

September 1, 2009



An interview with:

**LUKE LAOLAGI
RYAN LINDLEY
ERNIE LAWSON**

Q. How close is your home to the fires?

LUKE LAOLAGI: I'm 20 to 15 minutes away from Pasadena. It's pretty close.

Q. What are your parents saying about air quality?

LUKE LAOLAGI: From what I've heard so far, it's clear during the day, mostly the air quality. It kind of blows north at night. Not really too worried about it.

Q. Would it be a disappointment if you don't play? Could you use the extra week?

RYAN LINDLEY: I think obviously it's a tragedy right now what's happening. Our prayers and our thoughts are with all those that are up there that are threatened or working to stop this. But I think we got to go in right now and just prepare to play, prepare to play at 4:45 September 5th.

You know, whatever happens happens. It's all up to fate. We're going to be ready to play Saturday, though.

Q. Luke, you went through a week in '07 with uncertainty if you guys were going to play. Do you remember looking back at that week to feel like a distraction, not knowing if you were going to have to play?

LUKE LAOLAGI: It was tough. We had to go indoors to practice. It brought us closer that week. Having the whole community come together like it did, it really worked out, I think.

Q. If the air quality is an issue, how does that affect you? Do you feel you need to rotate more guys?

LUKE LAOLAGI: For our defense, we're rotating a lot of guys anyway in the first place. I don't think that's going to be a big problem come Saturday.

ERNIE LAWSON: As Luke was saying, I don't foresee it being a huge problem for us. As Luke said, we do rotate a lot of guys so we should be fine.

Q. Ernie, you see a redshirt freshman starting at quarterback, no career starts, do your eyes light up?

ERNIE LAWSON: Kevin Prince is still a UCLA quarterback. They have talent. He's starting for a reason. I mean, he's going to be a good player. His coaches are going to have him prepared, along with the rest of their offense and the team.

We're looking at him as a fifth-year starter. It's an opportunity for us to try to get after him but he's just like a fifth-year starter to us.

Q. Does it affect your ability to get ramped up for an opener as far as emotionally, in preparation?

RYAN LINDLEY: I don't think so. I think especially considering what we went through in '07 where it's a lot different and like Luke said, we had to adjust our practice scenarios, go inside and in the gym. For us right now, we're lucky enough to have good air quality here and we can go out and have full practices and really just execute the game plan to the fullest in practice.

Like I said before, it's really up to what happens come Saturday and how they feel about it. I think we're still going to get ready to go the same as we would.

Q. Are the feelings different this year as you have prepared under a whole new system, new offense, new defense? Brand-new season. Can you look back at last year and sense a difference this year?

LUKE LAOLAGI: I can feel a difference. I feel closeness in team. I think we're a lot tighter. We have a long way to go, of course, but I think we're heading in the right direction.

Q. What about for you?

RYAN LINDLEY: Definitely, I think what Luke said. There's a lot of different things you could say, the differences between this year and last year. I think this senior group with Luke being one of them, they've really taken a hold of this team and made everybody accountable for their actions on and off the field.

It just puts you on the map, I guess you could say, puts you on the spotlight, knowing you need to be accountable not only for what you do in yourself but for the rest of your team and how that looks to everybody else.

Q. Luke, do you feel more confident going into this game, more confident beating a BCS opponent than maybe a year ago?

LUKE LAOLAGI: I'd say we feel the same. We're lucky to have this opportunity to play a great team like UCLA. We're playing our game plan, we're going to be focused, come ready, be fast, and be ready to play Saturday.

Q. There's a lot during camp with a new offense, new defense. Do you feel prepared? Do you feel ready heading into this week?

RYAN LINDLEY: Definitely. This coaching staff and the work they put in with us, I think the only people that worked harder than us maybe in the weight room with conditioning and everything. I'm extremely confident on the offensive side. I'm sure Ernie and Luke on the defensive side. The great coaches we have here have brought up a game plan that's going to help us succeed and help us win on the field.

Q. Ernie, what's your favorite part about the new defense?

ERNIE LAWSON: I guess I would say how aggressive we are in attacking the offense. I think it's going to benefit us a lot as a defense and really lets us loose, lets us let our hair down and play. I think that will be a big advantage for us, will really help us out with games this year.

Q. Luke, how quickly did you adapt to the new system?

LUKE LAOLAGI: We've had all spring and all camp to go through this defense. I think we're

ready. We're prepared and confident to go in on Saturday.

Q. What's your favorite part about it?

LUKE LAOLAGI: Like Ernie said, the attacking style and the opportunity to make big plays. I think that's the most important.

Q. Ryan, what have you seen from the defense?

RYAN LINDLEY: They're an experienced group. In a way that kind of helps as far as you can see personnel and a lot of their guys had significant playing time last year, so we had a lot of looks at them. They're a good group. They got some guys that can make some plays at all levels.

I think it's just as far as putting up and we got to execute. We just got to execute the game plan and stay disciplined and stay doing what's coaches tell us. Coach Borges is going to have something great for us.

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