

Penn State University Football Media Conference

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James Franklin

Press Conference



JAMES FRANKLIN: So like always, appreciate you guys coming out and covering Penn State Football. I want to thank the staff. In 2023, there's a lot to be said for a drama-free signing day. Again, I think we take that for granted. I think it's very telling about the staff and how thorough and detailed we are. I think it's very telling about our process; that we don't pressure guys to commit. I also think it's very telling about the type of young men we recruit, the families that they come from and the high school coaches and people they are surrounded with, so that's been great and I'm very, very appreciative of that.

I think if you look at our class, it's pretty well rounded. We were really able to fill needs at every position, as well as signing so we can continue to develop across the board. I thought our length in this class is better than what it's typically been.

I think you guys know this as well: We have got a ton of guys coming in early. Again, that's not something -- some programs pressure guys to come in early. We don't do it but it continues to trend in that direction more and more, guys wanting to get on campus as early as possible. So we are excited about that.

But I think there's also going to be opportunities for guys to come into summer and still be able to impact our program and our roster, and we saw that last year as well. So that will continue.

As you guys know, from literally my first press conference, we are going to make Pennsylvania a priority. I think we did a really good job of that the last couple years. That continues to be a priority for us. We want the best players in PA to stay in PA, and specifically, at Penn State. If you look at us, we have a tremendous hit, if you say, in terms of the guys that have chose to stay home.

We have hit really well in terms of those guys staying home and being successful, whether that is a guy like Saquon Barkley or Micah Parsons or Miles Sanders, Abdul Carter. I can go on and on; Nick Singleton, the guys that have chose to stay home as high-profile recruits, and there's a

number of guys I could name.

Those guys have done really well here, and I think it makes sense for both parties. So we take a lot of pride in that. And then also the region but then we have also been able to tap into some other areas which are really important for us as well, and guys really coming from all over the country and being successful here, and again, that's been going on for a long time at Penn State, so we take a lot of pride in that.

So overall, I thought we had a really good day. It's been great to get the coordinators on board before signing day. I think that was important. I think that could have caused some issues for us. So I want to thank the board for the support there as well.

I think you guys know with certain hires on campus, there's a process that has to go in front of the board. So them being supportive and also timely. Sometimes our sense of time in college football is different than other people, and it's meaningful. I think that goes back to the alignment conversations we have had in the past. Those things are really important. If we had lost two recruits today because they -- you know, the timing of our defensive coordinator hire, that would have mattered and made sense.

So we are appreciative of Matt Schuyler's continued support and really the entire board for them understanding that football is a little bit different. Whether we like to admit it or not, it is, and the ramifications of those types of decisions. So I think that's been powerful and we are very, very appreciative of their understanding and support.

But again, overall, I'm pleased with our class. We still have work to do. As you guys know, we are not a big transfer portal team. And not only that, just the way we go about our process is different. It's amazing. There's guys that take -- some Penn State guys decide to go in the portal and no one ever calls. We try to be as thorough and detailed as we possibly can be with that process, as well.

And that's out of a ton of respect for the young men that we have in our current locker room, and making sure that we are bringing in the right guys that are going to complement them as well as create the most competitive environment



that we possibly can create. So we have some work to do there in a short period of time, but I like some of the direction that we got going on right now.

So that's really it. I'll open up to questions about, hopefully, this signing day and then obviously a few questions about Coach Allen.

But you guys are going to get an opportunity to talk to Coach Allen, so hopefully most of my stuff can be about the signing day. So open up to questions.

Q. Going back to the whole drama-free aspect, when you have changes in coordinators, what sort of questions were you getting from prospects and their parents over the last few weeks? Did they need to be reassured? Were most kids okay with it regardless? Can you take us through that a little bit?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Well, I think that goes back to what we talked about a few weeks ago when we talked about how every recruit when they commit to Penn State, I talk to them about committing to me and the university, and that there's probably going to be turnover on the staff, whether it's right away, this year, or whether it's in their four to five years here at Penn State.

