

# Joe Paterno News Conference

September 13, 2011

## **Q. Joe, how did the leadership of the team respond Monday after the loss Saturday?**

COACH PATERNO: Well, we only practiced yesterday, only have one (practice) under our belt. We went out with tops; we didn't put pads on them yesterday. And I thought overall was pretty good. I won't know until we see how they react to some things we do this week in the way of practice.

And we're trying to talk to some of the kids to find out what we've got to do to play with a little bit more confidence and what have you.

But if I had to say yes or no, I think we're doing all right.

## **Q. What is Chima Okoli's injury? And do you think he'll play Saturday against Temple?**

COACH PATERNO: As I said, we've only practiced the one day. And yesterday was just to try to get an understanding of what happened to us against Alabama, to try to correct some mistakes. We really have not talked about who is going to play and exactly what we're going to do. We spent this morning doing that.

And we'll go out this afternoon to see what some people are ready to do. So that's a tough question for me to answer right now and know what I'm talking about, because I couldn't give you an honest answer on that.

## **Q. Would you prefer to make a decision on a quarterback before the start of Big Ten play, or are you comfortable using both going forward?**

COACH PATERNO: I think we've made a decision up to a point that we want to play both of them (Rob Bolden and Matt McGloin) for a while until we find out exactly which one we think might be better for the football team and help them win.

But, right now, I think it's a toss up. I think both of them are doing well. There again, I think I said after the ballgame I'm reluctant to have people start blaming it on the quarterback. I mean, I think we're just not making plays.

We started that ballgame (Alabama) where we had a chance to make some big plays, a couple in the end zone, one of which would have been a tough catch, but the other one should have been an easy catch going down the sideline for touchdown.

We just didn't -- it's easy to pick out somebody and blame him, particularly the quarterback, because it's such a predominant person. The ball comes to them and they do something with it.

But I think both quarterbacks have played well enough for us to win with. And I'm reluctant right now to tell anybody, "hey, we're going to start this guy," because it would look like as if I'm, like the other guy didn't play well. I thought they both did a pretty good job, really.

I think we have to help them. I think some guys on the team have got to make some plays. We're the same way; we go in the ballgame, second year in a row we played that football team without (forcing) a turnover. And a year ago we had four or five and we had three turnovers in this one.

When you get in a tough football game against a good team, you're in an uphill battle all the time. So anyway that's one of my typical long answers to a simple question. We've got two quarterbacks. And as we talk now, whether we have two quarterbacks a week from now, we're going to -- we'll see.

## **Q. Joe, if you're unable to be on the sideline this week or in the future, have you considered sending another assistant down there to help coordinate the sidelines so things like the timeouts don't occur again?**

COACH PATERNO: The timeouts, that goes back to -- the confusion on the sideline goes back to the fact that, again, you think your kids understand certain things.

Two kids got hurt and they didn't know whether to go down, come in, come out. They come out of the game late. And in order for us to save ourselves five yards we had to call a timeout on the sideline. I think that we've got to do a better job, obviously, of making the kids more game-aware so that when that happens - you're hurt, sit down, stay there until we make a substitution for you. We're allowed to do that. We don't want you to

be phony about the substitution, but we had kids who were half off the field, back on the field, back out. And the guys on the sidelines weren't sure what exactly was going on. And finally we ran out of time.

So I think we're all right there. There again, that's an obvious thing. Here you go in the first quarter, you take three timeouts. I'm angry. I'm angry upstairs. I didn't know exactly what had happened either. I'm yelling down at them (coaches on the field), "you guys going to make up your mind what you want to do?" And then, of course, after I had a chance to talk to some of the guys, I found out that the kids were the guys who created the problem.

So I think we're all right that way. I don't think that's a problem. We've got to catch the ball and we've got to make some things happen on defense in a tough ballgame. We just haven't done that. It's as simple as that.

Now, why we haven't done it, obviously you've got to take a look at yourself and say, "hey, maybe there's something I as a head coach have to do a little differently." I don't know. But we can't expect to win consistently when you don't get a turnover on defense.

I guess we were almost last in the country last year in the turnover ratio, and we were allowing too many on the other side of the equation. So that's where we are.

**Q. It seems like you guys have struggled a little bit to get some production out of your kickoff return game, and I was wondering maybe what you see why there might be some struggles there and what you can do to try to fix those?**

COACH PATERNO: Well, we've had two kickoff returns for long ones. I know they were for touchdowns. (Chaz) Powell's had two, one a year ago and one this year.

We did not -- ordinarily we would do a little better job blocking up front. And there again I'm always reluctant, you take something way from the other guy. They (Alabama) kicked the ball (well). They put the ball where they wanted it. Most of the time it was down to their right, around the 10-yard line. Their coverage was designed to get to that particular spot and I thought they hustled obviously and made us miss a couple of blocks upfield.

So there was very little running room for the kids running the football. But having said that, again, I think we've got to do a better job. Whether we've got to change the return when we get that kind of thing and go in another maybe a wedge or something different than what we've done, then we would. But we've had some success with a kickoff return. We haven't done as well with our punt return.

