

Purdue University Football Media Conference

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Jeff Brohm

Press Conference

JEFF BROHM: Well, we're definitely excited to be accepted to the Foster Farms Bowl. I know it's something our players and our staff have worked extremely hard for.

I'm looking forward for the opportunity to go out west and play a great opponent in Arizona, and I know our players will have a great month of practice. We'll get a lot out of these practices. It will be very useful for us and hopefully go out there and play a very competitive and entertaining game and try to find a way to win.

But I'm very happy for our seniors, especially, because of all the hard work they have put in. I know they will be excited to go out there and try to finish the season the right way.

Q. You've coached a number of Bowl games. Do you feel that experience will help you in this one, and what's different about coaching a Bowl game than just a regular-season game?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think Bowl games are a lot of fun to play in, and without question, you know, it's a testament to the hard work that your team has put in. Our guys will be excited about this opportunity. It's been a long time coming, and you know, our goal is to go out there and win the football game.

I think we'll have good practices. We'll enjoy the time in San Francisco. Our guys will enjoy finding a way to go out there and compete at a high level on a big stage, and hopefully we can find a way to win.

Q. You mentioned San Francisco. You played a couple years in San Francisco. What's it going to be like for you to return to that same place?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I'm looking forward to it without question. A lot of good memories. You know, those were some fun days and to have an opportunity to go back to that same area and get out on the new San Francisco 49er field I think will be a lot of fun for me, and it will be a lot of fun for our players. It's a great stadium. Our players hopefully will respond and go out there and show what Purdue is all about.

Q. What memories stand out from your time with the San Francisco 49ers?

JEFF BROHM: Well, for me, it was probably three of



most fun years I had playing in the National Football League. I was with a tremendous team, a team with a lot of history and tradition. They won a lot of Super Bowls. We had some of the best players of all time: Steve Young, Jerry Rice, John Taylor, Brent Jones, Ken Norton, Merton Hanks, all those guys.

Really to get an opportunity to play around them and a lot of great coaches, that's kind of where I really learned so much about the game at the highest level and how they went about their business, how they found a way to win; the hard work they put in.

But also the confidence they had when they took the field. It's one thing that definitely stood out to me when I was with the 49ers: When they took the game field, there wasn't a question they were going out there to win and they were going to find a way to do it.

You know, a lot of fun times, a lot of good memories and a lot of great Hall of Fame players and coaches that I was around.

Q. How about when you look at the opponent, Arizona, what stands out?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I haven't looked at a whole lot of them yet. I know they have a tremendously talented athletic quarterback that's been able to run for a lot of yards and is very dynamic and probably is a similar version to Lamar Jackson but maybe younger. The little bit I've seen, he's maybe a little bit of a stronger runner, so that's going to create a lot of problems for us.

We're going to have to find a way to contain him and not allow him to single-handedly beat us. To have a chance to coach against Coach Rodriguez, he's an outstanding coach and he's played in a lot of Bowl games himself. I think it will be a great matchup and we'll have to, for us, find a way to keep it close and get in the second half with an opportunity to win.

Q. I believe this will be the first time this year you're playing a Pac 12 team. Is there anything about the style of play of the Pac 12 that stands out to you or that will present a certain challenge?

JEFF BROHM: Well, not in particular. I think when you think of the league, in my opinion, you think of, you know, high-scoring offenses, a lot of opponents, and

I'm sure, you know, just me looking at the scores that they have had, that's how they won a lot of football games. They have had some big wins. They beat some good football teams.

I know they have had a great turnaround from the year before and they kind of found their guy at quarterback. He's going to be there for a long time, and normally when you do that, you have a chance to do some special things. Just a very improved football team that knows how to win.

Q. Just can you bring us up-to-date on some of the injury situations, at least from what you know, with guys having a week here to maybe recover a little bit, perhaps namely like Bentley, Knox, Sparks, maybe Hopkins?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I'm hopeful that we can get most of these guys back. I know Ja'Whaun Bentley, I think is feeling a lot better. We're going to take a good break to give those guys time to get refreshed and to heal up. I think he's already feeling very good right now. I anticipate him probably practicing once we start back up, if not very shortly after that.

You know, Jared Sparks in a very similar situation. I think if he's not practicing at the end of this week, probably by the end of the following week, I think he'll be ready to go.

D.J. Knox had surgery on his thumb and we're going to try to get him back for the game. He may have to wear a cast on his hand for the game. We'll see how he does with what that may cause him maybe have to carry the ball under the opposite arm, but we'll see how that progresses.

