

Penn State University Football Media Conference

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James Franklin

Press Conference



JAMES FRANKLIN: So, first of all, appreciate everybody being here, especially the people that are here in person. Really appreciate you guys covering Penn State Football.

A couple things, I think the first thing I wanted to say, and I think you guys know this, but we have 14 players that we recruited that have come early and this is the first time we've done this. You know, they are basically here taking everything in. Not really contributing a whole lot but just sitting in meetings, watching practice. We talked about it with the leadership council ahead of time, and they were in support of it. And those guys have done a really good job being respectful of the veterans in the program and not creating a distraction, which was a long conversation ahead of time. That's been really good.

The only negative, and the reason I bring it up is we've got a couple guys from Florida who have never seen snow before, ever, in their life. And I'm telling them, like we've got significant snow right now. And I'm saying, right, haven't had snow like this in two years. I struggled getting to work this morning and I never struggle driving in the snow.

They are looking at me like, Sure, sure, Franklin. Recruiting speech; we don't get a whole lot of snow. Literally they are looking out there, and not only have I never seen snow before but not this much.

But it's been really cool having these guys here. I think it's a positive and it will really pay dividends for us and them down the road, just learning our culture, how we operate. They will get to spring ball practices. They will be way ahead.

So a ton of reasons that we did it. More importantly than all that, I just wanted to make a comment about, obviously, the tragedy in New Orleans, and our thoughts and prayers and support goes out to the families and the victims that were involved. Terrible, terrible, terrible thing for that city, for those families, for our country. It's sad in so many ways, in so many ways.

So our thoughts and feelings from Penn State Football go out to everybody that was impacted by that.

Want to take a minute of a pause, because you hate to jump into the next topic after that.

But we're expecting a large crowd in Miami. I thought last week, especially under the circumstances, I don't think people understand when you're playing SMU at home, and you're filling up a 107,000-seat stadium with pretty much all of your own fans; SMU small private school, that was impressive. That was a great home environment. And then very next week, all the short notice, you've got to travel again. I'm talking about for four answer, to travel again, and I thought last week's support was awesome.

I have to give Boise credit, too, I thought they did a great job. The energy in there was really good. But here we are again, and you know, this is the challenge of the playoffs. But our fans have been great. Our fans are special. We recognize that, and we're expecting a huge crowd in Miami, and I challenge everybody to wear white and White Out energy. We want that place rocking. Probably more hoodies than tee shirts from what I've heard on the weather report but we need that place rocking, and we appreciate the support that we always get.

Couple other things I did want to cover with you guys. You know, we did not submit, and I want to say this to you guys because it affects your job. We did not submit the availability report in the Boise game, and the reason why, again, I know that impacts you guys doing your job but the reason why is the College Football Playoff, it's not a requirement. And what happened the week before is SMU did not do one, and we did.

So until this is a consistent mandate across college football, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense for us to do one when they are not. So just so you guys know, I want you to understand, that was the reason behind that.

Finally, getting into this game, Notre Dame, Marcus Freeman, have known and followed Marcus for a long time. I think you guys know Gerad Parker. Gerad was on the staff there. Gerad was with us, Gerad and Marcus are really good friends. Heard a ton of good things about



Marcus from Gerad. Watched his career for a while, obviously. You know, being promoted there and getting a job like Notre Dame and has done a great job and has really run with it.

I think in a lot of ways, they are built similar to us. You look at their turnover ratio numbers, you look at their explosive play defense in terms of defending and limiting explosive plays. You look at the middle eight, they are built in a lot of ways that I think we are in terms of emphasizing the statistics that matter.

And they do a great job of not beating themselves, which I think is a really important thing in college football. It starts with that, and then you kind of go from there and play to your strengths and things like that.

But I think they do a really good job of those things. Obviously the quarterback's production jumps out at the you. Total production, his impact in the game specifically as a runner and big body guy, but also can make plays in the passing game. Running backs, they are legit. They have a massive offensive line.

Defensively when you talk about them on the defensive side of the ball, you know, Al Golden who is one of us, he's a Penn Stater. I've known Al for a long time; been a head coach; been in the NFL. He's done a great job with their defense. Again very sound, very aggressive, very disruptive.

I think they do a really good job on the back half as well. His blitz packages are challenging. A lot of stuff that I think he's done over his career as a defensive coordinator, but also time in the NFL in terms of attacking the quarterback, they do a really good job.