And you guys I think have been supportive of that as well. I know none of you guys would call and write an article and make it seem like we told a recruit before we made a change or a decision that somebody would do that because you guys know we don't operate that way.

But I think the fact that we do that, I think helps us. So when those things do happen, they are not shocked by that. I literally say to them, Hey, are you going to be committed if, say, for example, Anthony Poinindexter has a chance to go to be the head coach at School X, Y or Z, are you going to stay committed to Penn State? We kind of go through those things and I think that is helpful.

But then also back to the point about the board being able to make these hires in a timely way because not only are we recruiting them, but there's people that are trying to flip our guys. When you have a change, and specifically at a coordinator position, that can be unsettling. So being able to get that position filled as soon as possible while also being thorough and detailed, there's a ton of value in that.

But I think the other thing is being able to tell the story, right. You know, whether it's been at Vanderbilt or whether it's been at Penn State, we have got a history of playing really good defense under this current era, but really like Terry Smith said today, really, going back forever at Penn State. We have played good defense here for a long time.

So trusting us. Being able to show them a pattern of success and a pattern of decision-making, that has helps with that. I think all of those things have been a part of trying to limit that drama as much we possibly can.

Q. Can you talk about Liam Andrews and the push-and-pull of him being an offensive lineman or defensive lineman? Were you guys on board with that right away when he decided he wanted to play a little bit more on defense? Because it looked like he was going to be a great offensive line prospect and surprised some people.

JAMES FRANKLIN: So again, I think that goes back to that trust; that trust that they had in us that we weren't just telling him what he wanted to hear.

We were recruiting him hard, as an offensive lineman and thought he had a chance to be special as an offensive lineman. But I think you guys know with us, we are an underpromise, overdeliver program and I'm not going to tell a guy what he wants to hear to get him here and then switch it with other alternative motives or agendas, we are not going to that.

When we decided to say, hey, we are going to take you as a defensive lineman, if I'm remembering the timeline correctly, Deion was able to go see him work out, whether it was off-campus, at like a New England showcase or whether it was here, and we legitimately felt like this guy has a chance to be a special defensive lineman.

So we were able to be transparent and authentic with him and his family and say, yeah, we are recruiting you as a defensive lineman and feel like not only are you going to be able to do it but you are going to be able to do it at a high level. Because I think that's another part of our responsibility is even if a kid wants to play D-Lineman but we really fell like their best future is as an offensive lineman, we are going to tell them that.

I think at the end of the day, we are going to let the kids play the position they want to play. But when we evaluated him, and Deion evaluated him, we were very excited about his future as a defensive tackle. Specifically as an inside guy. His ability to bend, change direction, his competitiveness; and he's going to be a big guy.

You know, Coach Trautwein was heartbroken, but then also involved in the process of saying, hey, we still want you here, and kind of stepped away. And Deion took over at that point, as well as the rest of the defensive coaches and myself.

And again, back to that word "trust." I think the family trusted that we were being transparent and open and honest with them, and it really worked out well. I think the kid felt good about Penn State before that.

Now it was just a position thing we had to work through. We're excited about him. He's got some bumps and bruises he's working through right now but hopefully we'll get him rehabbing and in a position to be able to compete by the time summer camp comes around.

Q. About your offensive line class, big group, all five of them were on campus together in the summer. Based on your understanding of what this group brings, impacting 2024 and long term, two guys specifically, if you can expand on a bit. Cooper Cousins, he spent so much time as the first commit in this class and seems a little bit physically different than these guys are at this age. And then Garrett Sexton, because of his background, and I think his coach called him to athletic unicorn, where does he rank on the unique scale in your career of recruiting guys on the offensive front?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so Coop is kind of an unusual guy, right. I think first of all, he could play all five positions. You don't usually see a 6-6, 320-pound guy play center. I think that's unusual. In some ways, I think it hurt him in the rankings because I think when they ranked him as an offensive lineman, they ranked him as an interior guy and they always rank the interior guys lower than the tackles.

