

Weekly Press Conference - Head Coach James Franklin (Iowa) Penn State University - 11/17/20



Opening Statement:

I would like to open up with a statement. Something that I was thinking about laying in my bed last night that I put together that I wanted to put out there.

The football that I know and love brings people together and embraces differences. Black, white, brown. Catholic, Jewish or Muslim. Rich or poor. Rural or urban. Republican or Democrat. Long hair, short hair, no hair. They are all in that locker room together.

Teams all over this country are the purest form of humanity that we have. We don't judge. We embrace

differences. We live, we learn, we grow, we support and we defend each other. We're a family.

Penn State Football, Penn State University, and Happy Valley provide the same opportunities to embrace one another 12 Saturdays each fall. PSU Football brings people together like very few things on this planet. 110,000 fans from all different backgrounds throughout our region, from all different parts of the state; and they are hugging and high-fiving and singing Sweet Caroline together.

This is my football. This is the game that I love and most importantly, my players that I love and will defend like sons. Ultimately this is the definition and embodiment of what we are all about.

Lastly, [Jonathan Sutherland](#) is one of the most respected players in our program. He's the ultimate example of what our program is all about. He's a captain. He's a Dean's List honor student. He's confident. He's articulate. He's intelligent. He's thoughtful. He's caring and he's committed. He's got two of the most supportive parents and I would be so blessed if my daughters would marry someone with his character and integrity one day.

Now, back to Iowa. Iowa. Iowa. Iowa. Iowa. Iowa. Iowa and Iowa.

Seems somewhat ridiculous, but I'm going to talk about the Purdue game right now, because that's our normal routine.

Players of the Week on offense, winners: [Jahan Dotson](#) and [Noah Cain](#). On defense, [Shaka Toney](#) and [Lamont Wade](#), and on special teams, [Journey Brown](#).

Talking about our next opponent, Iowa. Have so much respect for Kirk Ferentz and their program. The consistency that they have had I think is incredible in a profession where

there's not a whole lot of that left. He's done an unbelievable job for that university; the consistency on their staff.

It's amazing, you put the tape on, especially on the defensive side of the ball, it looks the same as it did four years ago, and I hope that [doesn't] come off the wrong way -because I mean that as the ultimate compliment. They do what they do, and they do it really well.

Obviously going into Kinnick Stadium is going to be a challenge. We look forward to being able to wave to the children and the Children's Hospital, one of the most special traditions in all of college football.

We also know how successful that they have been playing in these type of games: Ohio State, No. 3; Nebraska, No. 17; Michigan, No. 2; Michigan, No. 15; Michigan State, No. 5. We know how successful they have been in these types of games.

Returning 12 starters. You look at them offensively, Brian Ferentz is their offensive coordinator. Done a great job. You look at who they are, they are an 11-personnel and 12-personnel team. They'll also get into 21 and 22. They are maybe a little bit different than how they have been in years past stylistically.

On offense, we're impressed with Tristan Wirfs, the offensive tackle, and really both offensive tackles, Alaric Jackson, number 77. The quarterback, Nate Stanley, big, good-looking, seasoned, experienced quarterback. I was kind of really impressed with him at the Big Ten media days. He is a big, good-looking sucker.

Then wide receiver No. 6, [Ihmir] Smith-Marcette, and then wide receiver No. 89 is also a return specialist, Nico [Ragaini].

Defensively, Phil Parker does as good a job as anybody in the country. Obviously their defense is ranked extremely high and very well thought of in scoring defense. Been there for 21 years, seven years as the defensive coordinator.

Again, you look at what they do defensively. They are a four-down bench front. Mainly a two-high team with variations of one-high, whether it's cover three or fire zone pressures.

You look at them again, their scoring defense is ranked third in the country, third in FBS, third in the Big Ten. We are very, very impressed with their defensive end, A.J. Epenesa, No. 94, No. 11 Michael Ojemudia, their cornerback.

And their safety, No. 9, Geno Stone, we've very impressed with him, a kid from Pennsylvania and I think he's playing extremely well. It's hard to watch a young man from Pennsylvania playing at another program in our conference playing so well. I've got a lot of respect for him. He has really developed into one of the premiere players, in my mind, in the Big Ten.

Special teams. They do a great job, as we know, they gave us a bunch of challenges and fits last year on special teams. LeVar Woods does a great job for them, an Iowa grad. Does a great job.