And then obviously Coach Denbrock on the offensive side of the ball has also done a really good job of playing to their strengths, running the ball, quarterback run game and keeping you honest with the passing game.

I know last week, I think it's Biagi, special teams coordinator. I know he got a lot of love in the game on special teams, but you look at it, they have done it all year long on special teams; one of the better special teams units in the country.

Obviously a well-rounded team. Obviously you don't get to this point in the season without being good in all three phases. So far, got a ton of respect for what we've seen on film and what we've studied, and we've got a lot of work to do.

Excited about the opportunity and open it up to questions.

Q. What kind of inspiration and impact do you think you and Marcus Freeman can have on younger black coaches by representing them in this game?

JAMES FRANKLIN: You know, it's interesting that you ask that question. I remember, and I wanted to kind of go back and jot down some notes but to me it just kind of makes me think of when Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith played in Super Bowl XXXXI in 2007 that was the first Super Bowl featuring a black head coach at all, let alone two.

You know, obviously Dungy became the first black coach to win a Super Bowl, which was significant. I remember thinking that as a coach, how significant that was in the profession and how significant that was for young coaches coming up in the profession to see those guys in that role.

I also remember, you know, I was offensive coordinator at Kansas State at the time and working for an African American coach in Ron Prince. I also remember at that time, there was a lot of conversations about will this impact the profession. Will this impact opportunities, you know, for guys. Earned, earned opportunities for guys. And at that time there was six coaches, African American coaches out of 127 schools at that time, 127 schools.

And you know, I think if you look at it with Sylvester Croom, Karl Dorrell, Turner Gill, Randy Shannon, Ron Prince, who I coached for at the time, it was myself -- and it's interesting. On that staff it was myself and Raheem Morris who has Shola's godfather and Raheem is now the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons. Ricky Rahne was the offensive GA who is the head coach at Old Dominion. Scott Frost was the defensive GA who is now the head coach again at Central Florida. You know, really, really good staff.

And then I don't know if I mentioned Tyrone Willingham was the other one. And there was conversations about how will this impact. You know, and I look at it, since then, there's an increase of 75 percent. There's 16 coaches now out of 134 and I know some people will say, that's not a huge increase. But it is an increase.

At the end of the day, you know, does this create opportunities for more guys to get in front of athletic directors? Does this create more opportunities for search firms? I hope so. I think at the end of the day, you just want an opportunity and want to be able to earn it through your work and through your actions.

So we'll see. I take a lot of pride in it. I think you guys know there's been some conversations in the past I kept private for a long time. But you know, I take a lot of pride

in it. I'm honored. I'm honored to be able to compete against Marcus. I'm honored to be able to compete against Notre Dame.

Most importantly, I'm honored to represent Penn State and the young men in that locker room. For me to sit here and say that it's not important and it's not significant would not be accurate. It would not be accurate.

All that's great. But at the end of the day, we've got to find a way to beat a really good football team that's well-coached, that's well-coached.

And again, I think like I've already stated, at this point of the season, you really have to be doing all things well to get to this point. You've got to recruit well. You've got to develop well. You've got to hire well. You've got to have the support from the administration, which I think you guys have heard me say we do now, at a signature level, with Pat Kraft and Neeli Bendapudi and Kleppinger, before that Matt Schuyler. We have that.

Pretty cool. So we've got to be ready to go against a really good team, and we're taking advantage of each one of those days. Yesterday was our Sunday. Today is our Monday, and it's an off-day for the players and game plan day for the coaches. We're a little bit ahead because we only had one day last week.

The schedule is a little bit different. We had a longer preparation period. I don't know why that is from a College Football Playoff perspective. You'd think it would be the same for each one but this one is a little bit shorter.

Looking forward to the opportunity.

Long answer; I apologize.

Q. Looking back a bit, what stands out or what do you remember most about the recruitment of Singleton, and how have you seen him grow as a person and player over the last three years?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so I think you guys know, I think at the time we had a guy on our team that we have a ton of respect for from Governor Mifflin High School. Jan Johnson now coaching with Coach Frey at Virginia Tech and Jan had a phenomenal career; in some ways very similar to Dominic DeLuca's path in a lot of ways.

So we had a good relationship with that school. We had a good relationship with those coaches. I think both of them kind of had the same trainer as well, Garage Strength. They do a phenomenal job. So some connections there as well.

He just was a really good athlete, and early on we were not necessarily sure what he was doing but we wanted him on our roster. We knew he was too big, strong, fast, we wanted him somewhere. You have to remember when Coach Frey was here, every good player that we were recruiting he thought was a linebacker, every single one of them.