From having him in camp, I think he could play all five spots and there's tremendous value in guys like that. He came to every camp. That was unique. We played him at tackle, and he showed he could do it. He's got a nasty streak. And to your point, he doesn't look like a high school kid. He's a lean 6-6, 320 pounds, which is unusual.

He also was really what I could say about a lot of these guys. He was a high production, highly rated guy who was low maintenance. I mean, literally, we offered him, they all looked at us, the whole family, he walked around the corner, I think we did this, I think -- I want to say, it was maybe during COVID or somewhere around that time because I think we were meeting outside. I'm trying to remember.

And he walked away and came back, like, four minutes later and said, "We're coming." And that was the end of it. You know, high-profile guy that knew this is where he wanted to be. The family was comfortable and they never wavered. They never wavered. They were awesome the whole time. He became a leader within the class in helping us get other guys. He's coming in early. Is going to have

chance to compete.

So I love him. You know, I do.

And then when you talk about Garrett Sexton, is a weird one, right. Garrett Sexton was a quarterback. You don't hear that very often, quarterback to offensive tackle recruit, and become one of the highest recruited offensive tackles in the country.

You know, Wisconsin has not been a big kind of recruiting area for us. We have been able to get, you know, one kid maybe every four or five years out of that area. This year we were able to get a number. I think it started a little bit maybe with Jerry a few years ago, Jerry Cross, out of Milwaukee. I think that helped us. And then for us to get three guys out of Wisconsin this year is very unusual.

And he's a really good one. He got hurt his senior year, so missed some time. But again, another kid and another family that, you know, was really trending as a prospect once people kind of got a chance to see him and his transition from quarterback to tackle.

Came to camp and did a great job for us in camp and then his senior year was limited with an injury. But we think he's got a really high ceiling. Excited to get him on campus and working with him as well. Him and his family were phenomenal.

I think we were able to get a few more guys that we think can be tackles. That's always been a challenge for us is getting the length that we would like and the athleticism to be true tackles. We've had some guys that have been able to be swing guys. Guys that we think are probably guards but have the ability to play tackles. So we have been able to get a few more of those guys in this class.

But it's still a little bit of a need for us, you know, whether it's the transfer portal or you never know in a second signing day. You just can't have enough of those tackle body types because typically, those guys can go inside. A lot of times it's hard for the center guard body types to go out. But overall, very, very pleased with the class and what Coach Trautwein and the offensive staff was able to do there.

Q. When you look at the high number of early enrollees, is it fair to think you may get more guys ready to compete in spring practice and summer camp because there's more of them or is it too early to say?

JAMES FRANKLIN: I think obviously when you're able to get guys on campus earlier, I don't think it's the end all be all but it helps. I mean, when they are here in the spring,

learning the system, getting comfortable, getting a feel, it allows them to be better positioned to legitimately compete in the summer and during training camp.

So you know, the number of guys, 16 guys coming in early, I think that helps. Now, I do think we got nine guys coming in the summer that if they approach it the right way will still be able to compete and we've seen examples of that.

So that's why you see the number trending. There's a lot of reasons why academically it makes sense in terms of the possibility of getting a master's degree while they are here, the likelihood of that improving. Playing as a true freshman, the likelihood of that increases.

So you know, it's not something that we really push. But I just see that becoming a more and more of a trend, which also can be challenging. Because a lot of times at mid-semester, you don't know exactly how many scholarships you are going to have available, whether it's guys declaring early for the NFL or whether it's the transfer portal. I don't think a lot of people understand that part of the process.

It's really a guesstimate. And that guesstimate has become harder and harder to make because before the transfer portal, we really could go back on ten years of data to say, okay, on average, we are going to have this much attrition, and that's all been thrown out the window now. So it makes it more and more difficult to do that.

So we're excited about getting them here but it can be complicated.

