



there's been a football team here. The Tennessee fan base expects to win. Under that kind of pressure, what are the challenges of turning a program around?

**BJ:** There are a number of challenges, but I think every challenge presents a great opportunity. Let's remember, this is one of the most storied football programs in all of college football. Since 1927, Tennessee is still the all-time winningest college football program in the country. We have the best fans in the country. You want to be somewhere where there are high expectations for your football program.

I think it helps that this is third time I've taken over a program, and it's the third time my staff has done this. We've been there. We may have taken over some programs that have won before, but nobody knows the infrastructure that was in place when we took over at those other two places.

I also think losing is a disease. There are some ills here, but we're on the mend. Look at the commitment from our administration, at our passionate fan base, at our facilities, our

academic reputation, our campus life. The University of Tennessee football team is a national brand.

**CV:** Who are your coaching heroes?

**BJ:** I don't know about heroes—but I would say I have a lot of mentors. I've been blessed and fortunate to not only have worked for some very good head football coaches, but also with a lot of really good assistants. I think you try to take bits and pieces from every individual that you work for or work with—and then you mold your own philosophy.

My career started in the National Football League. [Former New York Giants, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Alabama Crimson Tide head football coach] Ray Perkins was a mentor. I worked with former Tampa Bay Buccaneers defensive coordinator and Rutgers head coach Doug Grayber. Mike DeBord had a big influence on me—he was the head coach at Central Michigan, a longtime assistant at the University of Michigan, and then in the NFL with the Seattle Seahawks and the Chicago Bears. [Current University of Arizona] Coach Rich Rodriguez taught me a lot. [Current Notre Dame] Coach Brian Kelly taught me a lot.

Coaching is a small profession—and I have many close friends with whom I share ideas. Not just football coaches—Erik Spoelstra, the head coach of the Miami Heat, is a very good friend of mine now.

**CV:** You are known as a 21st-century coach—both with your offensive schemes and your embrace of social media. As a coach, how important is it to embrace innovation?

**BJ:** I think what makes successful football coaches, businessmen, and CEOs is the ability to adapt and

adjust to sudden change. Social media is part of the world today, so all of our coaches use it. You have to find different ways to get your message across. I'm a traditionalist by heart, but I also understand that you have to be flexible and you have to try to stay one step ahead of your competition.

I'm always trying to improve our football program. I challenge our coaches. I believe in constant and never-ending improvement. I meet with my coaches every year and I ask them to self-assess. How are they better today than they were last year? I think you have to constantly strive for growth. Most people in society are satisfied with being average. We are not going to be average.

**CV:** What are your thoughts about the Volunteers' rivalries with Alabama and Florida?

**BJ:** I understand the rivalries. I know rivalries are important. Every game is important, but we need to win a few of the rivalry games.

**CV:** When Butch Jones has coached his last football game, how do you want to be remembered?

**BJ:** I want to make a difference in the lives of the individuals we have come in contact with through our football program. We need to remember that college football is not just entertainment. It is part of the educational fabric of our institutions. We are dealing with young men who are going to be future fathers, futures husbands, and future leaders—we can never lose sight of that. If we stay focused, wins will come. Having a relationship with our players doesn't last three or four or five years. The relationship last a lifetime. That's what coaching is all about. ✕