

Joe Paterno News Conference

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Q. Joe, you're one win from tying Eddie Robinson. Can you share your thoughts about him and what he meant to college football?

COACH PATERNO: I knew Eddie. I wasn't intimate in the sense that we spent time together. He and I appeared before a Congressional delegation when they were in the process of trying to figure out what to do with television (college football package). I got to know Eddie a little bit. Then we talked a couple times.

He was a delightful person. He obviously did a fantastic job at Grambling. When you think about when he started, he was 24 years old when he was a head coach. He was really a great guy.

When there was no place for the black athlete, what he and Jake Gaither did with Grambling and Florida A&M was something special. I think Eddie was a great guy.

Q. My question is about Silas Redd. He's carried the ball a lot the last three games. Are you worried if you continue to use him like that about him wearing down?

COACH PATERNO: I think he carried the ball, what, 28, 29 times last week? Yeah, I've told the staff, in fact, I'm worried about six or seven guys. (Quinn) Barham played 90 something plays because we're using some of those guys on special teams.

When we talked Sunday, I said, "Make sure when you watch your kids. If they look tired, let me know and maybe we got to start taking a little time off practice."

So, I am concerned about that. But not only Silas. There are a couple of kids out there that are playing a lot of football.

Q. Are you surprised that Northwestern has had such a tough start to the season so far? What has stood out to you about them on film?

COACH PATERNO: Well, when you look at them, at times they look as good as anybody. They have such an explosive offensive football team. They've had some bad luck. But, you know, they look like we have looked on different occasions in the sense that they hurt themselves.

But they're a very explosive football team. When you look at them, you get the feeling, "Hey, these guys can beat anybody." I think I'm right on that. I think they really are a good-looking team.

I think Pat Fitzgerald has done a great job coaching them. They play with intensity, enthusiasm. As I said, they've got some people that can really explode. The quarterback (Dan Persa), who is a Pennsylvania kid, as most of you know, is one of the better quarterbacks in the country. First two games when they didn't do very well, he was hurt. But since then they've put a lot of points on the board.

Q. Your quarterback, Matt McGloin, said after the game that he took a few hits, including one to the head. Has he been practicing, and what is his condition?

COACH PATERNO: Well, he practiced yesterday. I guess he's okay. He got cracked in the head? Well, I didn't see it, to be frank with you. As I said, he was out there yesterday working, so I'm assuming he's okay.

Q. I wanted to ask you about tight end Andrew Szczerba. He's had a tough time off the field the past year. He struggled it seems lately a little bit on the field at times. Have you sat him down and talked to him at all about all this? How is he doing?

COACH PATERNO: I haven't talked to him yet. Bill Kenney, who works with the tight ends, has talked to him.

I think your observation is correct, however. Whether it's timing or what, he's had some penalties that have hurt us at the wrong time. Dropped a pass that hurt us, obviously, against Alabama.

He's got ability. The layoff (injured in 2010) may have something to do with it and maybe he's trying too hard to offset what is supposedly a problem for him of not having played for a while. I don't know.

But I should talk to him. I will, I'll talk to him. But right now I know Bill has talked to him. Bill feels like he's okay. We haven't done a lot, but we worked yesterday. He had a decent practice.

Q. Joe, I wanted to ask you about Curtis Drake. He suited up Saturday but did not play, didn't suit up the week before. What is his status injury-wise and academics-wise with you?

COACH PATERNO: Well, he had gotten in a little bit of a routine that I didn't think was the best thing for him, or was he doing what he should have done. I told him he better go to class, go to breakfast, et cetera, et cetera.

He's really come around, has done a great job on our scout team. He's still got a problem with that leg. We have to be careful how much we depend on him because he still is not 100 percent. If you watch him run, he's got a slight limp. He's fighting it. Hopefully he'll be okay soon because he's a very gifted athlete and could be a big help to us.

But, we really can't count on him yet. I think he's getting closer. I think right now it's a question of his physical condition, nothing else, because right now he seems to be in a groove.