Q. What excites you about the wide receivers in this class, and specifically, Tyseer Denmark?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Tyseer is a guy that we got to know really well early on. Was a high-profile guy in the state. We were able to evaluate them on film but also in seven-on-seven, live in camp, and just supreme confidence. Ball skills. Change of direction. It was obvious very early on that we wanted him and felt like he had a chance to be kind of a difference-maker for us in this class.

When you talk about Josiah Brown, he was a guy that we identified very early on. Had track times to back it up. Came to camp. Ran really well in camp. Suffered an injury his senior year, which limited some of his impact for his team and maybe some on the rankings, as well.

But they are two guys that we know a lot about and have been recruiting for a long time.

And then also Peter Gonzalez, a guy that came to camp. We told him the things that he needed to work on and to watch the improvement he made was significant. Dad played college football and played in the NFL, as well. Value in that. And really, just his measurables; height, weight, speed, and had a really productive senior year.

We love those guys we have got coming in. I don't think I missed anybody. But we love those guys coming in. Kind of different body types, different skillsets that we think will help that room and create a competitive edge for us. You've got New York. You've got Inner City Philadelphia and you've got Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Central Catholic specifically where we have been fortunate to get some really good players out of a really good program.

We are excited about getting all three of them. I wish some of them were coming early but again, they are guys that we still feel like we'll have an opportunity to compete come summer as long as they handle these next couple months the right way, which I think they will.

Q. T.A. Cunningham, very unique situation, has not played a lot of football. What do you remember about his recruitment and what goes into that evaluation to decide to take a guy who really has not played all that much?

JAMES FRANKLIN: First of all, I think T.A. is a guy that got on the national recruiting scene very early for a reason, right. There was a lot of traits that he showed that were obvious to everybody.

And then obviously when you talk about whether it's moving high schools, or whether it's limited film based on injuries, for us, we just want to make sure that we understand the reasons behind all those things, and the thing that's great about T.A. and his family is they have been totally transparent about all those things, and I think you guys know, we are thorough and detailed with everything that we do.

So here is a guy that had some challenges and some adverse that he had to overcome and the family had to overcome, and then some physical injuries and setbacks and things like that.

But the reality is, at the end of the day, that body type, those traits, those skills are still there, and we think he's a highly motivated young man.

We just feel like he's one of those guys that gets into our structure and our system, he's going to flourish again and be one of those guys that everybody is talking about a

couple years from now in terms of a guy that Penn State got a steal on because we trust in our evaluation process, and really did a lot of digging to make sure we understood all the details and were comfortable with the details.

Q. With Quinton Martin, what has impressed you in terms of just getting to know him as a person but then the film, as a player, as a running back?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think what's unique about both of our running backs this year in this class, both of them were used heavily as wide receivers, and I think in today's college football or the NFL, the more ways you can use running backs, the better. I think we made a huge investment this off-season and during the season to use our running backs in different ways and want to continue to grow in that area.

But I actually think both Quinton and Corey could play wide receiver for us. It's kind of back to the conversation we had about Liam. The guys that we are recruiting really should be recruitable prospects on both sides of the ball. You should be able to make the argument that those guys are able to do it and do it at a high level.

The thing again and I've said this about a lot of our guys, but here is Quinton who is the No. 1 recruit in Pennsylvania based on ratings and rankings, depending on how much stock you put into that kind of stuff. But really, really was low maintenance. You know, Quinton and his family and his support system have been awesome. He was able to lead his team to a state Championship Game this year. Committed to us. Never wavered. Stopped flirting with other schools and other teams. Totally shut it down. Really has done extremely well academically. Has just been awesome.

And again, back to that whole -- Ja'Juan Seider is a guy that I think if he chooses to be a head coach is going to be a head coach. You just saw another one of our former guys, Gerad Parker, get the head job at Troy. There's a bunch of guys that have through here that have gone on to become head coaches.

Here is another one that I wanted to make sure that Quinton understood that, as well. If Coach Seider decides he is going to be a head coach, he's to go to be, and are you comfortable with that and committing to Penn State and Terry Smith and myself. Terry is another guy like that that we talk about.

