

Joe Paterno News Conference

August 30, 2011

Q. Anthony Fera; he punted for you last year. What's his status with the team?

COACH PATERNO: Right now, Anthony got himself into a couple of jams, and he should know better. And we're going to play that by ear. I told him I was going to sit him out. Make sure he understands he's got some responsibilities to himself, his family and to the squad and to the whole program.

And he's a good kid. It wasn't anything really serious in the sense that he harmed anybody. But he broke a couple of rules. So we're just going to play that one by ear. When he's going to play, I honest to goodness couldn't tell you whether we're going to use him. We'll watch how he does things, make sure he's behaving and the whole bit and then make my mind up.

Q. Have you picked a starting quarterback, and will both Matt McGloin and Rob Bolden play on Saturday?

COACH PATERNO: I'm surprised you asked me about the quarterbacks...Both those kids have done really well. Spring practice and both worked hard this summer, stayed up here this summer, worked with the guys. And they have been real good in pre-season.

I'm not a guy that likes to play two quarterbacks. But I think we'll play both of them. We'll play both of them. They both are ready to play and they're both -- as I said, they've done everything we've asked them to do. And both of them continue to contribute to the football team and get us ready to play as well as we can offensively and so we'll play both.

Q. Have there been any other preseason injuries on the team besides your own?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I'll tell you what, we've got a lot of guys, their injuries have more of an impact on this football team than this guy sitting up here.

Well, we still don't have (Curtis) Drake. And they're going to give him some tests on Friday to see whether he can go (next week). (Evan) Hailes is back. The two kids, (Garry) Gilliam and (Pete) Massaro, they won't play this year, they're not going to play this year. I guess Massaro and Gilliam would be the two guys that are definitely out.

As I said, Hailes, I think, is going to make it. He's back. He's been practicing. Although he has some restrictions on what he can do. Drake has not done anything yet, except he's out there out running around. He's not really had any kind of real football contact or anything like that. And we won't know about him until, I think they're going to give him final tests on Friday and maybe he can start doing some things on Monday.

I think that's it. Is there anybody else? Off the top of my head, that's it.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about what is it that you see in Bolden and McGloin. What specific areas are they doing better than they did last year?

COACH PATERNO: Well, they've obviously had more exposure. I think they have a lot more confidence in themselves. Hopefully we're going to be a little better offensively, particularly up front. Although I still don't think we're out of the woods yet as far as the depth up front.

I just think the whole grouping offensively is better. Some of the wideouts have had more experience with them. I think they're more confident as to what they see and can anticipate cuts.

They've got a better feel for one guy's speed as opposed to the other guy's speed and one guy's idiosyncrasies compared to the others.

All of those -- there's a lot of little things that go on. And I think that their spring practice and the fact that they worked, so many of them worked together this summer, and then obviously, as I said, they've had good pre-season. I just think that all of that obviously makes them better.

You guys, you look at yourselves, and you realize as you start as a cub reporter, you make mistakes, you learn, you adjust, your choice of words become a little different, the whole bit. And I think that's pretty true of the -- you gotta know what your editors are looking for what your readers are looking for when you write.

These guys have to know what their wideouts are going to do and the feel for the running backs. You don't just hand the ball off. One running back hits the ball a little harder than another one and that kind of adjustment.

And I think just being around the people that they're going to play with over a period of time has been a big thing, because neither one of those kids played that before last year. Neither one of them, they went in the season and we struggled. And they were part of the struggle.

Q. Stephfon Green, is back in the fold. What did he -- what was the process of getting him back on the team? Did he have to come to you? Did you talk to him?

COACH PATERNO: Well, Green had gotten in a couple of situations, some of it was academic. Some of it, otherwise. And I had told him until I was sure that he was -- he understood that he had certain responsibilities, I was not going to let him out for football. I wasn't going to let him out on the team.

We're not going to take his grant away from him, because he can graduate in (December) and I want to see him graduate.

So he went to work and he proved to me that he deserves another shot and he's getting another shot.

