

# University of Iowa Football Media Conference

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

## Greg Davis Phil Parker

GREG DAVIS: We finished our 13th practice of spring 2016, and you know, as I've told you before, there are certain things that you wanted to get done in spring. One is it's a great time to look at your younger players, guys that red-shirted, to see how far they have come. We've been able to do that. Also try some different things that you like to get on tape.

So we've been able to do that. And then the big thing is just to install your offense and your defense. We feel good about where we're at. We've come a long way. We're not anywhere near being ready to play. There's a lot of things that we do not have in that we would have in if we were getting ready to play a ballgame.

I'm pleased with the way the guys are working. C.J. has had a heck of a spring. You can tell he's totally in charge in terms of what's going on, decisions that he has to make. I think Sean Welsh moving to center will end up being a very positive deal for us. He's played a bunch of ball. He just hasn't played there. Each day in spring, you can see him getting more comfortable. With Cole Croston and Boone and Ike, you've got some guys that have played a bunch of ball.

One thing that spring does, is it allows opportunities. So Keegan Render has played a lot of our first-team guard and has really come on. Feel good about his process.

The receivers, we've got three guys with Jerminic, VandeBerg and Riley McCarron that we feel like are ready to play. Jay Scheel has really taken a jump over the last, probably three or four practices now and has kind of gotten himself into the mix where he can play a couple different positions. I think he's finally healthy for the first time and he's playing with some confidence. So feel good about that.

We've still got a ways to go with five, six, seven in terms of the receivers. George Kittle has had a really good spring. He's got a chance to be an outstanding player. He's a guy that can stretch the field from the tight end position, and we'll do different things with him.

Behind him, both Wisnieski and Pekar have had solid springs. Feel good about where they are at. Vejvoda



has gotten better each time out. So this team is building each week, coming together. But we're a long way from where we need to be. Not sure who our fullback will be. We've got a couple of guys there that are really working hard.

Right now we're working about three guys in that position. We'll narrow that down probably to two somewhere in August. And I think both LeShun and Akrum have had really good springs.

### **Q. Is Tyler Wieggers the back-up quarterback?**

GREG DAVIS: Yes, Tyler is definitely the No. 2 quarterback. Both Drew and Ryan have come a long way. They are much more comfortable now obviously than they were in August.

### **Q. Is there any separation between the two freshmen or is it too early?**

GREG DAVIS: Yeah, it's a little bit early. It's hard to tell because when they play with the third group, things don't normally work as smoothly as you would like. So it's kind of hard to judge.

So you're looking at a lot of drill tape. You're looking at a lot seven-on-seven. But I'm pleased mentally where they are at.

### **Q. How much do you see Boyle, because if you look at all your quarterbacks, he's kind of a departure guy, the guy you expect him to run his own read -- how much can he show you with that?**

GREG DAVIS: Well, you know that's there. We know that part of what Ryan can do is there. Ryan is a heck of an athlete. We actually worked him some on special teams in, I guess starting in about practice eight or nine, because as Coach always does, we're trying to find a way to get our best athletes on the field.

### **Q. What do you like about Jay Scheel and what do you see in his progression and ability to run after the ball?**

GREG DAVIS: I like the fact, one, that he's very dependable. He can play either of the two outside spots and not miss a beat. He's smart, having been a quarterback, so he kind of understands what defenses are trying to do.

And again, it's really the first spring we've seen him

where he knew what to do and he was well. He made a catch and run the other day, I guess Saturday, that was really impressive. He made a nice catch today. So he's come a long way. And you can just see that when he goes out there now, his head is not spinning. He's more relaxed and comfortable.

**Q. Is that part of, he played quarterback in high school, and takes awhile to learn the position at wide receiver?**

GREG DAVIS: Sure. Even though you know kind of what they are doing, pretty much what they are doing, in most cases, how they are doing it and what they are seeing, there's a difference in knowing what they are doing and how they did it. He's now more comfortable with that.

**Q. Sounds like Sean Welsh has taken to the center position. Is that your hope, that he is that guy now this fall?**

GREG DAVIS: Well, I think it may allow us as we get to August to get the best five out there. And obviously Sean has played up-and-down the line. He's kind of built like a center and he's a tough guy, and he's a smart guy. We'll still work up James Daniels there, too. But Sean could end up being the starter center for us in August.