And Quinton and his family really never wavered. Had some hard conversations early on and working through some dynamics and things like that. But was awesome.

I just think, you know, I don't care what business you're in, what industry you're in. When you're in a leadership position, the more staff that you can have that are high production and low maintenance; the more players that are high production and low maintenance, especially in 2023 with all of the craziness going on in college athletics and specifically college football, you know, that's something that we really value. I think he's another example of that.

And then he's coming in to one of the best running back rooms in the country. That didn't intimidate him either. Wants to come in and compete see how things play out. And we are going to put him in position to do so.

It's awesome. We've got a pretty good run going right now, again, of State of Pennsylvania and the No. 1 player in the State of Pennsylvania. We've got to do it again next year. That's not looking as promising right now as it has been the last couple years, but we're going to battle and to find a way to get that one done as well. All these players, Singleton and Quinton that have done it. They have a responsibility to help us sign the No. 1 player in the state next year, as well. We take a lot of pride in that.

Again, I'm a big believer for a lot of different reasons, not just Penn State's but for the young men. That's a win/win for everybody. The best players in Pennsylvania need to stay in Pennsylvania and they need to come to Penn State.

I also believe the best players in the region should come to Penn State. I'm biased but I think we're the best option in terms of combination of school and football and being able to compete at the very highest level. We are the best option within the footprint, and that's no disrespect to any other program. But I believe that and I feel that way.

Q. We talked to a couple lettermen recently in the last couple weeks about what it means to play at Penn State, what type of kid they think comes to Penn State. But in your words as the head football coach, what type of person are you looking for to join your program?

JAMES FRANKLIN: I think that's one of the things that I think you guys have heard me talk about in the past and I talk about with the staff a lot.

Again, knock-on-wood, I think we have done a good job of this because again, we are responsible for 125 18- to 22--year-old males, the most unpredictable group of people on the planet and we are responsible for them unfairly 24 hours a day.

And we have worked really hard at making sure we know what we're bringing into the locker room, not perfect, but

make sure we know who we are bringing in the locker room, who we are bringing into the Happy Valley community, who we are bringing in to the brotherhood of lettermen, and making sure that the guys that we take that the lettermen are going to be proud of those guys. The community is going to be proud of.

And again, that's not easy. But I think we do a ton of homework there. Just like myself, they are not all perfect. But I do believe the guys that we're bringing within our structure and within our support system will flourish. I really believe that. I've got a ton of examples of guys that have flourished under the structure and under the system.

So for us, I talk to the staff a lot about don't get intoxicated by talent and talent alone. You know, look at the transcript. There's a ton of information on that transcript besides just GPA: Absences, tardies, the type of classes they are taking. Ask a ton of questions at the school. You guys heard me talk about this before. Talk to the high school coach, but there's pressure on the high school coach, right. Talk to the teachers. Talk to the guidance Counselor. Talk to the principal. Talk to the other students in the hallway. You guys have heard me talk about this before.

My mom was a hall aide, as well, as a janitor in our school system. Talk to them. They know everything, and how these young men treat those people that work in those buildings I think is very, very telling.

Talk to other coaches in the community that don't have the pressure to talk kindly about the kids. Get information from them. Be willing to ask the tough, uncomfortable questions.

You know, and it's funny because I say the same thing to the recruits. Like I'm a big boy. You won't hurt my feelings. Ask the tough questions. If there's concerns that you or your family have or other schools have negative recruited, just ask. Let us talk through these things, and that's part of building that trust and that relationship.

Then again, not telling recruits and families and for the most part, the kids that we're recruiting into families, they appreciate the transparency; that we are not just telling them everything they want to hear. Oh, you want to wear No. 1? You got No. 1, and you've told that to every recruit in the class, even the O-lineman. Like, are you going to start as a true freshman? Oh, yeah, you're going to start as a true freshman. Back when we were in Pollock dorms, oh, you're going to have your own room with your own bathroom. And then they showed up and they didn't.