Q. With Fera out, are you concerned at all about the punting game and the kicking game?

COACH PATERNO: Yeah, I'm concerned about the kicking game until we kick a few. I think that Fera is a loss for us, yes. But the kid who is punting, (Alex) Butterworth, I think he's done well. And (Evan) Lewis has got a chance to be a really good placekicker. So I think how big a drop-off it is and how badly it's going to affect us, I don't know whether we'll know until we play a couple of games and see how some of these guys handle the pressure. But as of now I'm optimistic.

Q. The situation a little bit similar last year in that I know that you guys were saying or telling the players, you know, concentrate on Indiana State and not the following week against Alabama as was the case last year. But kids being kids, is it a little hard for them maybe not to look at who they're playing in the second week and not the first?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I mean, that's something that I guess there's very few colleges, very few programs, I should say, in the country that are much different than what we're doing, and I think it's all a question of being mature enough to understand that anybody can beat anybody. Who beat Michigan earlier last year, 22-21, somebody, and we've had our troubles early with different teams through the years.

And we talk all the time about, you just can't afford not to be as good as you can be with good practice, pay attention to details, be ready, expect anything. The other guy's got nothing to lose, everything to gain, and we've got some... we're not home free. We've got some problems yet. But we're optimistic that we've made great progress and we think we're a better football team right now than we were at this time last year.

And hopefully we can go out and show that to people. But I'm really not as concerned about that, what you're referring to, as maybe other people are, because I think our kids have been pretty focused on getting to be better, and we were not happy with our season last year. I wasn't.

And you've heard me say this before: I don't think I did a particularly good job for the coaches or for the squad last year. And I think we're in much better shape right now getting ready to start the season this Saturday than we were at this time last year.

I'm hopeful we're going to be mature enough and understand how games are won and lost and do the things it's going to take to win it and go from there.

Q. You sound very comfortable and confident with your quarterbacks. With the season now, playing both of them, are you going to now put a the deadline at all during the season how many games, if you make a decision, or could this go on like that for a while?

COACH PATERNO: You know, you're jumping all over the place. I just answered the question about how do you overlook the first game. We're trying to get zeroed in on game number one, Indiana State this week, and we're trying to be as good as we possibly can be.

Right now, as I said earlier, I think we have two quarterbacks, both of whom have done well. Both of whom will make great progress, both of whom I think can get the most out of this football team.

What goes on from there, I haven't got -- you know, I don't have a crystal ball or the Lord doesn't come down and tell me to do this or that. Didn't even tell me to get out of the way of (Devon) Smith, for crying outloud. Get run over by a 160-pounder; knocks the devil out of me (laughter). So who knows? I can't answer that question. I don't know the answer.

All I know is that this week, I think both the kids we have, have done very well and they're both going to play and we'll see what happens from there.

Q. Joe, I might have missed it earlier, but will you be on the sideline for Saturday's game?

COACH PATERNO: Well, I'm trying to be. I've got some medical people who want me upstairs, and I want to be downstairs. That being upstairs is for the birds.

You can't -- you just don't seem to be in it. I like to be on the sideline and get a feel for things and be able to grab a kid and tell him to do certain things. So I'm going to try hard to be on the sideline.

It's probably 50/50 whether I'm going to do it this weekend or not. But I've made good progress. I'm walking around with the cane. I probably could get by without the cane right now. But I can't move fast yet. And I'd have trouble getting out of the way of some things.

But today is Tuesday. I've got three more days, couple more days before I have to really make up my mind what I'm going to do. But as of now it's a 50/50 thing, I think. Doctors tell me a little differently. But sometimes, you know, you have to do what you think you can do and not what somebody else thinks you can do.

Q. Joe, can you explain what Johnnie Troutman's situation is at guard? I guess he's not starting. Has he been doing what you want him to do, or he is still not kind of up to speed with --

COACH PATERNO: Johnnie's going to play a lot. We've tried -- our problem right now is, as I kind of hinted at is we're probably shallow a couple of offensive linemen, to feel comfortable that if somebody went down, we had a backup guy at every position that we had, that we were two-deep on the offensive line. I'm not so sure we are right now. We may be by the end of the week.

But Troutman can play either guard. (John) Urschel who looks, I'm not sure which one we're going to start. Let me quickly preface that with that remark, because I'm not sure whether we're going to start Troutman or Urschel.

But if we start Urschel, Urschel is a backup center just in case. So we're really -- we've got a couple of kids learning two positions. Troutman is one of them. Urschel is one of them.