**Q. Talk about Akrum, he's put on muscle weight and what he's looked like and how he's improved.**

GREG DAVIS: Well, Akrum is playing about 189, 190, which is up probably at least 15, 20 pounds, when he first came in.

What he's found is that it gives him the ability to take care of the ball better. He's also a good receiver coming out of the backfield. He's just had a really solid spring.

Akrum can do the things that you can't coach: Jumping sideways and some of that, and he gives you a chance for a big play a lot of times when it's not always there; but he gives you the chance to make a big play.

I think he's grown up and matured. He's kind of bought into the big picture academically. I mean, the whole gamut of things that they go through. I just see much more maturity out of him at this time.

**Q. The way you tend to use George Kittle, could that be as versatile of an option at tight end as you've had?**

GREG DAVIS: I'm sure it will be, because George is a guy that can play on the line of scrimmage, or he can play our B tight end, which is more of a move tight end. He can play flexed. Probably the formation that we got

in last year with three wide receivers with Jacob Hillyer in the middle with 20 personnel, we can do that now with 21 personnel and just let George flex out there. He brings a lot to the table because he's a tough match defensively.

**Q. C.J. was second team all-conference last year, but what does C.J. have to do better?**

GREG DAVIS: Well, the things that you're looking for are quicker decisions, not just making the right decision; making the right decision quicker.

And then second is where you put the ball. Not just where it is; it went to the right place, and we caught it; did it go to the right place and we had a chance to run with it after the catch.

Those are the things that he's working on. We've opened some things up to give him even more flexibility at the line of scrimmage. Where before, he had a package of things they can go to. He has a little bit more variety of things now that he can go to, if he sees something that he would like to try to take advantage of, and that's because we trust his decision making.

**Q. Is accuracy something that he works on every day?**

GREG DAVIS: Every day. He works on accuracy. And this summer, a big part is going to be deep ball accuracy. All of the intermediate things, he's doing a pretty good job of, but if you get a chance for the home run, you don't want to miss it. I mean, you don't just want a long foul ball, as Phil would say. You'd like for it to be a home run.

**Q. Is that something you guys thought you left on the table last year?**

GREG DAVIS: Yeah, there were too many opportunities where we had at least one-on-one where a better ball would have given us a chance.

**Q. Home run threats developing this spring?**

GREG DAVIS: I think the guys, in our terms, we talk about playmakers. And from an offensive standpoint, you'd start with, you know, George, Matt VandeBerg, Wadley and then Jerminic Smith. All those guys have shown the ability to come up with big plays, make explosive plays.

**Q. Do you see Jonathan Parker being more comfortable now and playing a bigger role?**

GREG DAVIS: Parker is much more comfortable now as a slot receiver. And again, I think he's a guy that's grown up and he would be right there with Jay Scheel in terms of the spring he's had and where he's at in the overall receivers.

**Q. Graduation is a part of life, what kind of growth have you seen on the edge, now that the tackles have a year on the field?**

GREG DAVIS: Well, I think just the fact that they have played for a year. You know, just the fact that they have played, they understand. I also think we can do a better job as coaches; when you get a guy that is sure enough a problem with chipping with the tight end, chipping with the backs and doing some things to help them.

But the biggest thing, they are just more comfortable. What happens is there's a process that all players go through. One is they have to learn now what to do and after they learn what to do; how do you do it. And when they get in a bind, do they lapse back into their old habits, which is usually a bad technique, or have they done the new habit long enough that they will trust it and do it. And that's where experience comes in. So I just feel like they are much better on the high rush right now than they were.

**Q. What are you able to do with Kittle on the field?**

GREG DAVIS: We are doing a few things with George on and off the line of scrimmage. When he's off the line of scrimmage, he's in a great position to help on a high rush, because that's the one that you worry about.

So it's just something that you would like to always have. So if they get in a bind, you can help them out.

**Q. I know C.J. probably puts way more pressure on himself anybody, but do you look to him to elevate a really young receiver core?**

GREG DAVIS: Yeah, I think that's part about being quarterback. Often times when we're watching film, I'll say, 'take this down; this is something that y'all have to really work on this summer, whether or not it's throwing a particular route against press coverage or exactly how you want this double move done, what you're looking for.' That's why the summer is so invaluable in terms of those guys getting on the same page.