Q. Can you describe [Shaka Toney's](#) growth since his arrival at Penn State, and can you cite an example or two of his leadership on the defensive line and on the team?

JF: Yeah, he's been -- he's been great. We couldn't be more proud of Shaka. I have a very close relationship with Shaka's mom and sisters and brother. You look how Shaka has grown, really, since he stepped on campus, in really every area.

You look at him physically, we actually recruited him to be an outside linebacker first at 195 pounds. Changed his mind during the recruiting process and wanted to be a defensive end. You know, just has embraced it. He's embraced the entire Penn State experience. I think our program has embraced Shaka. He's really turned into being one of the better defensive ends, I think for me to say a pass rush specialist, I don't think that's fair. I think he does so much more than that.

He is a fiercely loyal guy to his teammates, very respected in our locker room. Is fiercely loyal to his teammates. You know, he's really done well. I'm proud of him. I think he's going to continue to do great things here at Penn State. I think he's got a bright future after Penn State.

I'm really proud of him. Really in every area, he's a really good, example of a young man coming to Penn State and taking advantage of all the resources. I'm really proud of him and I will also say that I think his family has been a big part of it. You know, I think we're able to work together because one of Shaka's greatest strengths and weaknesses, he can be stubborn at times.

But I think because we have such a great relationship with the whole family, we work together. Shaka has got great perspectives. He's thoughtful. He's intelligent. He cares about his teammates. He cares about a lot of different subjects. You know, and he's been great. I've learned a lot from Shaka.

Appreciate Shaka, and I know our team does, as well, and I think what you saw on Saturday, you're just going to continue to see from him.

I think the thing that probably people don't appreciate enough is how intelligent he is. His football IQ is off the charts.

So couldn't be more excited about Shaka and his future at Penn State and very appreciative of how he's gone about his business.

Q. Through the first month, how do you think *Sean Clifford* has handled the leadership role, and how do you think the rest of the team has responded to him so far?

JF: Really good. It's kind of how he's wired. I also think he's been groomed for this. I take a lot of pride that we've developed our quarterbacks in-house.

I love his approach. He's been aggressive since, really, the day he stepped on campus from a football perspective, from a weight room perspective. Really, all of it, and from a leadership perspective. He's probably more vocal than what Trace [McSorley] was.

But he is fiery and he's competitive, and he understands how to prepare. He understands that playing the quarterback position is a lifestyle. You know, you're not the quarterback when you step on the football field. You're the quarterback when you leave your house in the morning. You're the quarterback when you go to bed and put your head on the pillow. Everybody knows that you're the quarterback on campus, and you need to understand that.

I think I've said this before, is if you think that's pressure, then you probably shouldn't be playing quarterback, but that's the reality of it, even at little old East Stroudsburg, that was ingrained in me and taught to me. You know, playing quarterback is a lifestyle. It really is.

And to be honest with you, I think that's kind of permeated through our entire program; that, you know, *Shaka Toney* knows being a part of Penn State Football and being a defensive lineman, it's a lifestyle. It's not just showing up and what you do on the field. It's all of it.

Q. Noah Cain came to Penn State via, I believe it was Louisiana, Texas, Florida. How did those experiences he had in those places shape him into the player he is now?

JF: Well, I think the fact that, obviously him having a little bit of a different path, playing really high competition, having to compete at a really high level very early on. It's funny, we talk about our running back room. He had the same running back situation in high school. Maybe not four, but multiple guys that he shared the ball with and took advantage of his opportunity.

He's prepared for this. Also got two parents that are very involved. Two parents that are very involved in the process. His parents are here all the time. Mom for games, Dad for games, and practices, really. They have just been great.

He's having a lot of early success. He's a very mature guy. You guys will get to know that as you get to know him more. He's a very mature guy. He's very well-liked and respected within our program. I don't think anybody is surprised by the success he's having, and as you guys know, we feel about that about all four of them.

Sometimes I think based on when a guy goes in a game or how the game is called at the time that the person is in there impacts it, as well, but we've got four guys that we feel really good about, and he's brought a lot of value to the room.

I saw a video that our social media people put out the other day of those guys, I think Noah was getting interviewed in the locker room, and the other running backs came in kind of messing with him.

I think Coach [Ja'Juan] Seider has done a really good job of the culture of that position and how much they care about each other and how much they support each other. It's really good. It's really good. It's really healthy. It's really positive.