So I think early on, we were, I thought, in a really good place and then he went on some visits and almost lost him. Then we were able to get him back and had a great senior year, and you know, has really just showed up here ready to contribute. He's a guy, I think in a lot of ways, like a lot of guys say they want to play as freshman but he approached it that way. You know, in the weight room in terms of learning the offense, how he practiced.

Got an awesome mom and dad. One of the best home visit meals we've had. Mom made oxtail. I don't know if you guys know Coach Trautwein has lost over a hundred pounds since his playing days, and he never eats anything. He packs his own food. Everything is organic, like even water. Like he won't drink certain water, like what are we talking about? Traut killed the oxtail. He was crushing it, going back for second and thirds, which I've never seen Traut like that. Got a great relationship with mom and dad, and brother, to be honest with you, as well.

I think he's just another example of a local kid that has thrived here. He's crushing it academically. You know, been great in the community. I think you guys have got to spend a lot of time around him. He's a man of few words. But he's a substance guy. To me, that's what Penn State is about. We may not be the flashiest. It's funny, I even look at Notre Dame and there's a lot of parallels between Notre Dame and Penn State and kind of same uniforms and now Notre Dame has even got a ton of different uniforms and things like that.

To me, he's a Penn State guy in terms of just substance, right. And has maximized his career. I think he's trying to decide what he's going to do, him and his family. Been a ton of conversations there. He's been awesome. I think him and Kaytron have developed a really good relationship but sometimes that's not always the case. They could be adversarial. They have been really good friends both on and off the field. I think they are complementary pieces to each other. He's could go great. He's thriving.

Obviously we'd love him back. But if he decides to come out we'll fight like heck to get him drafted as high as possible. I know it's important for him to go play well in this game this week and to keep this season going and keep this team together. We have 65 plays left on defense and

defense, and 24 on special teams and that's how we are approaching it. And Nick has been a leader. Big fan. Big fan of Nick and his mom and dad and Governor Mifflin High School, and how he's handled his whole Penn State career.

If it was just about Penn State and being greedy, love him back. But I ultimately want him to do what's best for him. More times than not, it's going to be what's best for everybody.

Q. I wanted to ask about Abdul Carter. How do you think he's progressing this week and do you anticipate him being available on Thursday?

JAMES FRANKLIN: He's doing great. His attitude is great. His mentality has been really good. You know, we'll see. But I think he's taken the right approach and mentality, and really, it's going to come down to how he feels and how much practice he's able to get during the week.

At this point, I don't think there's anything that is stopping him from playing. But it's just -- it's going to come down to, you know, how is he able to play.

We'll see. We'll see. But his mentality is great. He's got a big smile on his face. I think he's excited about this week. But it's too early to say at this stage, and as you guys know, I don't usually talk about these things a whole lot. I get where we are at. This is an important piece in the story line. But Abdul is going about things the right way, and we'll see how this thing plays out.

Q. You've been through almost the full season with Andy. He's obviously a really creative guy. How do you manage, or maybe just over approach that creativeness that he brings to the offense with maybe some times where, hey, let's just run the ball, let's do something straightforward, this is working. How do you balance those two things, given who he is and why you hired him?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Well, a couple things. No. 1, I kind of manage it like the same way I've always managed it. I think as an offensive coordinator, as a defensive coordinator I may say to Tom Allen, let's make him earn it here. It's third-and-long, trying to decide on the headset whether we are going to go after him or play more coverage. That's the stuff I'll probably say, they are discussing, and him and Anthony Poindexter on the headset. Hey, what do we want to do here. I may jump in here and say, hey, I agree with Dex, let's go after him here or let's make him earn approximate.

Same thing on offense. There's times where maybe you had not taken a shot in a while and I think we need to loosen him up and be aggressive. Or at midfield and we're in two down territory, and I'm saying, Hey, you've got two downs; so call this third down as if you've got two, if you're going to go-for-it-on-fourth-down, type of deal. Allow us to be aggressive and take a shot or pick up the first down. It's more things like that. It's governing the big picture. Do we need to run the ball here; we need to milk the clock; we are ahead by two scores or three scores and we want to run the ball here and manage the clock as much as possible.

The creativity we want, and that's a big reason why he's here. The explosive plays which are typically tied to the creative plays. It's funny, though. Last week we ran the toss, where Ty Warren tossed it to Drew and tried to take a shot down the field, and everybody thought that was a bad decision, according to Chris Peterson and Greg Kincaid, they sent that to me, because it didn't work.

