

University of Iowa Football

Media Conference

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Barbara Burke

Phil Parker



BARBARA BURKE: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks so much for your patience and coming out today. Before I make a comment on the bowl selection, we did want to share some news that I'm sure most if not all of you are aware that we lost a great Hawkeye this weekend in Bump Elliott, longtime administrator here at Iowa, 21 years as the director of athletics, also served at Michigan and Purdue.

With his passing, the Iowa Hawkeyes' plan tomorrow night to do a moment of silence prior to the men's basketball game and then at halftime we will show a video. In addition, more information about the services will be forthcoming as we get that from the family. Just a great man in Bump Elliott. Without question Bump will always be remembered as a great Hawkeye. So we are very, very sad, and our condolences from President Harreld and Athletic Director Barta to the Elliott family go out today.

Now let's talk about the bowl game and what we have coming forward. Very excited today to announce that we have accepted the opportunity to participate in the San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl. It's been 28 years since the Iowa Hawkeyes participated in the bowl. A big shout-out and thanks to Mark Neville, the CEO of the bowl committee, and also the bowl committee. In addition, congratulations to USC. We look forward to that competition on the West Coast.

We're so excited to participate in the bowl and have another opportunity for our teams to stand out here on a national level. San Diego is an awesome host city, a great community to host a bowl game. They're known as the RedCoats if you've been to that bowl lately. The RedCoats do a wonderful job of hosting our fans and our team and our coaches and staff.

I do want to say congratulations to our coaches and our staff for just a great season, 9-3, work is not done yet, have another game to participate in, and we look forward to the outcome of that.

In addition, to all of our Hawkeye fans, get online, get those tickets because we look forward to having thousands of Hawkeye fans come and join us in the West Coast.

I know that you have received some information via email and releases that have already gone out, so at this time I'll just open it for questions that you might have either on the process or the transition to get out to San Diego, any questions you might have bowl related.

Q. Have you decided on a timeline yet for the team and when you travel there?

BARBARA BURKE: Yes, the team, support parties, administration will head out to San Diego on December 21.

Q. When did you know this was a probability and not just a possibility?

BARBARA BURKE: Yes, so the bowl process is interesting, as you all might imagine. We start to look at a variety of opportunities that we have, and it really wasn't until about between 2:30 and 2:45 that Gary was able to give us a call and tell us that we had been invited officially to the Holiday Bowl. And let me explain why Gary isn't here today, either. As you well know, he was in Dallas at CFP meetings, and he's either on the plane or getting ready to board the plane to return, but he really did want to be here today and he does send his congratulations to the team, as well. We got a call from him about 2:45 this afternoon.

PHIL PARKER: Thank you for being here today. I wanted to mention that obviously everyone knows Kirk is in Foxboro watching James play, and I think that was a great moment for him to go there, but he does share that he's excited about the Holiday Bowl and playing USC. I've been here for 21 years and I haven't been out to the Holiday Bowl, so it's going to be an experience for us. We're looking forward to it, and obviously USC is very talented in what they do.

We're very pleased with our team this year as far as winning nine games is tough. We go out there, we prepare every week, and all the way since January, you start preparing for these games, and you only go out there 12 times and see what you can do, and I was looking at the -- you go look at the top 25 and just see how many good teams are out there, it's hard to win. But the good thing is we have an opportunity to go out and play a good USC team, have an opportunity to get 10 wins. That will be a great challenge for us to do that.

Look at the seniors, how many games that they've won. A guy that's been here for five years have won 46 games, and that's a lot of games to be won as a college athlete, and we're very fortunate in that aspect of it.

But we're excited about going, and hopefully the Hawkeye fans would love to travel out there and have a good vacation over there during Christmas.

Q. Have you watched USC, its passing game, or seen the stats of its most recent game?

PHIL PARKER: No, I have not. I do keep an eye out. Sometimes I get home late some nights and start watching them out there. They have some athletes. We'll get on it soon enough. You had to bring that up with the first question (laughter)... it's definitely a challenge.

Q. How will you guys handle practice moving forward? Do you have a schedule?

PHIL PARKER: We have a schedule, and we'll practice tomorrow morning. We've had two practices already, and really basically what we're doing is just trying to improve on our fundamentals and getting better as a football player, and we've done that the last two days, and then tomorrow will be another day.

Really what we're going to be doing is really practicing Iowa against Iowa. We won't really get into the game plan until about 10 days, maybe nine days before the game and start preparing and start looking at them and understand what they are and what we have to do. But I think our kids understand that. They have finals to go through here. It's going to be a tough situation for them. But it's just like any other day for them when they have to go to school, they've got to go to class and they've got exams, and then I think once we get out there and focus more on the game plan completely, it'll be a good time for those guys.

Q. What's kind of the general message? Some really short bowl prep here.

PHIL PARKER: I think what you do, you lose a little bit. When you start playing on January 1st or 2nd and you're playing, you have a little bit more time to develop more guys. It's like an extra spring practice. Here it's a little bit shorter, condensed. We're going to have to be a little bit more sense of urgency of getting things done, and you can't wait until the last minute. Obviously we should have things done before we get on that plane to go out to the Holiday Bowl.

