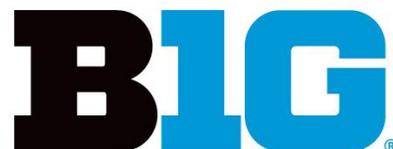


July 28, 2014



An Interview With:

PENN STATE COACH JAMES FRANKLIN

THE MODERATOR: We're going to start with Penn State head coach James Franklin.

Coach, an opening statement.

COACH FRANKLIN: Really appreciate the opportunity to be here. I want to thank the Big Ten. I want to thank Commissioner Delany. Great experience for our players. They're really, really excited. Got a chance to spend some time in Chicago, and now having this experience has been wonderful. So I want to thank everybody for that.

The only critique I would have is -- I don't know if everybody has seen the elevators -- the elevators. Well, there's one with a Penn State logo on it and there's a logo for each school. Well, the Penn State logo elevator was not in align with my room. And I refuse to ride any other elevator up there, so I had to end up walking up the floors. If there's any way we can coordinate and make sure the elevator's coordinated with the floor I'm on in the future, that would be the only critique I would have.

But things are going great. I want to take a minute and just thank the Penn State community and family. It's been unbelievable, the fans, the local community, the former alumni, the former players, been unbelievable with our family and our coaches, and I wanted to take the time to thank them, the students and obviously everybody that's been involved.

Change has been really hard, and we've had a lot of change in the last couple of years. You think about this, I've been here seven months and I'm the vet when it comes to Penn State, when it comes to our new athletic director. I want to welcome Sandy Barbour to the conference and Penn State. So excited about that. And our president as well, Eric Barron.

It's unbelievable, though, the fact you think of all the change in Penn State and how much

consistency we've had for so long and the fact I've been here seven months and considered the vet.

Excited about what's going on at Penn State and our process and our program. We had one of the strongest semesters academically we ever had this spring. The first part of summer school, we've had one of the strongest if not the strongest GPA that we've ever had. And we want to finish that out the rest of the summer as well.

We have nine guys this year on the roster that have already graduated, and they're going to be competing on the field for us. We're really, really excited about that as well, and that's going to continue to be an emphasis for us and always will be to have some of the highest graduation rates in the country, and our guys have embraced that.

And then just talking to our guys, have had a great summer. They're excited. This spring we're able to lay the foundation for what we're trying to do with mentality and culture and offensive and defensive and special teams philosophies, and our guys have kind of embraced that and they're excited.

This spring we weren't able to really play at the type of speed that we want to play at because guys were thinking, and I think since then, over the summer, we've been able to really kind of gain some confidence, and guys are looking forward to it.

We just brought a bunch of freshmen in that have joined the program. There's an excitement and there's an enthusiasm about the recruiting class and what they're going to bring to our program. And everybody knows we have some challenges when it comes to depth and things like that, so we're going to be relying on those guys.

And then the last thing, kind of the last piece of the puzzle, is excited about all our families being able to come back together. Family's a big part of our program. My wife and kids will be at the facility every single day. The rest of our wives and kids as well will be around. I think that's so important. Not only that our players get a chance to see us as coaches and having an influence in



visit our archives at asapsports.com

Penn State Coach James Franklin

their education, but that they also get a chance to see how we are as fathers and husbands and things like that.

So my family, we've been apart for seven months, and really, really excited that we're kind of on the countdown right now, five days left and my wife and kids finally move to State College, and that's pretty much the same with the rest of our coaching staff.

Excited about that. Summer's over. It's time to get to work, and interested in answering any questions that everybody might have.

Q. What's it like when you're recruiting and getting to know people, when you're the biggest program in the state?

COACH FRANKLIN: You know, it's been great. I think it's interesting, my background, I'm from Pennsylvania originally, but I've never coached in Beaver Stadium. I've never been there as a fan.

But I'm obviously aware. Growing up in this state but then also being able to recruit against Penn State for years. They were always difficult. The history, the traditions, the academic success, the facilities and those types of things.

So having an opportunity to come back home and being able to sell all the things that we're selling in recruiting, which is, number one, to get a world-class education, which is what it's all about; number two, an opportunity to play big-time football, doesn't get any bigger than the Big Ten; number three, an opportunity to live in a town that's going to be unbelievably supportive of the program.