Q. Your defense through five games, very highly-rated, ranked, regarded. Having said that, is there a next step for those guys for growth? Is there one, two areas, that you as a coach see, hey, we've still got to get better in this or that?

JF: Well, I think the first thing I would say is that we're one of only two programs in the country that are ranked in the top five in scoring offense and scoring defense. So I think we're playing at a really high level on both sides of the ball, and I think one compliments the other.

But yeah, I think for us, you know, protecting the football on offense and creating turnovers on defense is something that we always emphasize and believe in.

You know, creating explosive plays and eliminating explosive plays, both on offense and defense, are important. But you know, it's hard. It's hard to find a whole lot of things to be critical about with our defense right now.

I think the one area we could improve on is turnovers, getting a few turnovers. We'll see. Last time I gave a little bit of criticism in this meeting was against the defensive line and they weren't real happy about it, but they have responded fairly well.

So maybe if I bring up these turnovers, maybe we'll have, you know, 10 turnovers in the game on Saturday.

Q. Your guys seemed pretty fired up on Twitter last night. I just wondered how you keep this letter from becoming a distraction for your preparations for Iowa?

JF: I've kind of covered it. I'd like to really focus on Iowa moving forward.

You know, I'm pretty pleased with how our guys have handled it. But again, to your point, the way we keep our focus where it is, is by spending our time talking about Iowa and preparing for Iowa.

Again, it's not like we stick our heads in the sand and don't have an awareness of what's going on in our country or that we don't have an awareness of what's going on in our community or on campus.

But I also know that our guys want to continue building what we're building from a football-specific perspective and the way we do that is by sticking to our process and keeping things as consistent as we possibly can.

Q. With Iowa and Coach Ferentz, you said at the beginning, it's the same thing year after year after year. How do you think he's been able to sustain it for as long as he has? We don't see, for whatever it's worth, we don't see Top-10 recruiting classes at Iowa. We don't see what people think of as fancy X & O stuff, but what do you see there that's allowed him to be so consistent for so long?

JF: I think they are a program and a team that has an identity and have built towards that identity and recruited towards that identity and schemed towards that identity for a long time.

That starts with the head coach. That starts with the hiring and the ability to keep assistants for long periods of time, and I think what they have done a really good job is not allowing, you know, maybe what is the hot fad or the sexy current fad to impact them. You know, they are going to do it the way they do it. I look at Wisconsin, very similar in that light, as well and Iowa in that light.

When you're able to keep a head coach there as long as they have kept him there and they have an identity and the identity fits the university. The identity fits the community, and they get that. They know who they are and every day, they are building towards that, and when you have that, you've got a chance to have sustained success.

I think that may sound easier to do, to sit up here and say it, than it is to actually go out and do it because you look all over the country, and people are having a hard time replicating that.

I also think that it appears to me that it's appreciated there. You know, the level of consistency that they have is appreciated, is appreciated there. I think it's really kind of a combination of all of it.

Q. I wanted to ask you about something you mentioned earlier with Shaka, when he was 195-pounder in high school and you wanted him at outside linebacker. How important was playing defensive end to him then, and what made you guys think he could become the player there that he has?

JF: Well, it wasn't really a big part of it early on. You know, I remember we offered him and literally he jumped up and did a cartwheel in the hallway, during -- I think it was late in the process during the contact period.

Mark Schmidt, his high school defensive coordinator was the head coach at my high school for a number of years. I've known him for a long time. He used to coach at Lock Haven. He's a good football guy. He knows football.

Kind of all of that. Really good high school program. Won the state championship. Had a bunch of opportunities. Had a bunch of offers. We knew we wanted him in our program. We weren't really sure what he was going to be. We were projecting him as an outside linebacker, although he played defensive end.

But again, just like I talked about, Iowa's program, I think Shaka knew his identity, and embraced it and pushed back on us and said, "This is what I want to do."

We felt strongly about him that we wanted him in the program and we're comfortable with giving him that opportunity at defensive end.

Although he's undersized, he is really strong. He understands how to use leverage and his intelligence, like I said before, is kind of off the charts. I think with Shaka, he knows who he is. He knows the type of player that he is. He knows his strengths. He knows his weaknesses and he plays a style of game that allows him to be successful.

So you know, we're very, very pleased with him.