Q. How does it impact recruiting for you guys?

PHIL PARKER: Well, at the end of the week here, we've got one more week out there we'll actually have to go and then there's a dead period. So it's been

pretty good. I think the way recruiting has gone, and most of our kids have been on campus already, they've committed to you or they're waiting to sign, and you're really going out there and making sure everything is okay academically, everything is going all right and making sure that they still have the same interests that we do, so I think that's been good. Kind of looking at underclassmen, and I think there's a big dead period in there, so that's kind of -- we'll kind of figure that out to help us out a little bit.

Q. I know this is a time of year when position switches might happen. Have you guys discussed that? Is there anybody that's switching positions at this time?

PHIL PARKER: Not right now. Most of the guys we have, we have them in the right spot. Obviously for me personally, what we do on defense a little bit, we might move some guys, whether he's playing Mike or whether he's going to play Will or play outside linebacker. I kind of do the same thing in the back end and have some guys if they can play some multiple positions it helps us out, and this is a good time to do it.

Q. Historically when you've faced a high-volume passing team, you haven't always had the 4-2-5 in place. How much will that help this time around?

PHIL PARKER: I think it must have been a year ago or a year and a half ago when we were facing Wisconsin we made that transition. I think any time when we can match personnel, it's going to be good for us. We've adapted pretty well, and I think that's going to help us out in the future, which I think it's helped us out this last season.

Q. We haven't talked to you really since Belton got thrown in there pretty much full time. What was your assessment of how he played down the stretch?

PHIL PARKER: I thought he played better. I think when he first comes in here, he struggled I think a little bit in the beginning, I think away from home, being on campus, being in a different environment, and he really didn't get the hang of it. And then I think as he kept on going that he had to get in a position where he started doing some things, and I thought he played at a high level towards the end of the season.

Q. Can you talk about AJ against Nebraska? Defensive ends don't often get 14 tackles.

PHIL PARKER: He's been improving, and if you look at the beginning of the season maybe towards the end of the season, I thought he kept on improving week to week maybe just a little bit. But I thought the last couple games he really played well, and I thought the Nebraska game kind of tipped off that he has the capability of doing some things, and he's playing hard

and he made some plays that really helped us win the game.

Q. Do you expect anybody to leave the team for the NFL before bowls?

PHIL PARKER: I don't see that right now. I think they're excited. We're going to play on the 27th, and it's going to be the last time that we get together as a team. I think everybody is looking forward to that. I don't foresee anybody saying, hey, I'm going to drop out because the NFL is there. I don't think that's going to happen.

Q. How about the newness of everything? You have the routine down in Tampa you guys have been there so much, but how about experiencing something you guys have never done?

PHIL PARKER: I don't think it really pertains to the coaches as much. We're going to go, we're going to find the place where we practice, and we've got a system that we have. It's going to be very similar to here. We're going to go into meetings, have practice, going to watch the tape, and everybody that goes there is probably going to -- just watching our fans they're going to have a great opportunity to explore, so it might be different for them. But really for the coaches, I mean, we're usually in the hotel room, in the meeting room and on the practice field, and then we get to the game when the game tells us to get there. But it doesn't change for us.

Q. Do you have anything to say about the passing of Bump Elliott and the respect for him?

PHIL PARKER: I have a lot of respect for the Elliott family, and that was heartfelt when I first came here and I always had a lot of times that I had a chance to talk to him, and obviously his son when he was first here -- when I was here he was still around on staff and I have a lot of memories of Bump, and he's going to be missed by everybody. He's always a Hawkeye, and once a Hawkeye, always a Hawkeye, and I just remember the way he could deliver messages to you when you talked to him. A lot of respect for the family. A lot of respect for Bump.

Q. When you look at some of your DB's that were either injured early or like a Kaevon -- I assume Kaevon and Julius are going to redshirt because they can, and DJ, how does their progress go throughout the season while they were kind of out of the limelight, per se?

PHIL PARKER: Well, it's tough for kids. Kaevon had a chance, an opportunity to start one game, and then all of a sudden he had an injury that knocked him out, and Jack came in and did a good job. He never really got back to the flow of taking that job back over.

But the good thing right about now is those kids have a chance to improve and keep putting stuff on film. I try to tell them, I evaluate everything you do, okay. Can I trust you, can you be on the field, and are you going to be able to help us win. Are you the best for the rest of the 10 guys. And I think all those guys understand that, and I think they see a bigger picture of it now, once we've been in the first two practices. I see them guys; their intensity has picked up, and especially when they know that some guys, hey, might be leaving, graduation, hey, you see an opportunity at corner, OJ is leaving, might have an opportunity to, hey, who's going to be the starter. I do see a little bit of difference in how they're practicing the last couple days.

Q. You have a hole in the middle at defensive tackle after this game going into next year, and at middle linebacker. Do you have any players that you think you need to start taking a jump to make sure that they're in part of the rotation next year?

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, there's a lot of kids that you start looking at. One guy right now that played just a little bit, that's Noah Shannon, that's going to have to step up a little bit and try to take on that role of competing and going full time and being the starter. I think there's other guys, you look at -- as a group of linebackers, we have a good, good group of linebackers that's going to be a great challenge for them where they end up and who's the starters. But overall, we expect everybody to improve every day, and we've been working at it and some are sitting there and haven't played yet, you haven't seen them yet, and there's always this surprise that always comes through. We're looking forward to it.