Young (Mike) Farrell is learning both tackles. And I think we'll be okay, if we just have -- if we can stay healthy for a while, so a couple of the younger kids and a couple of kids that are just starting to feel their oats can put it all together, we'll have a little more depth on the offensive line. I think our first offensive line and a couple of backup kids are good enough but if we have a couple of injuries, we might have some problems early.

Q. Have you decided or has the team voted on captains yet?

COACH PATERNO: Yes. We voted yesterday. I had asked the squad, some of the guys came over to the house one day, whole mess of them, 15, 16 kids came over, wanted to just talk a little bit about where we were, it was about a week ago.

And I debated what I wanted to do with the captains because we have a lot of good seniors. And I wasn't particularly anxious to have anybody pick the seniors and whatever.

So they ran with the ball on this. So I let them -- I didn't let them, we had the vote yesterday. I haven't talked to the squad about it yet, so I don't think I can tell you guys anything yet. I'll probably let the squad know (first); maybe making an announcement Thursday.

Q. I know you said you're going to play both quarterbacks. Does that mean you've settled on a starter yet for Saturday?

COACH PATERNO: I don't know. I don't think it makes any difference. They're both going to play. Who starts, I don't know yet. We've got three days of practice. We'll see what happens.

Q. Where have Bolden and McGloin each made the most progress this pre-season, where have they made the most improvements this preseason?

COACH PATERNO: I think I touched base on that already. They are more experienced, more exposure to working with the different people, more comfortable with what we're doing offensively, more comfortable recognizing defenses.

And as I said, one running back hits the hole a little faster than the other guy, and one back does this. And they're little things, sophistication that comes with playing and practicing with the same guys. We've been fortunate this spring and pre-season, in that a lot of our skilled people have stayed healthy.

And both the wideouts, our tight end who really doesn't get any kind of attention, who should, (Kevin) Haplea played well, a true freshman last year, all those kids are starting to do well. (Joe) Suhey and (Michael) Zordich have given us two solid fullbacks who have been around and who can be helpful.

We didn't have that kind of arrangement last year going into the season. So the quarterbacks should be much more comfortable and they have been. They've been very -- I've been very pleased with the way they have practiced, with their leadership in the huddle...their anticipation of certain things. They're awareness of what's going on, all those little things that you would hope a good quarterback can do.

You know, people don't realize that a kid like Bolden last year, we take him down Tuscaloosa, he wasn't even with us for spring practice and he has to go out there before, what, 95,000 people and a situation that was very, very volatile.

And he had to get the job done, which was a very difficult thing to ask him to do. Thank goodness both these kids have played. They've played a lot of football and they've had a lot of good experiences, both good -- I mean, they're good experiences, even though sometimes they were -- it didn't work out well enough for us to win, but they still were exposed to different situations.

So, I think we're all right. The quarterback situation is not one of my concerns right now. I told you, my biggest concern right now is where we've got to get a little more depth.

Q. Regardless of who is the starting quarterback, do you alternate quarters or do you have to explain to them this is about when you're going to get in, because it seemed like there was some kind of communication gap after the bowl game.

COACH PATERNO: Well, it was a different kind of a communications problem. I think you're comparing apples with oranges or something. You know, the problem with the thing last year was where's the one kid go? One kid had used up a year and his family was concerned about the fact that he may not get to play.

And we had felt that as a staff and tried to get that across to both the boy and his family that spring practice would be a very important part of his future as far as a college football player.

I think we've got a good situation at quarterback. I don't know why -- we spend half the time talking about the quarterback. That's like tease a little bit. We've got 22 players. We've got punters. They're (quarterbacks) fine. That's not a problem for us right now.

Q. You turned up the heat in practice this fall. Have you gotten the results that you were after? You kind of questioned their toughness and things.

COACH PATERNO: I think we were at times not really tough last year. I think that's the inference you're making. And I think that we demanded a little bit more. And, again, I go back to what I, I think I may have overcompensated for what I considered the youth of the team last year and we didn't get as much out of them as we should have.