**Q. What do you want to see as offensive coordinator out of the spring game, 15th practice; what are your goals to come out of that?**

GREG DAVIS: I would like everybody that starts, to finish and not be hurt. That's my biggest goal after all these spring trainings.

I'd like to execute and keep the ball off the ground, don't throw it to them. Phil is going to come up and say he hopes we do throw it to him.

Just go execute. We're not worried so much about what it looks like, as there are certain players that we want to see and there are certain plays that we may

run to give that player a chance, that maybe not situationally would be something you do. That's not the biggest concern.

The biggest concern is it's still a workday for us, so there's things that we would like to get on tape that maybe doesn't always fit the best thing if you were playing an Iowa in a ballgame, but we need to see these things.

**Q. You're missing your most consistent running back with Canzeri, but you have three guys that have played a lot and one has been out most of the spring. What's the likely split you would see, or does it depend on your opponent when you have a guy like Daniels and Wadley?**

GREG DAVIS: Well, LeShun gives that you bigger back that still has some lateral movement. LeShun is one of those backs that the more he carries, the better he becomes, as a lot of big backs are.

Akrum is the great change-of-pace guy, and surprisingly for a guy his size, he's pretty good inside because he very seldom takes a straight-on lick. So in terms of short yardage, he's not a bad back in that situation.

Derrick unfortunately has missed all of spring and will not participate Saturday. We kind of got a handle on what he can do as a third down back; he's a dependable receiver. He's smart on the blitz. But we really wanted to see if he could get in the mix in the running back this spring. We'll kind of have to wait till fall to see how that works out, and then we'll see how the new guys, where they fit in.

**Q. Do you see a situation where LeShun and Akrum could ever be in at the same time?**

GREG DAVIS: Probably not.

**Q. Akrum in the last two games, no receptions and then he came out of the Big Ten, Rose Bowl with six and I believe Chris said he wanted to kind of see what he can do in space. Is there more of a movement toward that?**

GREG DAVIS: Sure. Because he's always been a pretty good receiver we felt like. The problem is you don't catch many on the bench, and so the ball security part kept him over there by us, and yet we knew he was a pretty solid receiver.

And I think next year, you'll see even more of that, because he will be out there and he will be playing. And so I be would really surprised if his catches don't go way up.

**Q. Fullbacks are often underrated, but last year you**

**had two that really had a lot of good blocks, were really active. Is Drake your No. 1 right now and how tough is that competition?**

GREG DAVIS: Yeah, Drake is definitely No. 1 right now. There's no doubt and he's a tough guy. He played behind two guys that we didn't feel like were underrated, but fullbacks in general are. We knew how valuable they were to us, and Drake has really done a good job. Austin Kelly has done a good job. There's several guys there that we feel comfortable; we'll come out with a good fullback.

How much we play the fullback will be part of their progress, and also the progress of Pekar and Wisnieski, because a lot of times when we're playing with two tight ends, we're doing some of the same things we could do if we had a fullback in the game.

So kind of what is the balance going to be in August, as to where does 21 fit and where does 12 fit. That will be one of the things we have to work out in August.

**Q. The 12 and 21, where you have an offset I and the tight end lines up as a fullback, do you feel comfortable?**

GREG DAVIS: Sure, we have done that.

**Q. Has there been a step up in what C.J. can do this spring or is he hampered a little still?**

GREG DAVIS: I wouldn't say he's 100 percent. Now, he has missed no practices, but I wouldn't say he was 100 percent.

Talking to Russ, the trigger point of the surgery is smaller and smaller and smaller. We haven't done a bunch of quarterback draws with him this spring and we haven't done a bunch of movement throws with him, so I would say he's probably still a little bit hampered.

I've almost forgot what he looks like healthy because he was hampered the entire year last year. But he'll be fine and we'll do some things with him that he can do.

**Q. As far as strategy goes, the Big Ten Championship game, when you guys came out in the fourth quarter, hit the big shot to Tevaun, came back with Matt VandeBerg, was that calculated to wait till that point in the game to unleash it, or was it at that point in time it made the most sense?**

GREG DAVIS: I would say the best answer is at that time we felt like it made the most sense. We had opened the game with a lot of shorter throws, just to make sure that we got the quarterback off and things like that.