And then with Hopkins, he had a back injury. I'm hopeful we'll get him back for the game, but I don't know that for sure yet. We'll have to kind of take that slow in the next couple weeks and see where he's at.

Q. What is your schedule, practice schedule, approximately? Do you have any idea of that yet?

JEFF BROHM: Well, this is the start of the second week of a three-week period of active contact, a period of recruiting, which is very crucial for us. All of our coaches are out and about trying to make sure we do all the things necessary to add the best class we can.

We're probably going to come back and practice this upcoming Thursday and Friday -- excuse me, I take that back. This upcoming Friday and Saturday when a lot of our coaches are getting back, and we have a few recruits in on visits. And then we'll allow them some more time off for their finals on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and then we'll probably report

back and start practice on that next Thursday.

Q. What's your general philosophy on practicing young guys versus, you know, getting veterans ready for the game?

JEFF BROHM: Well, the No. 1 goal is to win the football game, so we'll definitely have that in mind. But to practice, it's a very valuable opportunity for your young guys to develop and get a lot of reps, and we're going to make sure that we utilize that to the full capacity and I think our guys will enjoy the fact that we can get that done.

I know that, you know, it's important that we spend that extra time doing that, and you know, I do want our guys to enjoy the extra practices and the Bowl practices that we have. So we are going to make it fun for those guys.

But we want to compete. We want to get better. And without question, we want to make sure all of our guys are getting meaningful reps. Doesn't matter how long we need to stay out there; we want to make sure we get that done because these practices can really affect and help shape your team for the future.

Q. What were the 24 hours like, at least according to some on Twitter, in the Twitterverse, you were very close to being at Tennessee?

JEFF BROHM: Well, you guys saw it. I normally try not to comment on all that rumor and speculation because a lot of times, that's what it is.

Q. Did you talk to Tennessee?

JEFF BROHM: Well, like I said, I'd rather not comment on any of the rumors and speculation, because that's what it was.

Q. On another topic, do you expect that everybody academically will be good to go for the Bowl game? I know there's some questionable guys back in the fall.

JEFF BROHM: Well, we are going to have a few guys that we'll see how it plays out, and I'm not for sure how it's going to go.

You know, we've tried to work as hard as we can with some of those to make sure that they get over the hump. We won't know possibly until the last minute whether they will be with us.

Q. What's the best part of this, being Bowl-eligible? You mentioned the practices.

JEFF BROHM: It's a goal we set at the beginning of the year -- I know our guys, it meant a lot to them. It meant a lot to our fan base. It's something that we worked extremely hard for and we set out to try to

achieve, regardless of what other people may have thought and to just barely get there is a great accomplishment.

So I know we were happy and excited and to do it in the bucket game, it was a lot of fun. You know, this is a chance for our guys to have some extra fun, but it's a Bowl game and you want to win it. I think our guys understand that. It's one thing we'll try to do around here, is we will compete to be the best.

When we go out there, we're going to expect to win the game, and I want to make sure our guys, while we have a good time and enjoy the experience, when it's time to do football, we're definitely doing that and we're definitely preparing to find a way to win. A lot of times, just like during the season, you know, these games, if you can find a way to win against a good opponent on a big stage, it can really elevate your program and give your guys a lot of confidence. Because of that, I think that it's important that we do well.

Q. Do you feel like there was a turning point, for a lack of a better term, this season, that helped you get to this point?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think our season was a little bit of a roller coaster ride. We definitely worked hard in spring practice and summer, fall camp. Not really till the first half of the Louisville game did our guys really kind of in my opinion believe that they could achieve more than they thought. And that was a pivotal point for us; that even though we didn't win the game, I thought it gave us a lot of confidence and it helped us start the season fast and on a good note.

We were very competitive. I think we hit a little lull in the middle there and struggled and didn't play as well as we would like. But you know, that happens in almost every season and you try to eliminate as much as you can and figure it out as fast as you can.

I do think that we were able to respond and figure it out and go on the road and beat a good Iowa team in a tough environment, which was huge for our confidence, and it helped us coming back home, and playing in the bucket game against IU to figure out a way to win that. So I think that the way we finished was a very positive note.

Q. How do you explain that? Because as we know, this is a team that has not been able to finish the season or games, for that matter, strong, lately. What do you attribute that to; that this team was resilient, when it hasn't been?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think we've got great senior leadership. We've got some great, productive, successful players in our senior class that have done

well and they have kind of carried the team.

As the year went on, we tried to elevate the play of the others to help those guys finish strong. It was important to all of our guys to do that, to make sure that we give them something to go out on that they really felt good about. I know our coaches worked extremely hard to figure out a way to put our players in the best position to succeed and win and that was important for them.