**Q. I just wanted to know what your evaluation was of the performance of your front seven last Saturday, and secondly what they have to do to stop the Temple running back Pierce?**

COACH PATERNO: I thought we played well on defense most of the time, except for the fact that we didn't come up with a couple of interceptions.

The only time I was disappointed in the way we played defense was when they scored the last touchdown. It looked like a couple of guys got a little bit discouraged and nobody rose to the occasion to make a play.

But I think overall the down guys played fairly well. I mean, better than fairly well. I don't think we got blown off the board, what have you.

They have a couple of fine running backs. I think the one kid ran for, had the ball about 25 times, ran it for about 115, 120 yards. I thought -- and most of that came towards the end in there. So I would disagree with you, Joe, on your evaluation, if I understand what you're saying.

And I thought that part was fine. Did we come up with an interception? We had a chance for one, on the third down and 12. We had a chance to get the interception. We didn't come up with the ball. They took it in there.

So things like that that we have got to do better. We've got to change the game around on defense once in a while. That part I think is a legitimate criticism.

**Q. There's a lot of talk after the game and continuing today about having to make plays and having the kids -- the kids have to make big plays. What has to happen for that to happen? Whether it's something you could do as a coach or it's something that a kid has to do in terms of confidence, or how does that happen?**

COACH PATERNO: It's probably a combination of all of it. It's probably -- I'm not a guy that backs away from taking criticism of my coaching. And I've been more than willing to say, "hey, I didn't do a good job," this or that. But I don't think I would do that with our staff or myself on Saturday.

I think we just -- I don't know whether we've had -- you get into a mental attitude maybe. "Here we go again." They don't turn the ball over. We drop a pass, this or that. And it gets to be a self-defeating situation.

So there's a lot of little things. We've obviously -- that's the challenge ahead of us as coaches and a challenge ahead of the leadership on the team and some of the guys that should be the leaders, and that's what we've got to somehow get over that attitude.

We've got to go out there with the idea, "hey, we're going to make some things happen for ourselves." Can't moan about the officiating, can't moan about this or that. We've got to make some things happen for ourselves. And right now we don't seem to have that sense.

**Q. Have you spoken to Al Golden since he left Temple at the end of last season, and if so, how badly do you feel for having him walked into that kind of rough situation that was out of his control down at Miami?**

COACH PATERNO: I did not talk to Al before he took the job down at Miami. Frankly, I was surprised he took it, because I knew what a good job he had been doing at Temple. Temple was a good team last year. We had our hands full with them last year. We were ahead by a couple of points going into the fourth quarter (15-13, won 22-13).

And this Temple team is the best Temple team I've ever seen, and that's in all the years we've played. They've got some size. They've got speed. They've got excellent quarterbacking. They're a good football team.

And I think Al -- and I don't want to take anything away from the present coach (Steve Addazio) -- but I think Al left that situation in good shape. Whether it was a good move for him to go to Miami with all the fuss that's going on about that situation right now, I think you'd have to talk to Al about that. I don't know enough about that for me to be critical of what Al wants to do.

He's a bright young man, who certainly did a great job for us when he was on our staff (2000), captain of our football team one year (1991). He's got a couple of guys that are on that staff that have been good players and (Mark) D'Onofrio was a fine football player and a bright kid. He's coaching their defense down there (Miami) and coached the defense at Temple.

So Al knows what he's doing. And he probably felt that was a better move for him. But he sure left a good situation for Temple. Temple is a good football team right now.

**Q. I know you just said that this is the best Temple team you've seen. But your players are pretty young and I'm sure they're familiar with the record that Temple has against Penn State, which is not too good. Haven't won in the series since 1941. How do you convey to them that this team is that good and not let them be swayed by recent history?**

COACH PATERNO: Well, I don't think we're in a position to be anything but run scared ourselves. I think we've got -- we haven't done anything.

I mean, we're not a team that was a great team last year. We went 7 and 5 last year (in regular season). Lost some games because we were sloppy and the turnover situation, the whole bit.

I think we've got to take a good look at ourselves and say, "hey, we've got a ways to go." And Temple certainly is not going to be somebody that's going to be easy. It's going to be tough. And we better get ourselves ready to play as well as we can play.

And if I've got to convince them to do that, then I think we've got the wrong kids out there playing. Because unless they're stupid and they look at tapes, they're going to see what kind of football team Temple has.

**Q. Can you talk about the way Devon Still has come along as a player and a leader for you the last couple of years?**

COACH PATERNO: Devon has -- I thought Devon played an outstanding game Saturday. I really did. And Devon was elected captain by his teammates. And in his own quiet way, he's a guy that leads by performance. And he's one of the guys that right now is going to have to come to the front and pick up a couple of guys that have not had the kind of success he's had or paid the price he's paid to be good.

He's got to start to pick some of those guys up. And I think he will. I think Devon is really a good football player and a good team player and a good leader. And I think with that combination -- we're going to need just more than one guy.

