of all, when we go out recruiting, when we go out looking at someone – first of all, we’ve got to make sure that they meet the academic requirements to get into school, otherwise we’re wasting our time.

HB: Right, of course.

BM: Once we see that they meet the academic requirement to get into school, then we also have a character aspect of it, too. There are a lot of players out there who can play, but we don’t touch them because of character issues. So character is a big thing, where they’ve got to fit in with what we have here. And character is really big because they’ve got to come here and do the things they need to do, and [have] integrity. So that’s big – it doesn’t do us any good or the young man any good if they’re going to come here and do something that’s going to make them have to leave. And plus, you don’t want a situation where it’s going to bring embarrassment to your team or to your school, so we put a high interest in character.

HB: And so how do you gauge that, then? Is there sort of an interview process?

BM: Yeah, well when we go out and recruit, first of all, I can say that we know as far as talking to the counselor at the high school about the young man’s academic performance. And also to everybody around, teachers and everybody, about the character of young man – we also visit with the families in a home visit situation. And visit with the families – mom and dad, sisters and brothers, and so we get a feel for the young men before they come here; what kind of situation they’re in, how they’re going to fit in, and that kind of thing. And another thing, too – when you recruit someone, you not only talk to the people in their school, but their opponents. When I go talk about a young man, and I go to another school, and they’re talking to me about the guy at the other school, that makes you feel good.

HB: Yeah, that’s a good sign for sure. And so what would you value, then, in a potential recruit (in terms of character)?

BM: Well, it’s got to be someone that’s trustworthy, to begin with, and what he does off the field is just as important as on the field. Not when we’re watching him, but when we’re not watching him. You’ve got to be able to do things – that’s how I define integrity. It’s not doing things when people are watching you, but what you do when nobody is there. And so we look at character in that respect, and the fact that it’s going to be someone who is honest, who does what they’re supposed to do, and is going to be accountable for what they do. And as long as they’re that way, we can work with them. And you’ve got different aspects: you’ve got varying family backgrounds, but when you mold all that – you bring people in, people from different backgrounds who have different value systems, you’ve got to look at that and mold that to know. And in my personal experience, I can relate to that too, because I’ve been around in enough situations militarily, and those situations that have helped me evaluate that. Because
everybody’s not going to be from the same value system, but honesty is honesty in any value system.

**HB:** Right, and so that can work into the system regardless of where you’re from. And so I guess along those lines, they’re all of the same age, and there are always going to be issues at this age – and so what do you do when there is sort of an off-the-field issue with a player? How do you handle that?

**BM:** Well, it depends on what it is. Same thing with your kids – if it’s an off-the-field issue, first of all you want to bring the individual in and talk to him and find out what’s going on. And of course there are going to be other reports of that, too, so you want to get all the facts and they you want to deal with it. But if it’s something that – if it’s a controversial thing where the facts aren’t there, you want to find out what happened. If all the facts are there, you want to bring the individual in and find out about the whys. What happened, and why did this happen. But if it’s an investigative situation where you don’t know, but you’re trying to find out, you bring in what you need to do that, too. But, some of that your honor system does when you’re doing an investigation at the school. And we bring them in and talk to them. Most of the time we tell our kids, I don’t want someone else to tell me, if you get into something, I want you to come and tell me. I don’t want to hear it from someone else, and that’s what we call being accountable.

**HB:** So you said earlier that you went to East Carolina. How does it feel to sort of come back and be in North Carolina? Is this where you saw yourself?

**BM:** No, not really. It was fortunate to have a situation come up where I could come back, because of having been in the military when I left. Actually after I got my military training and all that, my first assignment was back in North Carolina also, over at Seymour Johnson in Goldsboro, at the Air Force base over there. But then we left and went to Colorado and Alaska, so we’ve been around. And then Ohio was back on the east coast, pretty much back in this area – coming back east from Colorado – but still, that’s five or six hours from home. And then the opportunity to come back to North Carolina worked out perfectly. I’ve always known that I’d like to get back in this state, but I didn’t have a timetable on that, it just worked out that way.

**HB:** Yeah, that’s really nice. And are you married, do you have family?

**BM:** Yes, I’m married. As a matter of fact, my wife works at the university also.

**HB:** Oh, wow, what does she do?

**BM:** She’s a comp [computer] analyst at Human Resources. We have three kids – our oldest son--he’s in Dallas. My daughter, she’s in Greensboro, and our younger son is in Cleveland. And they all went to Ohio University when we worked there.