I think that's behind us. I think right now we'll be -- I think we'll be more aggressive longer. I think we'll be able to handle adversity a little better, which is all part of the toughness, when you say "toughness", what do you mean by toughness? You have to define it. There's a lot of things that I mean by toughness, and toughness is getting knocked down and picking yourself up and going back in the huddle and making up your mind you're going to do better on the next play.

It means physical and mental toughness, playing when you're bumped up a little bit and you're hurt. There's a lot of things that go into that term "toughness". And I think that last year I wasn't demanding enough

for us to really come out of that thing feeling that we were a good, tough squad that would play 60 minutes of solid football.

I think we are in a better position to do that. Now, whether we were good enough with the tough schedule we have, we'll have to see.

Q. Is Andrew Szczerba all the way back finally, and was there a time when you thought you might not have him?

COACH PATERNO: He worked awfully hard. He did whatever the medical people wanted Szczerba to do, he did. And he's had a good pre-season. I think he started out a little bit rusty, obviously. He hadn't worked with the team for over a year almost.

And then he -- I think he's come along, and he's getting better every day. He's better today than he was when we started pre-season practice. He's got potential to be a really big-time tight end. And I think we're pretty good at tight end. I think both he and Haplea, give us two. We're worried if one of those guys go down, whether we have anybody behind them.

So I think Szczerba is going to be fine. He's just got to stay healthy, that's all.

Q. What makes you excited about opening day still and opening a new season and things? What are the things that you enjoy most about it and keeps it fresh with you with the new challenges and that sort of thing?

COACH PATERNO: Oh, boy, I wish I could tell...I enjoy it. I was coming over her with Tommy (Venturino). I said, it's hard to believe I'm going to start my 62nd year coaching and yet I'm as excited about it and as nervous about some things. I thought I wasn't quite sure how good our practice was yesterday. The coaching staff thought we had a good practice. I was a little bit -- I thought maybe we weren't quite as enthusiastic as I would have liked, but after talking to the staff, they thought we had a really good practice.

But first game, I'm always a little bit shakier...we've forgotten to handle this, didn't do that. Have we emphasized this enough? There's a thousand little things that you got to make sure you are handling. And I've got to obviously get a checklist that I go through just about every night trying to make sure we're not overlooking something. But even having said that, you worry whether you are doing something that you should be doing that would make the team a little better.

I'm anxious to see us play. I really am. And I enjoy it. I like being out there. I like practice. And some people don't like practice. Some coaches don't like practicing. I like practicing. I feel better this year until I got bumped up a little bit when I could run around and grab a kid and say, "hey, here's the way you want to do it" and so forth. And thank God that up until I got banged around I was in good shape, I could do a lot of things I used to do.

And hopefully I'll be right back doing that next week. But I enjoy it. I like it. I like what I'm doing. And I feel good. It isn't as if I get up in the morning, "oh, no," I get up in the morning looking forward to it. Get up early and we'll see what happens.

Q. Shawney Kersey is a player who is emerging on the depth chart. How has he kind of matured this fall?

COACH PATERNO: Shawney's had little problems, he's been here and had to go home a couple of times for some personal problems.

Shawney's got tremendous potential. I don't know whether he's reached it yet. I mean, we've got two or three wideouts that have the chance to be really good. I think we're all a bit aware of the fact that (Derek) Moye is obviously big-time. And (Justin) Brown is a little bit unappreciated. We've asked Brown to do a lot of things.

Kersey is the same kind of kid, maybe the fastest of the group, except (Devon) Smith. But once in a while he lacks concentration. But he's had a good pre-season, and has a chance to be, I mean, no question about his potential. He can run. He has good hands, great body control. He can do a lot of things well. But he's just got to be a little more consistent.

Q. Your opponent this weekend is two years removed from the longest losing streak in the NCAA. Can you talk about their program's development going from 6 and 5 last year from where they were?

COACH PATERNO: I credit the coaching staff, they've done a good job. Plus they've had a couple of kids that transferred in there. They've got a kid from Michigan State that transferred in there, the quarterback was – the quarterback last year didn't get a lot of help. But they've got a fine quarterback. They've done a really good job coaching. They play with a lot of enthusiasm. They were organized, disciplined. They'll be a tough opener for us. They'll be a tough opener.

You threw me off when you said the 6 and 5 and the year before then. I could tell you about them last year. I couldn't tell you about them a couple of years ago.