We talk about an opportunity to play in front of 107,000. That's unique. That's special. Differentiates us.

And last thing is early playing time. Right now we have some challenges and issues that we need to overcome. So guys are going to have an opportunity to come in and impact the roster quickly. We don't guarantee playing time to anybody. You hear the stories, coaches telling kids that they're going to start as freshmen. We don't do that.

Guys are going to have to earn it. I think our football program is designed to help these kids prepare for life. And they're going to have to earn everything that they're going to do in life. It's the same thing in our program. But we offer that opportunity.

Q. How do you prepare your players for what amounts about a seven and a half hour flight out to Ireland to start the season?

COACH FRANKLIN: Well, that's an interesting challenge. We're excited. It's a unique deal to open the season against Central Florida, against a really good football coach and a tremendous football coach in George O'Leary and a great program.

We're excited about doing that, no doubt about it. But there's a lot of things that go into it. We've obviously reached out to programs and organizations that have played in this game in the past. Navy and Notre Dame have been a resource. Our equipment staff have reached out to them, our administrative staff, as well as our trainers and doctors.

They've been a really good resource, and very appreciative of the help they've been able to give us. We sent out a team of guys from Penn State, about seven people from the administration as well as specifically football.

And then the other thing is Erica Walsh, our women's soccer coach, has done a great job. Talking to her, she's been involved in international play, and making sure our guys understand and our doctors and trainers and everybody be on the same page of not only the flight but the time change as well.

We think we've got a pretty good plan going into it. We're going to need to be very disciplined. We'll leave Tuesday night. Go to class on Tuesday, practice on Tuesday and leave Tuesday night, and we'll get there on Wednesday. We're going to have to force them to stay up that entire day and try to get adjusted and acclimated as quick as we possibly can, but no doubt it's a challenge.

Q. In spring how much emphasis did you put on kind of developing your roster in terms of the younger players being the depth issues you have with some of the sanctions, and how much more of an emphasis will that be in camp?

COACH FRANKLIN: I think it's always going to be an emphasis for us. It was this spring, trying to get as many looks, and really in the spring it wasn't really about developing depth, it was about getting to know our roster and giving everybody a chance to compete.

And that's how it will be this fall. Guys --

some people have seen we released the depth chart, and we'll do this every single year. Our depth chart is -- we just basically listed out by position by seniority. Because basically I want the message to our players and everybody involved that you're going to have to come and compete and earn your job every single year and every single day.

So we want to be able to come into camp with those freshmen, give them a legitimate job to compete for a starting position. And, if not, have an opportunity to compete for playing time in terms of depth.

And that's going to be very, very important to us, creating depth throughout our roster, playing as many guys as we possibly can, and then being able to call the game on offense, defense, and special teams to hide some of our deficiencies as well.

Q. Some of your players last week talked about you crying and saying you weren't going to leave Vanderbilt just before you did, and then at Penn State you talked about better facilities at Vanderbilt than there. I'm curious, were you misquoted, or were those comments disingenuous?

COACH FRANKLIN: Well, this is what I've learned. There's no good way to leave. When you invest so much in a place and you invest so much in people, there's no good way to leave. There's going to be hurt feelings.

I've read a lot of different ways the way people leave, and we tried to do it the right way. We stayed, had a team meeting, addressed the team and said goodbye.

But I hope over time that people look back and realize how much we cared and how much we invested in that program and in those kids and in that community.

That's what I hope.

Q. Do you think Christian Hackenberg at least from a talent standpoint is the best quarterback in the country?

COACH FRANKLIN: I think Christian's got a lot of tools. There's no doubt about it. The thing I'm probably most impressed is you talk about a kid that started as a true freshman, gotten all type of attention. There's been a lot of things that have gone on at Penn State through his recruiting process. Once he arrived on campus and now being a starting quarterback at Penn State is a big deal.

The thing that I'm most impressed is how humble and how hungry and how open he is to coaching. I think Billy O'Brien and our staff did a really good job of teaching concepts. That's kind of what we believe is you teach the game from a big picture perspective. They understand concepts. They've got a chance to put things together in their head and understand offenses.

So now we come in, there's a lot of similar philosophies, but he understands concepts of football. But I've been very impressed with him. You're talking about a 6'4", 235-pound guy who can run.