**HB:** Ok. So in terms of – I guess the point of this interview is really to find out about work and how it forms who you are. And so what would you say about how your job – whether this job or your military job, (the jobs you’ve had in the past) – how [do] they factor into how you view yourself and your identity? Is that too broad?
BM: Well, no, it’s a good question. The thing is that [with] any job you want to look at the value of a job and how you evaluate it. In the last seventeen years, I’ve been dealing basically directly pretty much with the students at an educational institution. And so the value you get out of that is: what did I do to enhance someone else along the way in what they’re trying to get accomplished? And I guess the rewarding thing to tell all about that is when you have people that you had direct contact with coming back years later, saying “Hey, thank you for doing what you did to keep me on the right [path], because you’re responsible for where I am now,” that kind of thing. We have a lot of kids coming back [whom] we dealt with around twenty years ago or so; they are now coming back with their families, to meet us to say, “Hey, you had a part to do with my success.” So that makes you feel good, and in doing that, you have an opportunity to interact with a lot of people. It’s not anything different than with your own kids pretty much, in this situation where you have a part in someone else’s development along the way. And it’s not on the same level as when your kids are young, but on a collegiate level. And they’re still growing and trying to find their way, and you’ve got something to do with that influence of helping somebody get through. That’s very important, and that’s the rewarding part of it.

HB: Yeah, absolutely. So going along with that, what are the aspects of your job that you value the most – that are the most important to you?

BM: Integrity. I think integrity and being trustworthy on the job are the two things that I think – without those two things, I couldn’t make it. I’m that way as an individual, and that’s why I find it so easy to work here, with the family atmosphere we create with our team. And the integrity – when I say integrity, I’m talking about doing things the way they should be done, and being honest about it and all those things. And being trustworthy, knowing that you can trust the people that you’re working with in a professional standpoint. Knowing that the people – when somebody says they’re going to do something, knowing they’re going to do what they have to, to get it done. And that part of it—I value that more than (I think) anything, because I could not work in a situation where there was a lack of integrity, or a lack of trustworthiness within the organization. That’s been my experience throughout my career – both careers, militarily and the coaching career – is being around people you can trust and people that have some integrity about what they’re doing.

HB: And you think that Wake Forest has a good structure for that?

BM: Oh, I definitely do. I think more so than a lot of places, because it’s out there where you can see it. And I think at Wake, the people – like I said, it starts at the top, if the top is that way, it filters down. And when you’ve got the people at the top with integrity and who are trustworthy and that kind of thing, then I think it just filters down to everybody in the organization. Likewise, when Coach hires a new coach, he does it like he does when he hires his players. [When] he hires a coach, he [the newly hired coach] has to fit in with the system, just like our players have to. And all coaches won’t fit in with us, and all students wouldn’t fit in at Wake, so you have to make those decisions based on your philosophy and what you’re trying to get accomplished.
HB: And are there specific values or characteristics within the Wake Forest community that you’ve noticed that are different from your--from the universities you’ve worked at in the past? Or is it a universal thing, you think?

BM: Well, it’s somewhat universal, but you find certain things that are unique to certain places. For an example, at Ohio University, a bigger student body, things were there but the coaching was a little different there than here based on just the student body. But you have some likenesses and you have some differences, but [even with] all those things you have to incorporate the trustworthiness and the integrity part of it, but you can – the situation at Wake, the family kind of atmosphere is there. And I think that comes a lot, too, from being a smaller type of school. I think everybody knows everybody more than at Ohio University. At Ohio University, there were a lot of people that I didn’t get to know; here, I know a lot of people, and people in different departments, and the heads and things like that, you get to know. And you know them personally, not a name, but you know them and meet them, and you have a personal relationship with a lot of people, and I think that’s very important, not only in the administrative part, but also at the student level.

HB: Yeah, absolutely. Are there any challenges you’ve had to face on your way to getting to where you are now, and how did you overcome them?