Then as the game went on, they got tighter and tighter with the safety, so we were able to get Tevaun in a one-

on-one situation. C.J. made a great throw and catch and then we came back and said, okay, Matt is getting the same looks, so we double-moved him. So it's just kind of when it happened. I mean, it wasn't purposely, let's wait till the fourth quarter.

PHIL PARKER: We have two days left to be on the field here during the spring, and we're building the culture here of the Iowa defense right now and we've got a long ways to go and hopefully we need these next two days to see some other young guys get a chance to get on the field.

Starting up front, obviously we lost Drew Ott and Nate, Nate Meier there, so that's a big loss for those guys. Got to replace them, and I think Matt Nelson has done a good job. Parker Hesse has played most of the year anyway, so he is doing really good.

Anthony Nelson has really come on at right end and he's done a good job and he's flipping on both sides so he can play right end or left end so we're pleased about that.

At linebacker, you start with Josey Jewell, he's done a great job in there inside leading the team. We like what he's doing, his progress. He's becoming a better player, obviously side for us and backed up by Angelo, which has done a good job. He's a true freshman, he's in there working as a second teamer and he's done a great job so far. There's a lot of things he has to learn and at least he has a good student in front of him that can show him the way. So we're excited about that.

Bo Bower is working at the outside linebacker still, and then at the Will backer, we have Aaron Mendis doing a good job there. He's really progressed, a lot of things, how to play the game down the field, coming downhill a little bit. In the passing game he's gotten better, so we're excited about where he's going.

In the back end, obviously we lost Jordan Lomax. Very productive player. We had Brandon Snyder at the position right now backed up by Jake Gervase, and I think he's doing a good job.

Miles Taylor is still coming back at strong safety. He's doing a pretty good job there, and we're fiddling around with who is going to back him up between Anthony Gair or if there could be somebody else. We're pleased about that.

Mabin is out for most of the spring. He hasn't practiced. Josh Jackson has done some good things, and obviously Desmond King, we obviously play him in the nickel spot and obviously he's done a good job at corner and he's done a great job at trying to lead the team.



sure.

**Q. When did you realize you had something with Brandon Snyder?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, we all liked Brandon Snyder coming out of high school. I thought he was a very smart kid, tough kid. Played multiple sports. Could be a quarterback. Basically understands the game, and obviously he's doing a lot of learning and it takes a lot of pressure.

But he's really progressed in the last 13 days of practice and I'm really excited to see where he can go. He's not there yet obviously but he's starting to understand it. He's going to put in the time; he's a student of the game. I'm kind of excited to see how far he can go. It's a little bit like Jordan: Tough kid, aggressive, he's going to put the time in and he's got a ways to go but I think there's some good competition.

**Q. Is the leadership a big hurdle for a younger guy, because that position is demanding in that way?**

PHIL PARKER: One thing is you've got to be demanding. To be a leader, first of all, you've got to be a starter. Sometimes to be in the back end and take control, and I think he's done that, as far as earned the respect of some of the guys around in the defense of understanding what he has to do in making the calls; he's going to make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes but I think he's done a good job up to this point. Now he has to keep on progressing through the summer and all the way through two-a-days.

**Q. What does Josey have to do and what can he do better?**

PHIL PARKER: Josey, there's a lot of things. Every time you take on a block, you can -- there's multiple things. Every play you evaluate. He's not perfect on every play but we're excited, just the leadership, the toughness that he brings to it and what he demands from everybody else. By example, that's what he does. He hustles every play. He's going to be very aggressive. I know the guys see that and that's all you've got to do is follow Josey and he'll take you where you need to go.

**Q. When you talk about building the culture; is that what you mean?**

PHIL PARKER: I think there's a demeanor, there's a tempo, there's an attitude, there's -- how do you carry yourself and what does football mean to you; do you have a passion for it; is it important to you. Some guys play the game just to be on the team. Some guys go out there and play because they love the game, they have a passion for it and they want to excel at it.

**Q. Fair to say Josey has a passion for it?**

PHIL PARKER: He has a good passion for it, that's for

**Q. Regarding the culture, when does that usually kick in, because obviously last year --**

PHIL PARKER: I think you're always building on culture. Everything we do, we're trying to make sure that that's the way we do things.