I think he's a much better athlete. I think he runs a lot better than people give him credit for. But he's going to have to continue to develop. And part of his development is us being able to surround him with the right type of talent. And that's creating the depth and things like that.

So excited about Christian, but really our focus is more about supporting Christian with the pieces of the puzzle around him.

Q. With such a young quarterback, and being a pocket quarterback, how big of a concern is it right now with your offensive line, having so many inexperienced talent from left to right of it?

COACH FRANKLIN: We have some challenges up front, there's no doubt about it. I think we got a great offensive line coach in Herb Hand. I think our offensive coordinator, John Donovan, over the last couple of years, has learned how to call the game, like we all have to hide some deficiencies or things that you're trying to overcome.

I think that's a big part of coaching. Very little -- there's not too many times as coaches that you're in a position where you can just always call the game when you're trying to attack your opponent. Sometimes you have to spend a lot of time trying to devise game plans to hide your deficiencies, and our issue isn't really talent, it's inexperience, and we're going to have to work on that. That's going to be very, very important.

I think that kind of goes back to my point I was saying earlier: I think he moves a lot better than people gave him credit for. He tested extremely well this spring in terms of pro-agility, in terms of vertical jump, in terms of broad jump, in terms of 40. I think that's going to be important.

I think the game of college football has

changed, NFL has changed. People say prototype quarterbacks, what is that anymore. Everyone's looking for an athlete. And I think Christian's one of those guys as well.

What we talk about is being able to have functional quickness in the pocket and being able to make people miss. Don't necessarily have to go for 80, but if you take that negative six-yard sack and turn it into a plus six-yard scramble or gain, that's extremely valuable.

And I think Christian's going to have the ability to do that, and I think our offensive line is going to develop and end up being a strength for us.

Q. Are there experiences you had getting Vanderbilt up out of the basement at SEC that you can apply to dealing with scholarship deficiencies and some of the obstacles there at Penn State?

COACH FRANKLIN: I do think there's some similarities. Whenever you take over a program and you're trying to do things and there may be challenges, for whatever reason the challenges exist in the past, they're there, so I think some of those experiences are going to be helpful.

I think one of the things that we really believe in is by creating depth. Everybody looks at your depth chart based on recruiting and things like that, but there's so much more about that. It's about developing the players in the weight room and in the offseason with their approach and watching film and spending extra time working on the footwork and things like that. I think that's very important. And then playing guys. A lot of times coaches go into the season and they have plans and they say we're going to play a bunch of guys, then they don't really do that.

You have to be willing to stick to your plan and play guys. It may be a tight game. You have to be willing to pull out your starter and put in a younger guy, and there may be some mistakes. But you're going to grow with that. That will help you in the fourth quarters of games. That will help you in the second half of the season because you'll be able to stay fresh.

One of the real advantages we have at a place like Penn State being a large state school is our walk-on program or our run-on program. That got a lot of press and media attention the last couple of years with Bill. Bill did a great job with that. We're going to continue to be able to do that. We had a tryout, I think we had 175 guys show up for it.

It's a little bit different. We've all seen across the country that walk-ons and run-ons have had a big impact, and they're going to need to have that for us as well.

Q. SEC really doesn't like your satellite camps. They went as far as to use the term competitive disadvantage in taking some of the camps to the southeast. How would you respond to them?

COACH FRANKLIN: Well, the thing that's interesting, I'm not really sure why it got all the attention that it did. People have been doing this for a long time. We're a program that believes in studying best practice and get on the Internet every single morning, find out what other people are doing, see if it makes sense for our program.

It's our job to do everything in our power within the rules to give Penn State a competitive advantage. And whatever that may be, whether it's recruiting certain parts of the country, whatever it may be, whether it's the satellite camps, we're going to look into all those things. So we're going to study best practice and find what's the best way to allow Penn State to be competitive.

When we talk about being competitive, that's in the Big Ten but that's also nationally. So we were excited. It gave us an opportunity to get to the part of the country where maybe kids who aren't able to travel to Penn State we were able to bring Penn State to them.

And it was awesome. We had a great experience, enjoyed doing it. The colleges that we worked with were awesome, but the reaction, I can't speak on that. All I can talk about is what we're trying to do at Penn State, which is build a world-class program.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.
FastScripts by ASAP Sports