BM: Oh, yeah. I think you have challenges in everything you go through. I’ve had challenges, and there are still challenges. You’re going to always run into those, and being in a situation, you have, for example, family challenges, personal challenges, and all kinds [of others]. You have a situation at the Air Force Academy where the challenge is the military, and the demands on your life as far as those things. And then you’ve got a situation where there were certain things that you could not discuss even with your family, and those are challenges through that. And like anyone, you’d like to be home with your kids as they’re growing up. But there are some demands on you where you’re not going to be as available as you’d like to [be]. As I look back on it, there are some times when my kids were growing up real small, I would have loved to have been a lot more available, but I was not able to be. Same thing about coaching – a lot of people don’t realize it, but coaches are gone a lot. But it’s rewarding at the end. And I’ve had challenges…even ethnic makeup is a challenge; I’ve had challenges in that respect. You go into a situation sometimes where that is a challenge and you cannot go along with the things you have to do sometimes because of that. And you have to face those, too, but it’s a reality. And sometimes the way you do that is you just confront things. And you want to know the whys, why is this and why is that, and you find out. And then, you have to overcome something in every job you have. Overcoming those things, those challenges, again goes back to the people you’re dealing with. If you’ve got good people you’re dealing with, it’s easier to overcome those challenges.

HB: Right. Do you find that the challenges you face in your job now are easier to overcome than in the military? Or is it pretty much the same, just different challenges?

BM: Well, I think the challenges are still the same in some areas, but experience helps you deal with challenges. If it’s the third or fourth or fifth time that I’ve had this problem, I know a little bit more and know how to deal with it than I did the first time it came up. So life experience
helps you out in that respect with that, and some of the things are recurring, so you can anticipate certain things sometimes, simply because of past experience. You know how to deal with them a little more effectively. And then now, too, I think as things go along, the job has in place more programs and more ways to help –

HB: To help you out with that, right.

BM: To resolve that, yes.

HB: So what – if it’s too personal, please you can keep it to yourself, but what would be an example of sort of an ongoing challenge that you’ve had, or a challenge that has come up on multiple occasions?

BM: Well, I just – some things are personal…I’ll just relate some things to you. When I was at Ohio, [there was] a situation at school, we had to go out at school sometimes with the kids because of some ethnic slurs and stuff with the kids. That’s something we had to deal with.

HB: Right, that’s a serious problem.

BM: Right, we had to go out there and we had to deal with that. And that becomes a thing now – those things happen, but dealing with them, I think for me, it was [more of] a challenge for us than it was for some other people. But you have to deal with those things. Some other things you have to deal with, things like performances, reports, things like that. How things work in general–those things are challenges of firmness and those kinds of things. And as long as those things are in place, that’s all you ask for. As long as the playing field is even and level, then you accept the challenge. But it’s when it’s not that you have a problem. And I think that as you go through this, you learn to deal with those things a little more effectively than when it first hit you.

HB: Yeah. And going in a slightly different direction, to start off this class at the beginning of the semester, we talked about what we thought the American Dream was, whether it still exists, and if it does, if it has changed. What do the words “American Dream” mean to you?

BM: The American Dream just means, to me, to be a part of something – to be successful, not monetarily, but be successful satisfactorily. It’s when you can have a situation where you can grow with the pursuit of happiness type thing, where you can have a family and be content and be happy with it. And where you can live without fear of anything that’s going to come from the outside – just having that feeling of freedom and that kind of thing. And being in a situation where you feel that you’re a part of something that’s bigger than you are. I felt that when I was part of the military, that the work, what I was doing, was not only for me but for everything that surrounded [me]. I’m able to function in a society that I can contribute to, and also [I can] get something back from it.

HB: You said you felt that way in the military – do you still feel that you’ve attained that?
BM: Yes, yes, because what I was doing in the military was, I think, protecting the things that I just talked about: to protect that way of life, to be able to fulfill those things. Sometimes we take a lot for granted in this situation, but when – in my times at the war and being in other places—we take a lot of things for granted here, but there are some tough things out there. I think the American Dream that we have is being able to live and enjoy those things that we have, what we’re about – and not only for a few [people], but for everybody.

HB: Do you think that it’s a uniquely American idea? Or do you think it’s more universal, but we’ve created it as an American ideal?

BM: Well I think America certainly does embrace that, and I think the ideal is spreading. I think we are, you might say, the icon of that. But I think it’s definitely one – of course, as far as bias goes, I’m very biased in that respect, because that’s the way I feel. But I think probably the image or the example of it is huge, and I think that other people aspire to obtain this. So I feel that we are the example of that, and I hope that it would spread, and I hope that everyone would experience the things, as far as the freedom to do things that we have here.

HB: Yeah, absolutely. So, where do you see yourself in five to ten years?

BM: Five to ten years…I hope in five to ten years, I’ll still be able to have my health and do the things I do now. I enjoy so much – I hope that I’ll be able to retire from a situation where I can retire on my terms, and not be forced to. And in four to five years, I hope to be health-wise as healthy as I am now, and career-wise to be a little more successful than we were this past year, but to get back to some of the things that we’re capable of doing.