For me, to see guys go out there and take a younger guy and see them learn from the older guys how to do things, how to do a drill, how to practice, understand practice, how to work in the weight room, all the things, how do you carry yourself; if you're sitting around here eating at dinner, how do you act, what's your maturity, grow up and how important it is.

**Q. What do you expect from Bo Bower's role, will he be a versatile guy, if he needed to play in the box or middle, he can play there or outside?**

PHIL PARKER: I think having been out, really didn't allow us to have Bo go back and play inside. I think Bo did go back into the Will backer spot. We'll have to experiment that in two-a-days, but I think that gave us a little bit more opportunity to see it. We have put him in there and moved guys around.

We moved a whole bunch of guys around inside to play inside, outside. Jock Hockaday has been outside. We moved Aaron Mends to the Mike backer, so they played multiple positions already. And Seth's done a great job at the linebacker position coaching him, and we're excited about where they are going, and I think the kids are learning more spots than just one spot.

**Q. Is it Mends' job to lose it at the weak side linebacker?**

PHIL PARKER: There's a lot of jobs open. I would say Josey Jewell, unless something really happens to him, I think he's got his job, but I think everybody has to work.

Jack Hockaday has done a good job there and he's pressed him. It's good to have competition at every spot. Nobody has anything locked up in my opinion.

**Q. Is he a frontrunner at this point?**

PHIL PARKER: They might have him on the depth chart. It's not big to us where they are right now. It's where they, you know, first game, second game, last game, that's where it matters. Doesn't really matter right now. We're not playing a game, so to me, it's about getting better and improving instead of saying who is on the depth chart, I don't really care.

King was not on the depth chart in the spring when he came up and started, what, 11 games as a freshman. So it really doesn't matter. As long as he keeps on

going; he has a good chance, he's doing better.

**Q. How much do the players care about the depth chart during spring? Do they play much attention to it?**

PHIL PARKER: I think they look at it, I don't know. We try to tell the kids right now, it really doesn't matter. It's a starting point. Somebody has to go out there. If you want to say ones or twos, that's just the way we organize it.

But everybody understands, you start watching film and you go in the meeting rooms and start watching the films, you can see who is one and two and who has progressed and who's making progress.

**Q. How conscious are you of building depth? That seems to be a big thing, especially up front with the defense to keep the momentum going and keep the energy alive in late November. How conscious are you of building depth?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, I think you've always got to have depth. It's hard sometimes when kids don't understand, sometimes we move guys for different reasons, and to have depth, like towards the end of last year, four or five games of last year, the two safeties weren't even practicing until Friday. That was kind of a tough situation for them.

We like to have guys in there, and they developed a little bit of depth there because they had to go out and practice when the guys were out. They were at practice, but they weren't practicing. And to me, I think that's very important to have some depth where you can count on a guy to go in there. And we expect guys, whoever you are, doesn't matter; if you're on the field, you have to go on and execute just as well as the starter. You are the starter and you can't be the weakest link.

**Q. What improvement have you seen from Matt Nelson and what does he need to improve?**

PHIL PARKER: I think Matt Nelson, he's really made a big jump of being more aggressive in his pass rush. I think he understands the quickness, and just going out there and doing it every day, getting his technique down, he's really excelled and really became a better player during the first 13 days.

Looking for him just to keep on growing, and he'll get better as he keeps on going. We're really excited about that. Anthony Nelson I think is really doing a good job, too.

**Q. Flemming decided to leave. Are you surprised by that or just a culmination of where the depth chart sat for him going into his senior year?**

PHIL PARKER: I wasn't surprised. We talked about it. We had a meeting after the, when they came back in January, we sat down and talked. His goal was to be a starter. That was very important for him to do, starter, to be on regular downs.

And he was a starter in our sub packages, and he wasn't -- he came out and said: Hey, if I'm not a starter, I might look somewhere to go to transfer and see where I can go start.

We knew that the whole time and we had opportunities where we were moving him around a little bit, and playing corner and we put him at strong safety a little bit as a backup. We just sat down and talked. He was very good about it. He saw where he was on the depth chart and he wasn't going to break it right.

