



2015 Big Ten Football Media Days

Friday, July 31, 2015

Rutgers Coach Kyle Flood

COACH FLOOD: Thank you. Good morning, I'd like to start by really thanking everybody in the media for the last year, and I'll thank you in advance for the upcoming season. I don't know that you can say thank you enough for everything that you do in terms of promoting our conference, Rutgers University and really all the universities in the Big Ten and ultimately the most important commodity we have, which is the players in our program.

And I'll just talk a little bit about the three players that we brought to Chicago with us. I think they're a great representation of our football team. I'll start with Keith Lumpkin who enters his third year as our starting left tackle, a fifth-year senior. He's got one class in the fall that, when he completes it, he will graduate with a degree in labor studies. Somebody that I recruited when I was at offensive line coach. And it's been a real joy for me to watch him come through his career.

The second player is Leonte Carroo, somebody I think everybody in the room is very familiar with, one of the premiere playmakers in the country. When he made a decision to come back to Rutgers for his senior year, our program got better. And it gave him an opportunity to do some things in his career that he had not accomplished yet and to be a better football player as well before he makes his transition to the next level.

And, finally, our captain -- returning captain Darius Hamilton, defensive tackle for us and another one of what I believe is one of the premiere players, certainly one of the premiere defensive players and playmakers in this league and somebody we rely on to be the anchor of our defense. And he certainly has lived up to that in his first three years so far. And with that, I would open it up for questions.

Q. I'm curious now that you're in the Big Ten participating in there, have you seen a difference in recruiting? Has it helped in recruiting when you walk into a young man's house with the Big Ten logo with Rutgers represented now?

COACH FLOOD: There's no doubt. I think when you attach yourself to a brand like the Big Ten and you play in what we believe is the premiere athletic, academic conference in the country and in the most competitive division in all of college football, if you're recruiting the right kind of players, they want to play that kind of football. And I really believe there's no doubt it's elevated our recruiting over the last two years.

Q. Looks like Kemoko Turay had 7.5 sacks in rotation last year. How do you expect him to increase his play coming into his fourth year under you?

COACH FLOOD: I think he's going to get a little more attention this year. That's for sure. That's going to be a challenge for him.

What we've done with Kemoko over the last year is try and bring him closer and closer to being a complete player, being a three-down player. Is he ultimately what he's going to be in his college career just yet? No, he's still young, still coming off his freshman year. We're excited about Kemoko, very talented. He can do a lot of things for us on defense and special teams. I believe he blocked two kicks last year. Kemoko is somebody that has an opportunity to elevate himself as a football player this year and not just be known as a pass rusher. And that's really what he's been working on this season.



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Q. I noticed all three of your players are from North Jersey parochial high schools. How key has it been to establish a North Jersey recruiting presence for you?

COACH FLOOD: Recruiting always begins at home. I think that's critical. I don't think there's any doubt about that. For us, we've always recruited the state of Rutgers. The state of Rutgers begins in New Jersey. And if you look at our rosters in the seasons when we've been really, really competitive and had high quality football teams, 2006, 2012, last season, I think what you see is we're -- generally between 75 and 85 percent of our players come from the state of Rutgers and those guys are right at the heart of the state of Rutgers right in New Jersey.

Q. Just curious what it meant to you, what it means to the program that Leonte decided to stay for an extra year?

COACH FLOOD: I was really excited. I just got this question in another venue. And I said, you know, the football coach in you is so excited when a player of his caliber comes back because you know what it does for your football team. Leonte is a great player in his own right. But by being on the field, he elevates everybody else around him because of the attention that he draws.

But I was excited for him as well because I think it showed a maturity in him that he was able to look at his situation and say, There's things that I want to work on to be a better football player. There's things that I came to Rutgers to do that I haven't accomplished yet. And because of that, I'm going to come back.

And I think ultimately on the back end of this when he does make that transition to the next level, not only will he be more prepared, he'll be a better football player. And, ultimately, I think that's going to help him as he goes through his career.

Q. With so much made about facilities in college football, last month Rutgers unveiled a first-class plan. What did you think of that facility plan? How much will that help you guys?

COACH FLOOD: The most important I think part of that was that the president is behind it. And when Bob Barchi, the president of Rutgers University, decides that this is important to him and important to the university, I know that everybody else is going to line up behind him and make sure it gets done. So we're excited about that.

Every year we've done things to improve our football facility. This will be a more expansive overhaul than we have done in the past, and we're looking forward to getting started.