Like we are an underpromise, overdeliver program. And I think sometimes we lose kids for that because we don't sell

them on a fantasy. We sell them on the reality.

But I think when you sell young men and their families on the reality, then I have a better chance of holding them accountable to what the expectations are once they get here and that trust is established, and then once they get here, you're able to build on that trust and that relationship.

Because as you guys know, as well as I, it's not going to go perfect. You know, they are going to think they are going to play as a true freshman. Some will. Some won't. Some are going to expect to play as redshirt freshmen or true sophomores and maybe they don't get the same amount of playing time that they thought they were going to get. Or maybe they miss a couple field goals and then social media blows up on them. Like there's going to be adversity that comes.

So by really developing this relationship based on trust, and love and support through the good times and bad times, I think allows you to overcome some of those things.

And we have been fortunate. We have been fortunate through chemistry, love, support, honesty, transparency, that I think we have been able to work through a lot of issues that can be challenging at times.

Q. With regard to Tom Allen, you mentioned wanting someone with head coaching experience --

JAMES FRANKLIN: That was how many questions we got before Tom Allen?

Q. About 35 minutes.

THE MODERATOR: Seven questions.

JAMES FRANKLIN: Seven questions. And how much time?

THE MODERATOR: 34 minutes.

JAMES FRANKLIN: 34 minutes. Thank you. You guys are awesome today. Today.

THE MODERATOR: Correction. Eight questions.

Q. You mentioned wanting someone with head coaching experience but he obviously has not been a full-time defensive coordinator since 2016. How does that change the evaluation process, and how do you fill the gaps when there's not a recent sample of him being a defensive coordinator?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think that's a great question.

A couple things.

I think first of all, the combination of being a defensive coordinator and a highly successful one. When he was the defensive coordinator at Indiana, they were the most improved defense in the country. And I think that's the other thing that you have to be careful of.

Say you're trying to hire two coordinators and you're trying to decide between the two. We all have to recognize, they are different programs. Like there shouldn't be the same expectation for different programs.

So as much as you possibly can, you're trying to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges, which is difficult to do, in college football in general, right. When some teams play nine conference games and other conferences play eight, that's hard to do.

So what we try to do is say, okay, the things that you can control, did you control them, and when he was the defensive coordinator, it was the most improved defense in the country. That was telling.

So here is the other thing, to your point: When you became the head coach, when you became the head coach, some guys get pulled in so many different directions that you are not really having the impact you would like to have, right, which is natural when this job really for the most part requires you to be a CEO of the entire organization. There are some guys that have been able to be the head coach and offensive coordinator or head coach and defensive coordinator, but not many. That's challenging to do.

So when you get with Tom and you start talking ball, is he one of these guys that's been removed from those things and is rusty and has to get back into being able to talk ball in a way specifically to defense that gives you the confidence that it's not going to take some time for him to get back into the rhythm of calling the defense.

And that was really apparent very early on to me as well as our staff that this is a football guy that is still heavily involved in what's going on from a scheme, and from a fundamental perspective, and that was obvious. If it wasn't, then we wouldn't be sitting here talking about Tom Allen.

Because I'm not looking for just a head coach of the defense as a CEO role of the defense. I'm looking for a leader of the defense and that leadership is not only the staff and the players and the fundamentals and the schemes and all those things.

It's all those things that are going to allow us to play really good defense, again, which we have been doing here for a long time. So do you study the data? Yes. But to your point, sometimes that's hard when you're no longer calling the defense. So you go back and say, when he did, what happened.

And then once you start talking defense again, does everybody in the room feel like, okay, not only does this guy know ball and know defense, but also, there's enough similarities in what he believes and what we've done because we don't need to just start over, that would make no sense, right.

But we are also not going to ask Tom to come in and be somebody else. He's got to say, okay, here are the things that are non-negotiables for Tom Allen and how we're going to run our defense and allow him to have the answers to the problems because that's the issue, right. You hire somebody to run somebody else's defense. Well, they don't know that defense well enough to know what the answers are when you're having problems. Because every defense has strengths and weaknesses, and when people attack your weaknesses, you know what the solutions are.