Now. Sometimes you don't break the depth chart as No. 1 right now. He might midseason, and he chose to make a decision and we're happy for him and hope that he finds a place that's comfortable for him. I'm sure he's going to miss this place and we're going to miss him.

**Q. The fact that he's on course to graduate in four years, it seems like he's really taken care of his business here.**

PHIL PARKER: I think he's done a really great job. Right now I think he's in class six hours, so that's all he has to graduate. Gives him an opportunity to go with his degree and he'll get somebody in the summertime wherever he chooses to go and have an opportunity to be a starter somewhere.

**Q. And at cornerback, you've got two senior starters, Josh Jackson seemed to flash; is Jackson and maybe Ojemudia right now the next two?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, right now they are. They have a long ways to go and grow, and I think they have done a good job. Josh has played a little bit, even though he had his surgery earlier in January. But he's been out there and we just have no contact with him, and we're excited about where he can go.

And I think OJ has done a great job where he's at, but he still has some growing pains to go through, too, and he hasn't seen everything and he's growing up. He'll keep on doing it and getting better and I'm excited to see where they go.

**Q. Do you think there's any chance any of the true freshmen could work their way into the defensive backfield?**

PHIL PARKER: I think there's always going to be like two guys we can pick out; one is to play on special teams. If they can help us on special teams and they

can add depth, right now, I'd hate to say who they are, but I have some ideas where we're going with that. And hopefully in the summer, the opportunity to work with these kids in the summer and get them on the right page and then go through two-a-days, they will have a better chance.

Usually two out of the four, we're not going to do it. Everybody is not going to be playing in the back end, but we're going to try to get some use out of at least two.

**Q. You guys brought in a lot of guys -- a lot of positions with flexibility over the winter. Have you had discussions where those guys play?**

PHIL PARKER: We all know they are good players and we'll figure out a lot of it. We have them in the spot right now and usually when you come here and you start seeing them move around, it's going to take a couple days to figure out where they fit in. But we're not expecting any of these guys to come in and be a starter.

So just come in and get their feet wet a little bit, start understanding the system. That all starts with -- it takes a process to do it, but they are some good athletes and some guys can maybe have a role on some sub packages.

**Q. I know you can't talk specifics but can you talk about recruiting as a whole, what this building and your success last year, what you've seen from that and how that's helped?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, obviously the facility is awesome here. We have a great thing to show kids. But after awhile when you get to start recruiting kids, we had a great class coming in last year and now the ones we are going for this year, it's really beneficial.

But I think it really comes down to getting to know the people and having relationships with them. A lot of guys have buildings, just like getting an education at a university, everybody has buildings, libraries, professors. What you put into it is what you're going to get out of it, and we're looking for the right kind of people to come here and that's where we pinpoint our target, our guys for recruiting.

**Q. How much easier does winning make recruiting? Does it make it easier to reach out and get better reception?**

PHIL PARKER: We have a little bit of, hey, we saw you on TV; we saw you here, there. I think it helps. But I think some of these young kids, in high school, they think they can walk anywhere, and, hey, I'm going to come in and play.

Sometimes I don't think they worry about who has won what games or what Bowl games have you been in. I don't think that matters that much, but I do think that when guys come here, there's a routine that you have to be. You've got to go through a program, and you've got to be on time. You've got to do everything the way you're supposed to be doing it. That's the kind of guy we're looking for. But I don't think guys say, hey, just because you guys went undefeated in the regular season, hey, we're coming to Iowa.

**Q. You care not so much about the stars, you care about the players that fit the program, whether they are four-star or whatever.**

PHIL PARKER: To me, it's very hard. When I go in and see a kid, if I'm meeting with a kid, I really don't care about their stars. I have no idea what their stars are and I really don't care.

But do I care about what kind of kid he is, what kind of character he is. You know, how does he work on the field; what is he doing to be better; what is his demeanor; what is he doing to be the best player; does he have a passion for it; how long has he played. A lot of guys out here don't play very long. When they start playing when they are three and four years old, they are invested into it and I know they have some time put into it, so it means something to them. That's what I look for. I'm not worried about the stars. There's a lot of stars out there.