I think we all just kind of stuck together, tried to ground the thing out, be as positive as we can when things are tough. Point the finger at ourselves first, always, before we try to fix problems, and I think because of that, you know, we were able to turn the corner.

But I do -- I am very appreciative to these seniors. They have stuck with it. They didn't have to. They could have not believed in what we were telling them and what we were trying to sell and do, and they have had great attitudes, great work ethics, and I'm extremely happy that they get to advance and play in a Bowl game.

Q. What do you mean specifically when you say to stay positive with these guys? Is that a Sunday where you go in and point out all the good things? How do you do that when it gets tough?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think when you're losing, it's never fun. First thing you want to do is maybe say, well, Johnny over here didn't do his job or this didn't happen. I think the first thing you always want to do is say, from the top down, let's figure out what I need to do better and what we all need to do better, and then we'll address our team and help those guys get better.

But at the same time, you can't lose confidence. Some of these games, the margin between winning and losing is so small that it could just be a few small things if you get fixed and corrected, will give yourself a chance to win. I think that our guys had a good attitude. We had great practices every week, really, whether we won or lost.

I felt like we really practiced well and our guys were into it. They were trying to get better and competing. And normally if you just kind of stick with it and just gradually try to improve and not get down on themselves individually and as a unit, you can make progress, and I think that we were able to do that.

Q. How many of the 15 Bowl practices will you utilize?

JEFF BROHM: Well, you know, probably right now, I don't think we're going to use all of them. I would guess probably around 13. We kind of put a tentative

map out based on which Bowl game we were going to go to. I think that we'll make sure we use enough but I want to make sure our guys are fresh and reenergized and that when we get to this game, we're healthy and ready to go.

Q. You've been out on the road recruiting, I think visiting a lot of your current commitments. Just the reception that you're getting after the last two wins of the season and the bucket, and how do you anticipate that reception going when you're visiting guys you're trying to get?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think the reception has been great and I think it's been very positive. Without question, the last game we had against IU and the way we finished was very positive reception, not only in all the areas we went to, but definitely in-state to believe it or not, this past Wednesday, we had positive reception and we had a lot of guys that are very interested in being a part of it.

They understand that, you know, we've got a good thing going. We've got great resources. We've had great support this year. We've been able to improve. We've been able to kind of showcase the Purdue brand and its out there more now. You know, it's been a positive response.

I think it's just got to be something that we gradually try to improve each and every year. We always want to try to continue to get better and get the best student athletes that want to be a part of it. And every year, every little thing's going to matter, you know, from how you play on the field, your win/loss record, the trust you can build and the relationships you can build throughout the in-state areas and also down in the southeast and even in the Midwest where we hit certain areas where people and coaches, players, feel comfortable with what we're selling, how we're doing it.

Really, it's the trust factor where the guys that know us and know what we're all about, it's been a very good reception. It's just something that we've got to consciously improve on.

Q. Is there a plan that you can use that from a momentum-standpoint when you're out recruiting or is it just, however you try to approach it or sell it? Is there a blueprint to the season that you've had and the late season-success that you can actually sell to recruits?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think what we try to do is you can't back down from any team you're competing against. You've got to be willing to go in any door to explore every option out there, regardless of where things stand and sell what you're all about. The more you do that, around the coaches and the players, the

more they trust you; the more you deliver on what you're selling, then these coaches and parents can trust who you are, what you're about and what your coaches are about, is always positive.

So we want to be aggressive. You know, some battles, you know, we've got to be smart and understand, okay, we may not fight this one. But in general, we want to try to fight as many as we can, and I think it's important our coaches continue to believe that -- and you know, attack at full speed, straight ahead and not hold back.

I think if we continue to do that, like I said, I think, you know, it's all important to get a few difference-makers, and the more difference-makers we can get that want to be a part of Purdue Football and the more we can develop them and utilize their skills, and like I said, opinion to improve every year, every little bit's going to help.

Q. Do you have any history with Rich Rodriguez?

JEFF BROHM: When I was at Louisville as a coach, we played West Virginia quite a bit and played them in some big games. I don't know exactly what we were ranked, but there was a couple where we were both ranked in the Top-10 and played. I think that's when they had Pat White and Slaton at running back, and we had my brother, Brian, and Michael Bush back there. Just had some great battles. Some high-scoring contests. Games that went down to the wire.

Coach Rodriguez has coached a lot of football and he knows what he's doing. He loves to run his spread attack and try to score points and have some fun with it. You know, I think he's gotten to know this football team.

Like I said, he found his quarterback, which is always important, and this guy's very dynamic and he's definitely put the ball in his hand and let him do his thing.