



It was the end of two-a-days and the dawn of what would become the historic football season of 2000. As Reese Travis recalls, quarterback Josh Heupel gathered the team and simply laid out how it was going to be in the fall. That speech, Travis said, is something he will never forget.

“Josh defined the difference between wanting to be a champion and having the desire to be a champion,” said Travis. “I get goose bumps as I think about it. Everyone in that room took that speech to heart and walked out of there knowing he was right. Each of us thought, ‘I don’t just want to win games, I have the desire to win games — I have the desire to be a champion,’ and we executed that as a team.”

We all know what happened after that.

Travis, a product of Carl Albert High School in Midwest City, played two years at Northeastern A&M College in Miami, Okla., before transferring to the University of Oklahoma. He walked on at OU as an offensive lineman in January 1998 and redshirted his first season. Then came the Stoops era, and Travis played his final two years of eligibility under the new regime.

From the outside, that improbable championship season seemed to come out of nowhere. But contrary to that notion, Travis said the team was prepped to expect the best.

“Coach Stoops and the entire staff, the upperclassmen, as well as the young guys who had just come in — we were all on the same page from the mental and the emotional aspect,” said Travis. “He did a good job of laying out our goals early, which were first to win the three pre-conference games, then our next goal was to win our division, then the Big 12 championship, then go play for the national championship.”

“We were coached on handling the success and continuing to play week-to-week by focusing on each opponent. We enjoyed each victory but then got focused on the next competitor. You have to give the coaching staff a lot of credit, managing a bunch of 18 to 22-year-old young men and their emotions.”

When the team gathered last fall to celebrate the 10th anniversary of that 2000 championship season, Travis said it was satisfying to hear that everything that the teams of today and the fans enjoy — from the expanded stadium to the renovated locker rooms — started with that 2000 squad.

After graduating in May 2001, Travis was able to parlay a connection from strength and conditioning coach Jerry Schmidt into an entry-level job with DePuy Orthopedics, Johnson & Johnson’s orthopedic implant company. Based in Tulsa, he started out by helping other sales representatives and working in the service side of the business.

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66 - REESE TRAVIS

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"This was a great opportunity for me," he said. "During my time at OU, I was never a superstar and I wasn't a starter, but I was blessed with the ability to play and lettered my senior year. As part of a national championship team, I took everything I learned from the different coaches and working with players who were All-Americans. I worked out with them every day, and it was that work ethic, the determination and desire to be successful where a lot of my success came from."

"Going into the real world with that confidence, knowing that I can work harder than anyone out there and I can achieve success no matter what is in front of me, it all came from my time with OU and the football team."

Travis said All-American Torrance Marshall, for example, was a vocal leader for the team no matter how hard the workouts got.

"Torrance was not in the best shape of everyone, but he was cheering you on and pumping you up," said Travis. "Being around guys like that, or like Cory Heinecke, a walk-on who became a starter and earned a scholarship — working with people like that, you can't but help to embrace that kind of work ethic, to want and have the desire for excellence. We were surrounded with people like that."

During his five-plus years doing medical sales with Johnson & Johnson, Travis said he took everything he had learned from the football field and applied it to business. He outworked the competition and, although he did not have a medical background, worked his way through the ranks and received several awards in the process.

In 2007, he moved back to Oklahoma City and continued working in sales until the opportunity came up to become a franchisee in a frozen yogurt business.

"In the summer of 2009, this concept for Orange Leaf came to Edmond and we liked it, so we did our research," he said. "We talked about creating our own concept from scratch or working with other companies in the industry, and we came back to Orange Leaf. At the end of the day, we felt that they had the best-tasting yogurt in the industry."

After he became a franchisee, Travis said he could see the frozen yogurt industry evolving and committed to opening additional stores. Before long, he and his partners approached the owners about buying the entire company. The deal closed less than a year ago, and at that time, Orange Leaf had 15 stores, three of which were owned by

Travis and his partners.

In the process, headquarters moved from San Francisco to Oklahoma City, and Travis became CEO. Today, there are 60 stores across the country with another 25 under construction and 75 at some stage of financial commitment.

"We knew we were buying a great product that was extremely competitive in the marketplace and felt we were getting into something that was going to be a growing industry," said Travis.

Orange Leaf offers self-serve frozen yogurt in a variety of flavors, as well as in no-sugar-added, dairy-free and certified kosher alternatives. Customers can fill their containers with as little or as much as they like and add their own toppings. Payment is by the ounce.

Despite the dire circumstances of the recent economy, Travis is nothing but upbeat about his company's future.


"I think this is as close to a recession-proof business as you can get," he said. "Families may not be taking vacations right now, but they will go out for treats. Our concept is innovative in that it is self-serve. The customer always gets what they want. And we offer the healthiest options in the business."

With plans to expand overseas and a goal of operating 300 stores within three years, it seems that inspiring speech by Heupel, now the Sooners co-offensive coordinator, still resonates with Travis. His ambitious plans for his

company seem to be the proof.

"I desire to be the best," he said. "I desire to build and run a good business. I don't just want to do these things, I have the desire to do these things. I learned that from Josh, and I will never forget the night he said them. I apply these to my life and in business."

Travis has been married to his wife, Laynie, since 2003. They have three children and are expecting their fourth in March. He has slimmed down from his playing weight of 280 and now weighs 220. He still works out on a regular basis with a group of friends, and although he no longer pushes big guys around, football is a part of his life and always will be.

"Football is how I was able to walk on and play at OU and be a part of something special." 

— Susan Grossman

The Travis family



Photo courtesy of the Travis family