When it works, everybody thinks it's the great decision. The double pass to Tyler Warren to throw back. If that didn't work against USC, they would say, Oh, my God they tried to get too cute, right.

For us, we work at these things. We want it to be aggressive. We want it to be just part of our identity; this is what we do. And I think it creates a lot more headaches for the defensive coordinator, and the defensive staff that's trying to prepare for these things.

At the end of the day, it's about execution. You've got to rep it enough that the guys know what to do. So like for example, it's not always going to play out the way you repped it in practice. So have you repped it enough that when the ball is supposed to go here, and that's not open and it's been open every single time in practice, have you given them the look where, okay, that's covered, and what's -- what's our answer right here. Are we throwing the ball away; there an outlet, are we trying to get back to the line of scrimmage, whatever it may be.

I think that's the important thing is we want the creativity. We want the explosive plays. That's probably the biggest difference in our offense this year is the explosive plays, which is a big reason why he's here.

But those are also tied to the creativity and also all the things that you have got to try to prepare for during a week, right. So it's all of that. And for me, it's just, you know, either pushing Tom and Stig and Andy to be more aggressive when I think we need to, or when there's times that we need to be a little bit more conservative. That's kind of how I see it.

And during the week, we'll have some discussions, or during practice I'll see some things or we'll discuss some things. I'll give some feedback. But I want us to be aggressive. I want Tom to call the game aggressive; I want Stig to call the game aggressive, I want Andy to call the game aggressive and creatively.

Q. Max Granville could have been one of those 14 guys walking around in a 00 jersey but looked like you do some of the same things with Abdul. Can you talk about the strides he's made?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so Max is obviously a defensive end for us and has played defensive end this year. But in our third down package, to your point, he backs up Abdul.

So when we lost Abdul, he's the next guy in that role, and I think it speaks a lot about our excitement about Max. Max, if you looked at him from a recruiting standpoint, was highly, highly productive as like a 3-4 outside linebacker dropping, interceptions, rushing the passer, doing a ton of different things.

To me, we have thrived with those kinds of guys. You look at Chop, Micah Parsons. It's funny, a lot of times in recruiting game, guys try to use whether you're a 3-4 outside running backer as a 4-3 defensive end as an argument on why you should go one place or another. Chop was a 4-3 defensive end for us and playing 3-4 outside linebacker in the NFL and thriving. Micah has now played defensive end and linebacker in the NFL. Was a defensive end for us that last year when we lost him.

We were going to do a ton of different things with him. You look at Jayson Oweh, another first round draft choice. We looked at him as a guy that could do a lot of different things within our defensive structure. The reality is, the more guys can do in terms of dropping and being comfortable with coverage, pressure the quarterback off the back side or the front side -- excuse me, off the edge, really, but then also have the size and physicality to hold up in the run. Max is 250 pounds right now and looks great. So he's another one of those guys.

I think Harvey is another one of those young guys we're excited about, as well, Malachi. We have a bunch and we continue to recruit them because they are just so valuable and could impact the game and cause headaches for defensive coordinators, quarterbacks and offensive tackles.

So we were able to play him a significant amount this year but still safe his redshirt. I'm pretty sensitive to that, especially under the new roles, especially under the new

rules being able to play in four games plus the whole postseason.

So that could be a ton of football if you manage it the right way and I think we did. There are some guys we look back at that are fourth and fifth year seniors right now that maybe their freshman year, played two reps in two or three games. That burned their redshirt.

We just want to make sure that we are managing that correctly. They all think they want to play as true freshmen but some of them get to the end of year and are kind of like, well, I wish I didn't based on how the reps played out. But you just never know with injuries and things like that.

Q. You talked about aggressiveness in fourth down and play calling. When did that change become a priority or what spurred that change?

JAMES FRANKLIN: It really has not changed a whole lot. If you go back to Vanderbilt, we were doing those things there. I think some years, you maybe do it more than others because maybe you're better at running the ball or better at short yardage situations or better on the offensive line.

When we got here, I think you guys know this, I think we had three or five offensive lineman in the whole program. I would not say our strength was the offensive line, and I say that and people are like are shocked by it.

You've got to play to your strengths, and sometimes your strength is to punt and play good defense and early on, that was our strength when we got here. Bob Shoop had done a really good job for us. We had a little bit more depth and talent on that side of the ball. You know, if you go all the way back to Vanderbilt, that's what we did.