Q. Joe, Rob Bolden has started all the games. But lately Matt McGloin has finished most of the games. Is that a coincidence or is there some reason for that?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I think there's a reason for it in the sense that we've had some luck with that kind of combination. We're still at the stage where we really have two quarterbacks. It's bad enough what they have to go through, both from the media and from the fans, as to one's better than the other. So we've tried to get into some kind of a situation where there's some continuity to it.

Since we have had Bolden starting with McGloin coming in, we've been able to do a decent job. I just have been reluctant to change that. You change it, you don't know what you're going to get. McGloin does a good job coming in off the bench. He's a guy that observes things.

I think the thing has worked out all right. Obviously, we've all talked several times. I'm sure they'd like me to pick one or the other. I think right now I couldn't do that. So we're going to stay pretty much the same way.

Q. Coach, Drew Astorino seems like he's been getting better and better every week. How important has he been to the defense? What has helped him pick up his play this week?

COACH PATERNO: Well, Astorino is a good football player. He played well last year. You talk about recruiting and all that stuff. I don't know whether he had anybody, Pitt or anybody else around, that really wanted him. I think he was headed for a Mid-American (MAC) school. I think we were looking at somebody on the other team.

I watched this kid (Astorino). He made a lot of plays. I said, "What's the matter with that guy?" We brought him up, liked him, made him an offer, and he accepted it.

He started out slow, wasn't real confident. But he slowly has gotten better and better and better. Had a good year last year. Right now he's playing really well.

Again, last year he played hurt a lot. Knock on wood, I hope we can keep him healthy because he makes a lot of tackles. He's in a lot of plays. I think if he stays healthy, he'll end up having a great year.

Q. Coach, you might have seen that Sean Payton, the coach at the New Orleans Saints, suffered a severe leg injury, similar to what happened to you at Wisconsin in 2006. Is there anything that could be done to protect coaches on the sideline from some of these things not happening?

COACH PATERNO: Well, if you could come up with one, I'll be willing to put a patent on it (laughter).

That's part of the game. When the kid from Wisconsin hit me, he wasn't looking around a little bit. I think we're all right. Now, they have a new rule in. It's not really a new rule, but it's one they're enforcing. That is you have to be at least three yards back of the line on the sideline. That's to protect the officials as well as the players and the coaches. Those officials have to be careful, too, because they get run over once in a while.

It's a physical game. It's a game of speed. It's getting faster all the time. It's kind of hard to control some of the things that may happen.

But I don't have an answer for it. I certainly don't want to start changing things unless they're not going to have an impact on the outcome of the game.

Q. Joe, when (Michael) Mauti went out for the season, everybody talked about what a big loss it was. How well has (Nate) Stupar played?

COACH PATERNO: Well, Stupar played really well. But, you know, Mauti was an exceptional athlete. Now our problem would be if something happened to Stupar. But, Stupar has played well. I think there's no question about that.

Q. How much did you look at Dan Persa, the Northwestern quarterback, when he was down in Allentown?

COACH PATERNO: I've asked that question a couple times of the staff. We didn't take a quarterback that year, so we really weren't looking for one. But there were some things. He's not the biggest kid in the world. He's just one of those guys that's tough to evaluate because he makes things happen, he's smart, he's tough. If we were going to take a quarterback, I'm not even sure we would have taken him.

But our loss was Northwestern's gain because he sure is a good football player. He makes things happen.

Q. Coach, do you feel you are getting closer to ironing out some of the issues that have kept the other guy in the game more than you'd probably like?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I don't really know what you mean. I think the other guys have played well. We have had pretty good control of most of the games. We've lost the one game to a pretty darn good football team (Alabama). The rest of the time I think we've done a pretty good job.

We're not playing people that are dying, coming in and dying, giving it to us. Iowa is a pretty good football team. Purdue is a very much under-rated football team. So I don't know. I think we're playing pretty well.

Sure, you'd like to be able to get maybe a couple more scores in some areas that we may have hurt ourselves. You know, you run a kickoff back to the three-yard line, how many times have you seen that call? But, I think we're doing all right, I really do.

We're playing with poise when we have to. We're doing some things well. The other guys are playing hard against us.

