BY ALEX TRICK
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Coming off of a tough loss, Purdue will face a team it’s never met on the field before, but one that is part of head coach Jeff Brohm’s coaching network.

The Boilermakers (3-0, 1-0 Big Ten) will play Florida Atlantic (2-1, 0-0 Conference USA) Saturday for Purdue’s homecoming game at Ross-Ade Stadium in the first-ever matchup between the two schools.

Brohm’s connection to the Owls’ football program dates back to 2005, when he was hired as quarterbacks coach for the Chargers, a situation he was in when he first came to Purdue.

“When (Horvath) came in these doors, I said, ‘look man, full back, special teams and the role can grow from there, too,’” Brohm said. “Purdue running back coach Chris Barclay said Tuesday, ‘He understand the assignment and he just took it and he got better and better and better. And now he’s in the same scenario in the league, so he’s been prepared for this for years now.”

Barclay said he wasn’t shocked Horvath had performed well early on, adding he ordered a Hornets Charger jersey.

“I’m just as proud of him,” Barclay said. “I get my hats and everything, but I just ordered my jersey. It’s authentic, numbers raised and everything. It’s gonna be here in a couple of days.”

The Kansas City Chiefs selected Karlaftis as the 39th pick of the 2022 NFL Draft, the first of his former teammates off the board in late April. The Boilermakers rank 124th out of 130 teams in the nation in penalties, which contributed to Purdue’s last-minute loss to Syracuse.

“Definitely anytime I coach, I try to do the best I can, and that’s what I did, and how and why I did it, and try to do the best I can to understand that,” Brohm said.

Even though FAU is in the top-four percent of yards per carry, ranking seventh nationally among run defenses, Purdue will still look to cut down on undisciplined mistakes like Perry.

“Even during the game, a figure that Brohm was ‘probably the best I’ve ever worked with it, I have to make sure that happens, and we all need to do a better job, including myself, with making sure we win the penalty battle.”

Sixth-year quarterback Aidan O’Connell has thrown for 1,992 yards this season, helping the Boilermakers rank ninth in the FBS in passing yards per game. FAU’s quarterback Nicky Perry has thrown for 873 yards this season. He is also tied for fourth in the FBS in passing touchdowns with 10, and has an additional two from rushing.

One caveat is Perry has thrown a fourth game, one more than O’Connell. Despite one fewer game, O’Connell has thrown the ball in more than Perry. O’Connell averages 33.3 percent on average of around 214.3 yards per game, fourth nationally, while Perry has thrown an average of about 211.2 yards per game, 45th nationally.

Purdue will still be without senior linebacker Alice Grooms, who has been sidelined since suffering an injury in Week 1. A senior running back King Doerue and senior wide receiver David Bell both injured in Week 0 and Week 1, respectively.

“The homecoming game will kickoff at 7:30 p.m. Saturday and will be televised on Big Ten Network.