

**July 28, 2014**

**BIG**

An Interview With:

## **WISCONSIN COACH GARY ANDERSEN**

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Gary Andersen. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH ANDERSEN: Thank you. It's great to be here. Second year is always a little bit cleaner. I think that will hold for our players and our coaches and our administration as far as we all understand each other.

Proud of where the kids are, just briefly through the football team. We always stress three areas of success for our kids. I think academically our kids are doing a tremendous job. Our goal is to get the football team to a 3.0 GPA. We're very close to achieving that and excited about the opportunity to help those kids continually maintain and sustain greatness in the classroom.

Socially, I think our kids are growing daily to work themselves into manhood, and that's a big part of our job as coaches.

But today we talk a lot about football. So we'll move on to football. This is a youthful team. They're exciting to watch, work. They're exciting to be around. And the youthfulness is contagious now.

I think that starts even with our seniors. There's a lot of new faces that our seniors are challenging to get involved in the offense, the defense, and the special teams and be involved in our team. And as those young guys go, in certain positions, our season will definitely follow.

But the leadership has been outstanding. Point out a couple of young men from a leadership standpoint. Melvin Gordon has been unbelievable. Melvin is about team first. And the position he's in, and we all know how great a player he is, but he's even a better young man and a leader for the young kids in our program. So proud of the way Melvin has handled that.

I would say Michael Caputo on the defensive side of the ball, the way he's involved

himself with the youth through this summer and last spring was so very, very important.

So our leadership is in a good spot. I like where they're at. Offensively, lots of questions, but the first question is not with the offensive line. Those kids are all healthy. I feel great where they're sitting. Excited about the opportunity for them to get back and mold themselves as a group. We look to have eight or nine deep in a good position there.

Couple of young players will probably contend for some time there. But we're prepared and in a good spot with numbers and with returning starters on the offensive line.

So the wide receiver is a big question mark and it's been talked about a lot. We need a couple young men to step up, some in our program and have been in our program for the years past, but Kenzel and Jordan, quite frankly, need some help as far as moving ourselves forward. Alex Erickson has done a nice job. He's back off his injury.

But we have Jazz Peavy and Robert Wheelwright in our program a year ago; they need to be ready to step up and play this year if we're going to be a factor at the wide receiver position. And we have some young men that came in, three young men that are with us, feel good about all three of them. Two of the three need to get on the airplane and fly to the LSU game for us. So we'll see how all that boils down.

The running back position, obviously Melvin is the running back, tremendous running back. Corey Clement is an unbelievable competitor and he wants the ball just as bad as Melvin does. I love the competition there.

Derek Watt with the fullback spot, I feel very comfortable with him there and him also moving to play some tight end for us.

And Sam Arneson starts at tight end position, will be good at tight end also. Feel good, some youth at the tight end spot, but feel good where they're moving.

And quarterback spot, it's an open competition, and excited to watch those kids compete and watch them develop.

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Defensively, a lot of new faces, the front seven especially. I go back to the youth. They're athletic. They're excited about the opportunity to compete in the Big Ten. We're going to see where they sit in camp, see if they can hang in there with our offensive line from a physical standpoint. In fall camp, if they can do that, then we should be able to put together a pretty good defense. If they can't do that, then if you can't stop the run, you're going to have some struggles as you move through.

But I expect they'll be able to get that done. Excited to watch them develop. Great competition for the defensive line position. Great competition at the linebacker spot.

Excited about our corners. I think Darius Hillary and Sojourn Shelton played very well last year and should take a step forward again this year.

So the other safety position is wide open, but overall I feel good about where we sit on offense and defense at this point.

Special teams-wise we return a lot of people. We'll have competition at all spots from the snapper to the punter to the place kicker to the holder. But I feel we're moving in the right direction. We'll see when we get out on the field.

The positive of the summer with being able to get with the young men and spend a couple of hours a week has been invaluable for the youth of our program, for the new kids that came in in the summer, for the development of even the seniors as they've gone through.

It's a great rule change in my opinion. I think it will affect college football in a very positive way because these young men are walking in more prepared from a scheme standpoint. They understand their coach more than they did obviously by being able to spend time with him outside of the recruiting process.

So great opportunity this year for the Badgers. We're all proud to be part of this great conference. From there I'll take questions.

**Q. How I guess lucky are you and the coaching staff to have, I guess, kind of an easier schedule given that this team is so youthful? And on the other hand, how do you combat that youth? Do you have kind of I guess the older players kind of take more younger players under their wing, or do you kind of have meetings to address that, or how do you deal with that?**

COACH ANDERSEN: First of all, I think the schedule is challenging; people can say

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whatever they want about this or that but we have a great schedule that's highly competitive and we're playing very good teams out of our schedule.

LSU is LSU, one of the best in the country year in, year out. Bowling Green is picked to take their conference and was a great team last year, then we get into the Big Ten.

So there is no easy Big Ten games. Anybody who thinks there is is sadly mistaken, and I'll debate that with you as much as you want to debate it because you better strap it on and be ready every week in the Big Ten.

So as far as the schedule goes, I disagree it's an easier schedule or what have you. That's my opinion.