Q. Are you concerned with the number of times you have fumbled?

COACH PATERNO: I don't think we fumble that much. We've fumbled at certain key spots.

Q. 15 fumbles in the last six games.

COACH PATERNO: Well, how many have we gotten? How many times has the other guys fumbled? Saturday the other guys fumbled three times.

I mean, we have fumbled at tough spots. No, I'm not concerned about it. I think we're doing all right there.

Q. Joe, do you have any update on Derek Moyer? Is he progressing the way you hoped he would be? Do you expect to have him next week still?

COACH PATERNO: He was at the practice yesterday without football gear on. Derek, he's anxious to get in. I don't think we're going to have him for another couple of weeks. But I'm reluctant to say how long because he's one of those kids...he's a big, lanky kid, has no extra weight. He's got a very conservative life style. I think he's got a chance to maybe come back quicker than we would think he would.

But the kind of injury he had, they were talking three, four weeks. Now, if we get him in three weeks, we got two weeks to go.

Q. Any update on your health? How you doing physically?

COACH PATERNO: Me? I got banged around a little bit when the kids tried to protect me from getting hit the other day (vs. Iowa). I have my days when the leg gets tired, starts to ache a little bit. But, overall, pretty good. You know, I can get around, walk around. They still have the cart out there for me if we have a two-hour practice in case I get tired. But, overall I think pretty good.

Q. Joe, in the past few weeks, your defense has done a good job against quarterbacks that pass from the pocket primarily. In the next couple weeks you're going to face a lot of quarterbacks that use running as an element of their game. Any change in the defensive mindset or the reps taken in practice, things like that?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I think we've got to play our game. You take this week, I mean, I think they lost their running back that had a knee. I think you're looking at good receivers as well as quarterbacks. You're looking at running backs.

Iowa was a much under-rated offensive football team. Their offensive line was much better than people realized. I thought our defense did a heck of a job.

You just don't change. You've got to know what you're doing. You've got to know what your buddy's doing. You've got to make adjustments today. It isn't you go out there, like the old days, quarterback lined up, back here, back there. They know all their plays now.

You have a tough time trying to get cute with your defenses because you're liable to be out of position because you haven't spent enough time in that. So we won't change much. May put a stunt in there that may have bothered them or something like that.

But we're just going to have to play hard and do a little better maybe in taking the ball away, that kind of thing, make sure our kicking game stays good. Those kinds of things will be important as we come down the stretch.

Q. Joe, you said earlier you were worried about six or seven guys might have been playing too much these last few games. How do you balance getting them rest in practice and also making sure your quarterbacks get plenty of work in practice?

COACH PATERNO: Well, you can control the way they practice. You go out there and say, "Okay, don't hit the quarterback." Everything is live except the quarterback. We do that all the time. We try to protect the quarterback in practice all the time.

What you do is you try to get the seconds in there. Let's say you're going to run a period where you may end up running 15, 18 plays. Ordinarily you might give your first offensive guard 10 or 11 of those, and the second offensive guard maybe six or seven of them. You change that around. Maybe you give the second guy 10, 11, 12, and the first guy six or seven. You try to pace them. You try to pick the plays that you feel that maybe they need a little bit more work on.

We won the ballgame Saturday, had trouble with a linebacker on a particular stunt last Saturday against Purdue. When we start working against that, you put your first kids in there to handle that.

So you can make adjustments. That's not tough.

Q. Coach, last week you talked about tightening up your red zone package. Still not much has changed coming out of last week. Can you talk about your concerns there still?

COACH PATERNO: Yeah, that's a problem. That's a little baffling to me. But, again, one thing or other. One week I'm yelling about penalties, the next week I'm yelling about a fumble, next week...

I think one of these days we'll settle down and we'll be better. Now, whether we'll be really good or not, the other guys are playing pretty good football against us, and we may not get to where we all think we're doing a good job.

We're working on it, let me put it that way. I'm concerned about it. Anytime you get inside the 20, first down, and you have to walk away with a field goal, you'd prefer a touchdown.

We've made it. That goodness our kicking game has improved which has made up a little bit for our lack of putting the ball in the end zone for a touchdown when we get in the red zone.