Q. You may have answered some of this, but I wanted to ask you about playing at Iowa specifically, why are they so tough there? Anything you can pinpoint? The pink locker rooms? The atmosphere? The fans being on top of the stadium? Why are they so difficult to play there?

JF: I think obviously when you're able to have a home-field advantage, you're tough to play at home. There's a number of programs in the country that are like that. We have obviously a distinct home-field advantage.

There's some programs that have it and there's others that don't. It's a combination of the place will be sold out; it will be loud; they are right on top of you the way the stadium's built. It's not one of those old school stadiums that used to have a track around it. They are right on top of you.

I think the fact that they don't have pro sports teams there; they are the only show -- I mean, they are the show. They get great support from the state. They get great support from the community.

It's a place that not only with Coach Ferentz, but even before him, you know, they have had consistency. It's one of those places.

So I think for all the things that we just talked about is why they have a home-field advantage. It's loud. It's hostile. You know, they are on top of you. They feed off of their crowd. We hope to prepare our guys in a way that we can feed off the energy in the stadium. You know, this is why you come to Penn State, to play in games like this and in these types of environments.

Q. You have four safeties who seem to be playing at a pretty high level. What does that do for your defense in terms of the flexibility and how you're able to use them, especially when you can bring guys like [Jaquan] Brisker and [Jonathan] Sutherland off the bench?

JF: I think rotating those guys helps obviously keep them fresh. It also helps us in our nickel and dime package because we have a lot of guys that we believe in, and we also have a number of guys with different skill sets and different body types; that we can take advantage of those things, as well.

I think whenever you have depth and talent and trust, you know, trust in your players and the players trust in the coaches, then it allows to you do some pretty cool things based on matchups and personnel and also helps us on special teams a great deal, too.

We think it's a really good group. Coach [Tim] Banks has done a great job of developing those guys. He's a great resource for Coach [Brent] Pry as our co-defensive coordinator, a guy that has been a defensive coordinator for I think 15 years before coming to Penn State.

I think that's really valuable, because they are not only being coached by one of the better, if not the best safety coaches in the country, but also a guy that thinks big picture and understands how all the parts fit together. His coordinating experience I think helps from that standpoint, too.

Q. What does it mean to go to the Midwest, maybe get some extra time Friday on the road with it being a night game, and how beneficial is that to get your guys out there?

JF: Yeah, I don't think we are doing anything. I think obviously, depending on where you're at and how many guys you're actively recruiting in those areas, that it makes sense.

I think this one, we'll probably spend some time in the hotel watching film and grading tape and having some discussions and extra meetings, getting ready for the guys.

And the other thing, to be honest with you, it's allowing the coaches and staff to sleep in a little bit. We grind at it pretty good, and when you don't even have that Saturday morning, that's where the 12 o'clock games, going out -- I went out Friday night, and then up early Saturday morning; that Saturday morning, even if it's just an extra hour, is helpful.

From what I understand, our plan, we're not going out on Friday. We'll sleep in and get ready for the game and go from there.

Q. You mentioned Iowa's kind of their identity, their offense, that's who they are and what the university. Is do you feel like you guys have that at this point in the season for your offense, that identity and do you kind of know what it is, or is it still evolving?

JF: Yes. Yeah, I think, again, you don't get to the point where you're No. 5 in the country in scoring defense and scoring offense without an identity. I think the numbers back that up clearly.

Q. With the chunk plays, I know Sean said that he wants to be a little more accurate on those deep throws. Is there anything that you've noticed with those plays, anything he needs to fix or clean up?

JF: I think like always with the quarterback, it's footwork. It's funny, in the recruiting process, everybody wants to focus on the quarterback's release, or you hear about guys in college or the NFL; that they are going to go to this quarterback guru and fix their release and that kid's been throwing in the backyard with his dad since he was three years old and they are going to change his release in six months.

I've always been a believer -- you know, obviously you want the release to be as clean as possible, but you watch, there's been a lot of guys to be successful in the NFL -- we played against Philip Rivers at NC State four years in a row, and then have watched him now, I think he's in year 15 in the NFL, an unbelievable NFL career. You look at him coming out of high school and college, he did not have a traditional release.

We're big believers that the game of football is played from the ground up at every single position and if you start with a really good stance and start and you've got clean footwork to allow the quarterback to be in rhythm so he's on time with his throws, then you have a chance to be successful.