**Q. The first couple of games, Bolden's played a couple of series then McGloin, and then Bolden again. Is that order pre-determined, or do you go by feel as the game goes on?**

COACH PATERNO: I think it's mostly as the game goes on. Although, we did expect to do something almost exactly what you just described. We had gone in there with the idea we were going to let a couple of series and then we were going to put Mac in there for a couple of series and go from there.

I might second-guess myself a little bit, because I thought Bolden threw the ball really well early. I think he just didn't have any luck.

But we had kind of told the kids that's the way we would operate for a while. So maybe we change that a little bit, but I intend to play both of them.

**Q. Curtis Drake finally got in a game on Saturday. Is Drake back okay now?**

COACH PATERNO: I don't think Drake's 100 percent yet. The doctors -- I keep asking the doctors, "is he getting better, is he getting better?" And he goes out there and runs, but he's still not -- a lot of you would be familiar that we put red crosses on a kid, he can't do anything; put a green cross on him, he can't have any contact. And Curtis has still has got a green cross on.

**Q. You talked about dropped passes being a problem early on in the first couple of games. Can you pinpoint what might be the problem there and how do you improve on that?**

COACH PATERNO: Concentration, obviously. And it's a question of confidence. That's the hard part sometimes when you watch practice, a couple of those kids that didn't make some catches (in Alabama game) make some great catches in practice. I mean, it's just something I've got to get them over. And we can play up to our potential. We're not playing as well as we can play, I don't think.

Now having said that, as I've told you guys 100 times, I'm reluctant to take something away from the other guy. I mean, we did not get licked by a poor football team Saturday. Alabama is a good, solid football team. That's not a question we went out there and had a bunch of rinky-dinks beat us. They're a good football team.

There are no weak spots on that football team (Alabama). And they can run and they hustle and they're well coached. They've had a lot of success. They are used to tough competition and have had some success. So that's where I'm coming from.

**Q. You've seen a lot of Temple teams in your time. Can you talk about what makes it - from where you sit - what's made the difference in their program now that's enabled them to be successful as opposed to --**

COACH PATERNO: Temple's program? Well, I think they went out, Al went out and got themselves -- they went out and did a really good job recruiting. And I think when they got them, they went to work with them and they were I think only won two games the first year (1-11). I could be wrong on that. But I know they didn't have a lot of luck the first year.

But they didn't panic, stayed with a couple of things that he believed in, and they worked on getting some people stronger and quicker and a little bit more knowledgeable about how to play. And they started going with maybe five good plays or 10 or 12 or 14, so now they've got a solid core.

Al left it -- and, again, the new coach is a very enthusiastic guy. I don't know him well, but he was on the Florida staff when we played Florida last year. And we had a little get-together with the new coach at Pitt and the Temple people with the idea we ought to be working making Pennsylvania high school football in any way we could help the high schools.

And I was very impressed with both those guys. I think that Pitt's got themselves a heck of a guy even though they replaced one of the guys I admire very much, (Dave) Wannstedt. And obviously Temple replaced a fine young coach with this guy. And he's good. When you see the game, you'll know what I'm talking about.

**Q. Any update on Stephfon Green's status? Is he with the team?**

COACH PATERNO: He won't be with them this week.

**Q. This should have come up after the game but I was curious on the punt, 13 minutes left, you're down three scores.**

COACH PATERNO: We were still in the ballgame. We were fourth and 5, at about, what, the 40 some yard line? They make that (stop), the game is over. I would do the same thing exactly the same way.

**Q. Over the years it seemed your team's played their best in a lot of the biggest games. And just seems that you maybe lost some of that. Do you have a feel for --**

COACH PATERNO: I think the observation is probably correct. Why we're not doing a little bit better, again I go down to some success. I think we've not had some success in some key situations, which would give some of these guys a little bit more confidence in themselves.

Unfortunately, we had to play a lot of them when they were young and they weren't ready really to play as well as they would have liked to have them play last year. And they haven't gotten that quite out of their craw.

But I think we've got to see what happens. I'm not going to go -- I know -- everybody's disappointed we didn't do a little better job (vs. Alabama). Certainly I'm disappointed. But still we've got a bunch of good kids. They're working hard. They got beaten by a fine football team, didn't make anything happen for themselves, got a couple of tough breaks and the whole bit.

I think we've got to make sure we don't panic, go from there, because I do think your point about do we know how to win a big game? We haven't done it for a while.

**Q. Are you closer to getting back to the sideline for Saturday?**

COACH PATERNO: I hope I'm going to do it this week. I thought I could do it Saturday. But I don't move quick enough to get out of the way. As you see, I can walk without the cane now. Although, I can't walk -- I have a lot of pain after I walk a while. And then it gets sore. But I'm getting there. I'm hoping I'm going to be able to do it Saturday.

I'm walking up steps now. They didn't want me to walk up steps. I'm walking up some steps on it. And I'm optimistic, but I'm not positive (it will happen vs. Temple).