**Q. You used the Sound Mind, Sound Body camp as an entry point. Now that you guys can't go to that this year, what are your feelings on that?**

PHIL PARKER: You know, I think it's an opportunity for kids to go out there and compete against each other. Does it really matter that we're sitting there as coaches at that time? I don't think how much that makes a difference. I mean, we knew about guys. You go recruit your area, you have a prospect, they have a camp, they come together, they are teaching things, besides football. I think that's more what Sound Mind, Sound Body is about, than just going out and running around, even though there's a lot of kids that go there. But I really don't -- it's good or bad. I mean, it doesn't matter. If they change the rule next week, then we'll be there.

**Q. You guys with Drew Ott, I know you prepared to go forward without him. Where do you go for pass rush? You've used linebackers in the past. Where do you look to next?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, I think we still have -- and we didn't have him the last, after the fifth game. So we had to create some things with some linebackers and obviously we recruited a lot of linebackers in this class here.

But I think there's a guy we can put in, like Anthony Nelson could be a guy we can use as a rush guy on third down. Besides playing on normal first and second down, he can play on the third down. But I think there's other guys, other linebackers we can use. We are getting more of those type of guys. We'll figure it out, who is going to be in there.

We don't have everything nailed down right now, who is going to be in certain packages. But we have enough guys and athletic guys that we feel that we'll have enough.

**Q. Ekakitie and Johnson, what do you need out of them this year?**

PHIL PARKER: I think they need to be consistent, more consistent. Make sure they keep on doing their job, what they are supposed to be doing, responsible for their technique and improving their technique, their effort.

Everybody needs to keep on getting better. I don't think you can sit there and say, hey, the defensive tackles have to make plays for the defense. That's just not the way it works. I think the guys we have in place right now, they are in good positions.

I think we have a chance to be good. But there's a long ways to go yet for the summer, so I'm not asking for anything more than what their best is.

**Q. When you look at Jaleel, he seemed to make a lot of strides as starter last year versus a rotation guy two years ago. What's his upside and how when he's playing at his best, how does it impact your defense as a whole?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, Jaleel, he's done a great job and he's grown as a person, and obviously as a player. I think the more that he plays within our defense and do what he's supposed to do and be more consistent with that, that's where he's going to help the team. He's very powerful, very strong. He's a violent kid and we're excited about where he can go with his upside.

I think he can be a much better player than what he was last year and we're looking forward to that and hopefully he can play more downs and maybe he can play on our third down package, which he keeps on bugging us about; hey, let me play on third down.

But that all is going to work. But I think the things that he has, the power, the strength, and he's got to be able to control and make sure to eliminate the mental errors that go on during practice.

**Q. Have you seen some improvement from Parker**

**Hesse, you talk about rushing the passer, he was pretty stout against the run, have you seen improvement?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, I think there's a lot of times, you do it all spring going against our offense, and he's done a good job of doing that, but the younger guys have really kept up. And it's interesting to see how Parker Hesse has progressed from where he was as just a first-year guy, and now getting a little bit more used to things going on. I'm really impressed the way he works, his work ethic.

**Q. He's athletic enough; is technique a lot of it?**

PHIL PARKER: A lot of it, everything is technique here with what we're doing, whether you're playing a run or whether you're pass rushing, you need technique and you've got to perfect it. The more you do it, the better you become.

**Q. When you look at the Raider package that you guys use, were you comfortable with the amount of times you used it last year, or looking back, do you want to do it less, more?**

PHIL PARKER: I think it was beneficial for us last year, and I still see us using it for next year, and you know, I think it's a good fit, as long as we have the right pieces.

You know, sometimes we'll go back to our nickel defense. We haven't used much of our four-down defensive linemen with five defensive backs in there. We could go back to that and use that. But right now, our plan is to still use the Raider ban kit package.

**Q. You used Aaron Mends in there late, I think Nebraska comes to mind where you got some good burst off the edge. Is he ideal in that position or do you look at some of your other backers maybe filling that role with him?**

PHIL PARKER: He could be a starter. He also did both places, so sometimes you don't want to overload a kid, but he's done a good job when he was in there. If a kid can go out and do it, he can play Will linebacker and still go out there and be a rush end and help us out on third downs, because he can run. He's very powerful and he's getting used to pass rush, and he can bull rush you or run by you. It's going to be interesting to see how he keeps on progressing that position. I'm not going to wear him out. We're going to have more than one guy.