So these were a lot of discussions that we had when we hired Andy and Tom because really on either side of the ball, we are not as far away as we think to go where we want to go, specifically on defensive side of the ball.

So all these things were part of this conversation, and Tom needed to be comfortable with that.

Because just like we talked about with the recruits, I am also not going to sell Tom on something, and then he gets here and I want something different. You know, Tom is in a position that he didn't need to take this job.

So I wanted Tom very comfortable in what he was signing up for. I wanted to be very comfortable what I was signing up for. And then this was an unusual situation, too, because a lot of times, it has to go so fast because of your situation and because of recruiting, but also if the guy has a current job, that plays a part in it as well. Because they are trying to keep him, you're trying to get him away; the longer they are there, the harder it is to get him.

So this was kind of unusual, too, because he was out of a job and it allowed us to really take our time on both ends for him and his wife, and for us as an organization, too.

So that's what I probably have the most comfort in and why you said I look better. Well, wonder why? Because I have got Coach K, and I have got Tom Allen and everybody signed. No drama.

So I slept more than five hours last night, which was awesome.

So I appreciate, in my ten years, first complement you've given me, and I'll take it.

But all those things kind of factored into it.

But I think, again, back to your original question, how can I compare apples-to-apples so I can make a decision and know truly what we are looking at.

The other thing that's interesting is like, you know, I think sometimes people want to say, well, let's look at the numbers of when he was a head coach because he's got a defensive background. Well, did you guys do that for the last guy? Because the numbers would tell a very similar story. So again, my interest is what did he do when he was controlling the defense from A to Z.

Q. The quarterback, Ethan, what are your big picture plans for him? What do you expect him to possibly play next year?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yes, Neil, my friend. That's hard to say, right. We recruited Ethan because we've seen over time that he's got a chance to be a really talented player in the Big Ten and nationally.

He's proved that, you know, over his entire career and really over the last probably year and a half, has really taken it to a different level. His high school and his high school coach did a phenomenal job with him. His quarterback trainer, as you know now, we've got history with him. He's done a great job with him as well. His family have done a great job. This kid is wired right. He's been raised right. Discipline and structure at his high school. Discipline and structure in his home.

I think all these things lend a young man to have success when he gets in our structure and discipline. I think he's fortunate. I think more times than not, especially at the quarterback position, you know, are there exceptions? Yes. But more times than not, you like to come in and sit behind a guy for a year and learn and take it all in.

I think there's a reason why Drew threw 23 touchdown passes and one interception, whatever that number was this year. I think being able to sit behind Sean and learn behind Sean was valuable.

When I was with the Green Bay Packers and we had Brett Favre and we drafted Aaron Rodgers that year, I think a big part of Aaron Rodgers' success was he was able to sit

behind Brett, learn from Brett, what Brett did well, what he would do differently. And obviously you look at his career.

So I think more times than not, there's a ton of value in that. Now, does that mean that he won't have a chance to come in and compete? No. We want him to come in and compete. We want all of our guys to come in and compete but worst-case scenario, if he doesn't, if he can sit behind and learn for a year and then be competing that following spring, then that's not all bad, either.

Again, these are the type of conversations we have had as well and he understands and I think him and Drew have a relationship and that helps, too. But that position as we all know is the most position probably in all of sports, and specifically in college football in terms of you know competing for championships, conference and national.

So the better we can recruit at that position and develop at that position, and then recruit around that position to complement those guys, the better and that's O-line, that's tight ends, that's running backs, and that's receivers and that's coaches. That's all of it.

So we are pleased with them. We are really happy he's in the fold and his development over the last year and a half has been really cool, and it's interesting because you look at Drew's kind of trajectory as a recruit and Ethan's very similar in a lot of ways.

So pretty cool. I think we are also allowed to recruit other states besides Ohio for quarterbacks, but if it works out that way, we'll be happy to go there again.

Thanks, guys.

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