Q. Coach, now that you've had a year of Big Ten Conference play under your belt, did that meet your expectations of what you thought the league was going to be like when you came in there? Or now that you've seen some of those teams in action, do you feel differently than you might have coming into it?

COACH FLOOD: I felt that the league played out exactly how we thought it would, a very well-coached league with very talented football teams, a very physical brand of football. All those things were things that we expected.

The one thing I would tell you that really jumps out when you play in the Big Ten and certainly the Big Ten East (Division) is the margin for error is so slim. It is so slim. And not only you have to be ready to play every week, but then when you do have that win that's really exciting for your team and your fan base or maybe you have a disappointing day, you better be ready to turn the page because that next game is coming and it's only seven days away.



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Q. What do you have to say about Penn State, a potential rivalry, and a prime-time game at Beaver Stadium?

COACH FLOOD: I think it's the third game of the year. When that game comes -- when it comes to game week for that game that will be the most important game on our schedule just like everyone is. It's the only game you get to play that week. We're looking forward to it. I know it will be a great environment out there. They've got a very exciting fan base. We're looking forward to that game. But we're not looking at that game now because we've got two we've got to play before it.

Rivalries could come down to three things. Geography, certainly the geography is there. Recruiting. Do you have players in both programs that were recruited by both schools? We do. Certainly the case. And then competitive football games which we had last year.

So is it the start of something like that? It might be. But I think those things have to happen organically. I don't think you can create them.

Q. What are your expectations for Darius Hamilton as a senior and also as a returning captain?

COACH FLOOD: Come to work every day and work to be better. I don't put tangible numbers on expectations. Darius is a player who plays the game at a very high level. Every team we play against this year, part of their game plan will be to make sure that they are accounting for Darius and in a lot of cases with more than one person on every play. So ultimately what it turns out in numbers, I know Darius is going to make his share of plays. I'm not concerned about that.

But in terms of expectations, my expectations are very simple. Come to work every day. Work to be a better football player and a better person than you were yesterday and elevate the people around you because Darius has that ability. And not every player is at the stage of their career where they're ready to do that. But Darius started that last year. And as a football team, if we're going to achieve what we want, he has to continue to do that. He has to continue to elevate the people around him.

Q. Changing offensive coordinators, how involved was Ben last year in the offensive game plan? And then, two, what will he bring differently this year to that side of the football?

COACH FLOOD: If I answered the second part of that, I'd have to kill you. Can't give away all the secrets here before we even get started.

No, we've changed offensive coordinators. Ben is our offensive coordinator now. I would tell you every coach on offense is involved in the game planning. Ben was the guy speaking directly to the quarterback during the season so he was the conduit for Coach Friedgen up in the box. Certainly was a great line of communication.

And the ability to keep Ralph Friedgen on our staff to me was very important. I know that he felt like he wanted to step down. But when I proposed it to him to be a special assistant to not just me but to Ben during the season, he was excited about that. He's done that through the spring. He came and spent some time with us in the spring. He'll spend more time with us in training camp. And I think all those things are good for our program.

And, ultimately, this is Ben McDaniels' offense now. I think it will look different because you'll have a different person calling the game. And other part of that is that you'll have some different playmakers out there as well.



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The emergence of our running back position with Paul James coming back healthy. The addition of guys like Josh Hicks, Robert Martin, players in our program already, Justin Goodwin, Desmond Peoples. It's a very talented room, and we're working every day to find more and more ways to put the ball in the hands of those players.

Q. Aside from trying to win games and develop players, do you ever feel like Jim Harbaugh comes in this league and he's getting so much attention that there's sometimes a battle to keep the attention national and local on you guys?

COACH FLOOD: I don't. I think we've got a lot of our local media here today. And they do a great job of covering our program. And I think when you play in the Big Ten Conference, you're going to get a lot of attention. You're going to get a lot of exposure. And our players know that. And we're in the number one media market in the world.

So when a player comes to Rutgers University and we're playing on primetime in High Point Solutions Stadium and that needle in New York is moving its way up and up and up, we'll get our share. Our job is to make sure we go out and we're prepared to be 1-0 each week. When you do that, if you do a good job, you'll get all the attention you deserve.

Q. How key was it to retain your defensive coordinator this year?

COACH FLOOD: Continuity is certainly a positive. There's two types of continuity. There's continuity in people and continuity in systems. And having Joe Rossi come back to the program really allows us to have both. Being able to promote Ben McDaniels to offensive coordinator kept the continuity of the system. I think that's going to help our football program. The ability to have Joe Rossi on our staff gives us the continuity of not just people, but people and system, and I think that always makes your program better.