HB: So you would definitely want to stay in coaching?

BM: Yeah, as far as I’m concerned, the time in my career – this is a second career, there’s not going to be a third. Coaching will be it; other than the things I want do that’s not relying on something for a way of living, which is something I would do just on the side, that type of thing. So, yes, coaching would be – I’d like to retire from coaching as a coach.

HB: And so you said you’d like to have something on the side, more coaching opportunities on the side?

BM: No, no, I mean I may do some other things, not because it’s a career, but because I might have aspired to do [them] but never had the opportunity to do because of coaching. I might go back and do things I love – for an example, I love landscaping. I do it as a hobby at home, but I wouldn’t do it as a business because of time and my age and all, but when I retire, I’ll be doing some of that personally on my own. I love that kind of stuff. I love animals, [especially] dogs. If I could do it all over again, I’d be a vet. I’d do dogs and all that – I love dogs, I’ve always had dogs.

HB: Do you have dogs now?
BM: Oh, yeah. Two German Shepherds; I’ve always had one since – I can’t remember not having one. Those are things that you’d like to do, but those aren’t career things. But as far as careers, I’d like to – when I finish my career, I’d like for it to be the career I’m in now, and I wouldn’t want to be doing another career, but I’d be doing things like those kind of things just because I like to do them.

HB: And is Wake Forest a place where you could see yourself finishing out your career?

BM: Well, that depends – as a preface, I wouldn’t mind doing that, but I don’t have the –

HB: Right, circumstances change.

BM: Yeah, but I would be like to be able to finish out my career here, definitely. I think we’ve got the best of a lot of things out here. Definitely the support system, and I think Wake Forest is unique in a lot of ways. And as far as recruiting, the school sells itself as far as the academics – we have sometimes when it’s a balance with athletics, because the pool is shrunk[sic] a lot. When we go out, we don’t just look at the athlete – we look at the other part of it, too. Student-athlete is what it means: it’s a student athlete, and student comes first. You have to look at that aspect, and I think the school itself and the uniqueness of the school with small class sizes and the ACC, I think it’s a good thing.

HB: You mentioned the idea of a student-athlete – do you think that [it’s] the academic component, to every student (including the athletes here), that that makes the team a little bit more special than perhaps at a bigger university? Is it the fact that everybody here really is academically inclined?

BM: Well, yeah, I think they have the common purpose of academics. I think here, because of the situation, the thing I find here that I don’t find at a lot of other situations, is that the team really likes each other. Our kids – for an example, I’ve been some other places where the team has its own little groups within the team, and I find here that the team--they like to be together. They do things together. I recall taking my daughter out on her birthday to dinner, and one of the tables where we were at, we had several of the football players over there having dinner together. And I just say that they like to mingle together, because they have common things that they’re going through. The situation out here where you’ve got to study with study halls and all that, everybody has got to have quality as far as time management. And I think that that’s unique in the fact that we probably spend less time than any Division I team as far as time on the field, because we have to go and get those classroom things.

HB: Right, people have so many academic commitments.

BM: Right, you have to give them the opportunity to do that, and I think that the system, with the academic support system that we have here, allows for us to do so. And I think our kids realize that with the situation, they’ve got to get that done, and so they manage their time a little better.
**HB:** Yeah, how do you think that they are able to balance the academic requirements and this huge athletic commitment?

**BM:** It’s tough, but they know that without the academics, they won’t have the athletic part, so they’ve got to get it done. You’ve got to find a way, and it’s going to cut down on the social life, but that’ll come later on. You’ve got a bunch of time to do that, and I’ve found that even as a player, the more time you have, the more time you waste. Having less time – when I had less time to do things, it seemed like the management of time was a lot better. For example, in football season, you have a situation sometime where things are so condensed that when you don’t have football, it seems like you waste time more. So you have to be really good as far as scheduling is concerned. And we get a lot of help with that from academic support about daily planners and things about how you budget your time, and then you’ve got courses about time management and I think that helps a lot. But it forces you to be disciplined, and I think discipline is a big part of being successful in a situation where you’ve got a high demand on you from both sides.

**HB:** And so speaking of being busy and stuff, do you find that you’re busier during football season or during the off-season when you’re doing recruiting and all that?