The old days of the three-step drop, the three-hit-and-throw, the three-and-a-hitch, the five-hit-and-throw, the five-and-hitch, and the seven-step drop, as well, that was pretty distinct, pretty clear.

Where now, with all the different things you're doing in an RPO offense, with the ride and decide and things like that, it actually makes the footwork even more challenging. There's just been some times where we haven't been as clean with our footwork and it is hard to be consistently accurate if your feet aren't where you need them to be, where you want them to be.

There are some things I know he's working on and [offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach] Ricky [Rahne] is working on trying to refine. Overall, been pretty good. You look at our completion percentage and things like that, we have done a pretty good job.

This week and as the year progresses, our margin of error is small, and we've got to make sure that we're putting Sean and the offense and the defense and the special teams in the best chance to be successful, and putting our players in the best chance to be successful and that's always going to come back to fundamentals.

I think that's one of the things that you have to be careful of is at the end of the day, the most consistent programs, people get way too caught up in the schemes -- and schemes matter, don't get me wrong. But typically, the most successful, the most consistent programs are going to be the most fundamentally sound, week-in and week-out. Who blocks the best; who tackles the best; who protects the football, those type of things.

At a certain point, you really have to be really good in every area, but we're always going to be a fundamentalist program.

Q. You've often talked about identifying potential game-wreckers on the other team, having a plan for them, because they can change the game plan. Would you view A.J. Epenesa in that light and can you speak to maybe the challenge that Rasheed Walker might have? He lines up on the right side a little bit and Rasheed has five starts.

JF: Yeah, I think that's more than fair. I would say both defensive ends we've been really impressed with, both defensive ends.

Obviously Epenesa is the guy that got all the headlines coming into the season, but we've been really impressed with both of those guys, and Geno Stone. Those three guys on defense -- and I'm not slighting any of them. They have got a bunch of really good players. But those three guys consistently jump off at us.

And then on offense, it's obviously the two offensive tackles, the quarterback and the wide receiver group, especially with the Smith-Marcette young man.

So they are the guys that you go into it saying, 'we'd better have an awareness of where they are on every single play and down and we'd better have a plan from a schematic standpoint that accounts for them, too.'

Q. What did Fred Hansard put in behind the scenes in the off-season to get himself this opportunity and is he playing the best football of his career at Penn State?

JF: Yeah, we love Fred. Again, another great example, unbelievable mom and dad. Fred is a guy that walks into a room, and the whole room lights up. Fred's got unbelievable personality. Got a huge smile on his face. Very appreciative of his opportunity here at Penn State.

Has fun, whatever he does. May be the best dancer on the team. I think he could give Marcus Allen a run for his money. I know Marcus is kind of legendary in that category, but Fred, it's always been more impressive to me when you see a guy who is 6-4, 315 pounds doing it, it's kind of like Muggsy Bogues in the dunk contest, more impressive watching a 5-9 guy do it.

Fred is a special guy. We knew that doing the recruiting process. He's had some injuries that he's had to overcome that's affected his development, but he's battled through it. He really has. He's been great.

There's a brotherhood at that position and really throughout our whole team, but [defensive line coach] Sean [Spencer] does a great job with it.

We're very pleased with Fred. He has a little different skill-set than maybe some of the other guys, but he's very intelligent, which I think is probably an under-appreciated trait in the game of football.

We are very pleased with him and expect him to continue to have an impact and we expect his role to continue to grow, or to continue to challenge guys, for more time, which is not only going to make him better but make the guys in front of him better.

We've always had a lot of confidence and faith in Fred, but it is nice to see a guy that's worked so hard and been such a great teammate to get some return on his investment, because it doesn't always work out that way.

Q. Talking about getting *KJ Hamler* the ball as much as appropriate; Purdue spent a lot of time and resources keeping him in check, especially after the first touchdown with the safety over the top. Do you expect to see that a lot going forward?

JF: All year.

Q. And when that happens, how do you feel your offense has done taking advantage of the things their defense is giving you?

JF: Yeah, just like the question you asked. People are going to have a plan for K.J. I think the common plan that you're going to see is what we call a bracket coverage, where you've got the outside linebacker, nickel, playing inside leverage and the safety over the top playing outside leverage or vice versa, and really double-teaming the guy on levels, not the obvious double-team at the line of scrimmage like you may see on a punt return type of deal with the gunner or the bullet on the outside. But more on different levels.