For the youth, one thing we're doing in camp is we will start out with two practices. And we have the teams split basically in half. It's not split by youth. It's not split any other way than simply what's the best ability for us to practice. We're still in school for the first week in practice. So we'll have a morning practice, afternoon practice, and then we'll go through our meetings in the afternoon. It will allow youth to get reps. It's one thing to sit in meeting rooms to see it and another thing to be on the field watching a player taking reps. But all of our players are going to get reps.

There is no 1s and 2s in the first four days of camp, there's no 3s and no 4s. There's an A practice and B practice and everybody will compete. They'll get reps, they'll put it out there, and it will allow the youth to be able to mix in a very competitive situation with the veterans on the team. And hopefully that will allow the cream to rise to the top quicker.

But our veterans are definitely challenging these young players to make sure that they're moving in the right direction physically and mentally. But ultimately the kids are making the decisions they make when they walk away from the facility. I tell them all the time -- I ask them the question: How much does it mean to you when you walk away from the facility? If it means a lot to them, we'll have a lot of freshmen be able to play early on. But it's the mental part of this game at this level that you have to be prepared to handle from week 1 to week 10, 11, 12 and everything in between. That's the toughest part for a young kid to handle.

**Q. For those who don't follow your**

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**team regularly, take us through the quarterback battle a little bit. Do you have a timetable for picking a starter?**

COACH ANDERSEN: Joel Stave and Tanner McEvoy will come in and split the reps. Those first four practices when we're split, obviously one's going to be a 1 in the morning and one will be a 1 in the afternoon. D.J. Gillins will be in the middle of that argument also as he comes in as a freshman, but he will not get as many reps as the first -- those first two young men.

It's going to be interesting to watch. It was a great competitive battle in spring as even though Joel was very limited; I think in the summer, has continued to grow. The kids are handling it very well amongst themselves and they're also handling it very well amongst the team.

As far as a timeline, I really have no timeline. I've been through this a few times in my career and it will all settle out just like every position battle does.

It's just the highlight of the quarterback position. Everyone wants to talk about it. I understand it. I get that. But it's no different than the battle that may be taking place at a wide receiver position or what have you. Works itself out. The kids on the team will understand it, the coaches will understand it, and at that time we'll make a statement and have a starting quarterback. It may not be until we jog off the sidelines for the first snap at the LSU game, though.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you, with the youth coming in and the turnover on the defensive front seven, how different do you expect your defense to be scheme-wise compared to last year with kind of fitting new players into the system?**

COACH ANDERSEN: We will be -- we're not as experienced obviously, which is a concern. I believe we're athletic. We're tough minded. We need to make substantial gains in camp with our ability to consistently play with pad level, hands, technique, pre-snap awareness.

With the youth, overall, I'd say you'll see us move around a little bit more than we did last year. You'll see us play with more packages than last year. Last year we would carry sometimes three different defensive packages into a game. This year, with the ability of Vince Biegel, Jesse Hayes, Joe Schobert, some special pass rushers, Alec James, you'll see us build some pass rushing packages with sometimes two corners, three

corners, four corners in the game; sometimes one safety, sometimes three safeties.

But we'll be more multiple. And that will allow us to be what will look like we're being more aggressive and with some more athletes on the field in certain situations.

**Q. After losing Jared Abbrederis, how do you address the wide receiver position?**

COACH ANDERSEN: As I said earlier, the challenge is going to be by those numbers I discussed earlier: We have to replace Jared with two or three players. Now, there's some young men in that program that Wisconsin football means a lot to. Kenzel Doe has had an unbelievable offseason, a very good spring, became dynamic at the end of the year in the return game. He'll be a presence for us in that situation. Jordan Fredrick has had his role. Alex Erickson has had his role.

The challenge is for the youth to step up. If those kids that are in the program that have experience at wide receiver have made the strides I believe they've made, and we can have three of those five youthful kids that I talked about, the ones in the program and the ones that are just new to the program, we can replace Jared by numbers.

But we're not going to have Jared out there at this point. Somebody's going to have to catch a lot of balls and do a lot of special things to be put in that pedestal.

**Q. How good of an athlete is Tanner McEvoy?**

COACH ANDERSEN: Anytime you look at a young man that is a quarterback and has never played safety in his life, breaks his hand in camp, turns around, learns the scheme, understands it, he's very smart, he's intelligent, he had to learn how to tackle in a couple-week period and got better and better as the year went on, I would say he's an elite athlete. But the way he moves around in his size, his ability to -- the speed he runs with, I think he runs very, very well. He's elusive and he's smart. He's got the ball in his hands.

So he's a very talented athlete, allows you to do some things offensively to force defenses to understand that if you make a mistake, he's more than willing to take off and make you pay.

**Q. How do you battle the expectations of being favored to win the West Division recently by Cleveland.com?**

COACH ANDERSEN: First I heard of that was when we got here last night. So we're not worried about any of those expectations and where we're sitting. We have high expectations for ourselves.

I think this football team will sit down and they'll write up their goals here when we report on Sunday and give us an idea of what their visions and what their care factor and want-to is for the season, which will be high, and we'll worry about what we can worry about.

But, again, it's the Big Ten. It's Wisconsin. The expectations are always high. You're expected to do things well off the field; you're expected to do things well on the field. So the fact that somebody says you may be first, second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth really has no bearing on where we sit as a football team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.  
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