**BM:** Well, it’s a different kind of busy. During the season, it’s a change every week because you have to prepare for another team. During the recruiting season, it’s still busy, but it’s a different kind of busy, because you’re out trying to get the recruits and that kind of thing. It’s a year round thing, but it’s just where your emphases are at that given time. During the season, it’s a seven-day week, and during the off-season we get to come home on the weekend, but we entertain recruits when we get back. During the season, it’s a seven-day week for the coaches, and the players on the field, they have a day off. For us, it’s a seven-day week, and we’re not talking eight to five. We don’t record the numbers, but we’re talking long hours. And you put in what you get out of it, and we have to – here’s the thing, when you spend as less time on the field as we do, you have to have practice organized where you can get more in a shorter period of time than most people do in a long period of time. But that puts a lot of emphasis on us to have it organized, so that’s what we get paid for. We’re in here getting the practice set up, getting things done so that when we go out there, we’re efficient in what we’re doing and not wasting time.

**HB:** What – so what are the hours that you would say you do work during the season?

**BM:** A week?

**HB:** Yeah, or does it totally depend?

**BM:** It depends, but it’s pretty constant, too. I would say – it’s the same thing in the military, you’re not on the clock in the military, you go whenever duty calls you. I would say during the season if you had to put a weekly hour on it, it would have to be close to – what? – seventy hours a week, probably.

**HB:** Wow…
BM: More than that. A forty-hour week is a normal work week, right?

HB: Yeah.

BM: Yeah, so it’s another thirty on that.

HB: Wow, so that’s pretty busy.

BM: Yeah, and then you take some of that stuff home, too; it’s not all over when you leave. But that’s the reward of it, too. Now there are some tiring times, too, during the recruiting season when you’re still working, but it’s quite – because so much of it is travel, it’s not the grind as far as seventy hours, because you’re not changing teams every week, trying to prepare for another team – you work in the week and you get here and all of a sudden that game is over and you’ve got to flip it and do the same thing for your new opponent. So it changes.

HB: And you do a lot of traveling during recruiting?

BM: During recruiting, yeah. During recruiting you do a lot of travel, and recruiting usually takes place right after – you get about a week in the spring to go do junior recruiting, which is not bad. That’s a little more low-key, because at that point, you’re not talking to the kids, you’re only talking to the schools – to counselors and coaches and all that, and getting the academic and athletic evaluation. And then during the fall, September and early December – in December when you go out, you can actually talk to the individual.

HB: Ok, so that’s when you talk to the family and all that?

BM: Yeah, during the contact period – what we call the contact period. You have a contact period, a dead period, and a quiet period. And all those means something to us as far as what we can do. During the contact period, you can actually go out and evaluate and talk to the families and the players. During the quiet period, they can come on campus, but we can’t go out. And then during the dead period, we can’t go out, and they can’t come in. That’s how it works.

HB: Ok. And so what part – do you find football season itself or the other parts of the year most rewarding in terms of your job?

BM: Well, football season is rewarding, because you get immediate results on what you’re trying to do. Football season, you get a week-to-week – what we call a week-to-week progress report on what all that other stuff’s doing, because when we play a game on Saturday, it’s a direct result, a test of what you’ve been doing all the rest of the time. So that’s the report period, that’s the grading period. That’s what I find to be the most the most satisfying, because you’re actually doing it. When you get into all of those others, you do those things, but you can’t wait until the season starts again to prove what you’ve done.

HB: And so, what is – if you had to say one thing--what would be your favorite thing about your job?
**BM:** The interaction with the kids. The coaching, the teaching part of that. Coaching is like teaching – you come into the classroom, you do things, and then you go out and perform. And so I’d have to say the interaction between coaching and the students, in this case the players on the field, that’s the fun part of it. The other parts are fun, too, but if you say I had to cut out everything else, that’s the only thing I could do, that’s what I would do.

**HB:** And what in your life do you think most prepared you for that – for the interaction with the kids and for helping them so much?

**BM:** Well, having played and gone through that experience, and I taught a little bit, and rearing my own kids. All those experiences help you in that situation because it’s just like having a hundred and five kids and everybody – it’s just a bigger family, is how I see it. And then of course you have your position groups, and in my situation I have the running backs and the specialists, and in my group there are probably about anywhere from twelve to fifteen people, so that just becomes my group that I’m working with. And every coach has that group that he’s working with, and I think that, to me personally--that’s the reward. If I had to pick one, that’d be it, because all the other stuff wouldn’t happen if you weren’t successful with that.