So obviously, we've got to put him in position to be able to make plays for us and get the ball in his hands, but not be so hard-headed about it because obviously no different in football, no different in life, no different in business, no different in anything else, when you're trying to take one thing away, you're creating an opportunity somewhere else, and you know, that's in every walk of life.

I think we've done a pretty good job of that. Obviously we've got other guys that make it challenging to do that because the defensive coordinators know that, as well. When they are bracketing K.J., then Jahan [Dotson] is probably one-on-one. *Daniel George* is probably one-on-one. [Pat] Freiermuth is probably one-on-one. [Justin] Shorter is probably one-on-one. So on and so forth.

It also removes a guy from maybe fitting in the run game the same way as they normally would. We have to understand that and that's where kind of the chess match comes in.

Q. Younger guys seem excited about doing things they haven't done before, whether that's going on the road or playing in a game that some people might say is more important than others. Is there value in having guys go on the road, not necessarily not knowing what they are getting themselves into, but being excited about going into an environment that some people might be afraid of?

JF: Yeah, I think as long as you prepare them for what the environment is going to be like, then yes, they can take that nervous energy, which is natural, or they can take that energy from the stadium and use it for yourself.

I thought we did that on the road at Maryland, and you know, again, most of you guys were there, it was a great environment in that fourth quarter.

What we have to do is our experienced players, we have to prepare them for the environment. We have to prepare the young guys that have never been in that environment before for what it's going to be like and our veteran players need to help with that, as well, but that's our process. That's what we do every single week.

We talk about it, Sunday through Friday. We talk about it in meetings. We talk about it in practice and we talk about it in the hotel. We talk about it before meals. There's very few things that I think surprise our guys because we're pretty thorough in how we go about preparing and explaining things, all the way back to summer camp, what it's going to be

like, the pink locker room, all of it. You know, getting our guys as prepared as we possibly can for it.

You know, some people hit me up about, are you going to go in and cover the walls and that kind of stuff. No, we are going to embrace it. I think the pink locker room is awesome. I think it's one of the better stories in college football. It's one of the better historical things in college football. You embrace all those things. You embrace waving to the children in the Children's Hospital.

We have a huge connection here with THON and Hershey, and although the game is really important, it's nowhere near in comparison to the battle and the fight that those kids in the hospital are going through.

It's having an awareness of all these things and respecting all these things and appreciating all these things, but making sure that we can kind of narrow that focus down to the things that we need to for those 60 minutes on the field.

Q. The last two games against Iowa have come down to the final play. What's your take on why this has become such an intense match-up these last two times?

JF: I think it goes back to the things I talked about before. They are a really good program. They have great pride. They have a tremendous identity and they play to that identity.

I talk all the time about 75 percent of college football teams will beat themselves by turning the ball over or penalties or whatever it may be. They are not one of those programs. You're going to have to beat them. They are not going to beat themselves.

Just got a lot of respect for how they go about their business. We have found a way to win tough games. We're going to have to do that again come Saturday. I'm always kind of looking at records. They had a pretty successful record against Penn State. I think they are one of the programs that had a winning record against Penn State.

But it's close. I always look at those things, because a lot of times you can focus at the time we've been here, but I look at it beforehand, as well.

Again, I think for all the reasons that I just stated is why the games have been so competitive and really that's what you want.

That's what makes college football so great. That's what I think makes the Big Ten so great is you can make an argument that our conference from top to bottom is good as any in the country. There's probably a conference out there that is maybe a little bit more top-heavy, but from top to bottom, you can make a pretty good argument, specifically with our side.

Q. Can you talk about what problems Nate Stanley creates as the opposing quarterback?

JF: Yeah, I think No. 1, you're talking about an experienced quarterback who has been there and done that. Plays with a lot of confidence. Up until last week, he had not thrown an interception this year.

He's a big, physical guy. I don't know if you guys remember early in the season, Idaho had that quarterback that we would get in there and sack him, and like, you know, we were like jumping on and just trying to hang on to that guy.

When you see this guy, he is a big, physical, imposing guy, who has got a strong-arm. He's one of those guys, he's going to make some throws that you sit there and say, wow, that was an impressive, big-time throw.

So whenever you've got a guy who has won as much as he's won; whenever you've got a guy who has as much experience as he has; that has the toolbox that he has in terms of body type, in terms of experience, in terms of arm strength and then with the athletes that they have been able to surround him with at the wide receiver position, as well as at the running back position, it's a lot of weapons.

Again, they have got an experienced veteran staff that knows how to take advantage of all those things. You know, it's going to be a real challenge.

Q. The HBO episode -- how do you think that went? Now that it's in the past, did it go as you expected?

JF: Yeah, we talked about it again this Sunday. I thought our guys handled it well during that week, but then we have to deal with it actually coming on air Wednesday night.

So watch it, enjoy it, flush it, move on. You know, move on. That's easier said than done, but we talked about it Sunday to make sure that we do that to keep our focus on the task at hand.

I do think it's a tremendous opportunity. It was a tremendous opportunity for our university and for our community and for the athletic department and for the football program. We are very appreciative that HBO chose us, and I hope they felt like they got the access they wanted and were treated in a first-class manner. All the feedback that I got was excellent from them and in their interactions with our players and with our staff.

But again, it's Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa. So Wednesday night -- how long is the show, Kris? They get an hour away from their studying and academics and preparation for the next game. Get some popcorn. Watch it and then move on.

And I would appreciate if nobody on campus or in the community would say anything to them Thursday morning about the show to reinforce that. When you see them and they are walking around campus, hit them with the Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, Iowa, which I know everybody loves so much.

Q. When it comes to [Shaka Toney's](#) conversation this morning, he told us it felt like Adissa Isaac had the potential to be an all-time great defensive end. What stands out about his development from January?

JF: A couple things. One of the things is we haven't found this, and we don't know where to look it up. I don't know if there's ever been a 17-year-old to get a sack in Penn State's history. I mean, he is a young freshman, just turned 18.

He's a guy that showed up here, at like 217 or 218 pounds or whatever it was. He's basically 240 pounds already. He's a lot like Yetur [Gross-Matos] where if you tell him to do something, he doesn't question it. He does it full speed.

We've got guys that are that way, and we've got guys that have got a thousand questions, but once you answer their questions, they will go full speed, as well. He's one of those guys, you tell him to do something, he's going to do it to the best of his ability.

His background in terms of his family and the role that he had in his family; I think the situations that I've seen that are similar to that create a lot of maturity and a lot of responsibility that he had on his plate very early in his life.

Mom is phenomenal. She is one of the most unbelievable human beings that I've ever been around. She really is. And the kid I think has got a lot of God-given ability. You know, he's one of those guys that you don't have to coach a motor. You watch one of the plays that he made on Saturday, it would be easy for you guys to find. He rushes the quarterback, gets hit, sticks his foot in the ground, runs right down the line of scrimmage, makes the tackle on our sideline and for a gain of maybe two yards. I mean, he's got that natural motor. Yetur's got that type of motor.

We have some guys that are unbelievably fast, but they don't always play with that type of motor and when you get 11 guys on defense literally running to the ball on every single play like the program depends on it, that type of intensity, you have a chance to be pretty good, you really do.

He has that. It's not something that you have to coach. It's in his DNA already. So that's really valuable, and I think we've got a lot of guys doing that. We've got a few guys that we need to understand the impact of it.

It's kind of like, I used to always say as an offensive coordinator or a quarterback coach, one of the best things that you can get a quarterback to do, a young quarterback to do, is to go through his progression, hitch up in the pocket and hit the running back on the check down and the best thing that could happen is that running back break a tackle and go 80, because it reinforces the fundamentals and the things that, you know, probably people don't think about. They think about the 16-yard throw on the sideline or the post-throw for a touchdown, 50 yards.

When a young, defensive player can have great effort on the back side of a play and end up making the tackle; or, how many times have we seen the ball's tipped, and now because all 10 guys are running to the ball, one of the guys gets an interception, or there's a fumble and the ball comes out on the ground and they are able to recover it.

How many times do you put the tape on and the ball came out and you saw a change of speed; a guy that didn't think he was going to be involved in a play and then he tries to speed up to make the play. Well, what could you have done if he had been running full speed the whole time?

He's just a guy that gets that, and you know, we talk about it during the recruiting process. Obviously the more guys that we can get that come in with that, it makes it easier.

So now you're just spending your time focused on fundamentals and scheme, rather than what we are really talking about is coaching effort.

There's different levels of kind of the standard.

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