Now, it's probably hard to find that because no one covered us or followed it. But that's the reality of it. So you know for a lot of different reasons, you've got to do what you've got to do to win games and give your team the best advantage. Sometimes it's going to be being aggressive and going for it on fourth down, and some years it's going to be punting based on how your team is built and constructed and what your strengths and weaknesses are.

In terms of our DNA and my DNA, we would like to be aggressive. And historically, I think, again, if you just look at the numbers, it may or may not say that. But again, that may be because it was a couple years where I didn't feel like that was in our best interests based on what our strength was and who our strength was.

Q. I was at the explosion earlier. That was cool to see.

JAMES FRANKLIN: Is that how it's described?

Q. The felling.

JAMES FRANKLIN: I did not -- I was not there, obviously but I did see the videos and then I did see what it looks like afterwards. I also saw, Greg showed me, Tom Dienhart said, "Well, thank God because it was the worst press box in the Big Ten." Whether you agree with that, I'm not sure but we were fighting to be in the argument.

So I think it's a great thing. Obviously Pat's done a really good job when it comes to facilitates and moving the needle, not just for football. I was over at the east area locker room for the other sports. That came out phenomenal. I don't know if you guys have seen that. Came out great. Obviously the indoor that's being built over by the soccer stadium going to be great. Soccer are getting facilities they have needed for a long time.

Pat has done a really good job, him and Vinny, moving the needle for all 31 sports which is hard to do. I've said this to you guys before, when you don't do facility projects every couple years like you need to, you can fall behind and it becomes a massive project. This stadium, I know there was a lot of maybe some anxiety about it. But I think it's going to create some challenges in the short term but in the long term it will be in everybody's best interests and will be a stadium that everyone is really proud of and will create a lot of the amenities that we need because you're not just competing with other programs and other sporting events. You're competing with TV now.

So I know this isn't your question. I know you've got a question. But I do think this is well-needed, but I also know in a place that doesn't love change, it's also scary. But I think in the long term, it's going to be a win for everybody.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Kaytron Allen, had just a fantastic game against Boise State but I wanted to ask you about a play you might not be too thrilled about, the run that got called back because of the hold. But it was such a special run. I was going to ask you the positives you took away from that, not just the way he ran and finished the run, that was nasty but the way it was blocked, everybody had a piece of that run.

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, he is playing his tail off right now. You guys recognize that. I think everybody recognizes it.

I know there was a ton of conversations about Mr. Jeanty, and deservedly so from Boise. He had earned that type of conversation. But I would make the argument, we have

got the best duo in all of college football. I think obviously we are about to play a team that's got some good backs, too. Again, we are part of that conversation.

Kaytron is just so physical. He's just so physical, and he wears people down. He's able to run you over, keep his feet, extend runs. It's funny you bring that run up. So typically on Sundays, I show the team all the big plays in the game and try to identify not just the obvious, like the common football fan or even some of the young guys on our team. They just watch Kaytron. You kind of try to point out the reasons for it being successful. The receiver is down the field at the point of the attack. Then I highlight the guys that I want to make a big deal out of, and then also, sometimes you don't highlight somebody, and that's telling, too, because everybody is highlighted but one person, right.

But I showed it. Even though it was called back, I showed it because I thought it was such an impressive run, and he deserved his flowers in that moment, and so did the rest of the group.

But yeah, I think he's running great. I think Coach Trautwein and Coach Howell deserve a ton of credit, as well. Those players deserve a ton of credit. Andy, obviously, deserves a ton of credit. But a lot of people are spending time talking about an Andy and Traut and Ty and the rest of the guys on that offensive line are just playing so well and so consistent, and physical.

And like we've talked about, run game travels. At this point of the season, being able to run the ball; but then also, turn the tape on and you've got Evans running over your head and Ty Warren coming down with contested catches and making big plays. That's challenging. And Drew extending plays with his feet and also picking up first downs with his feet, as well, you know, I think the development of our wide receiver room is something that I don't think has been talked about enough. That has turned into a strength, and I know there's a ton of conversations come into the year.

You look the year Trey has had. We felt like Trey has been able to have those years the last couple years but he's had injuries. Omari coming and playing to his superpower, line of scrimmage. Julian; you think about the catches Julian had against USC, we are not here without those. And I get it they are not gaudy numbers, but you watch how Julian is blocking. Where are the explosive plays coming from? The receivers owning all of the responsibilities of being true wide receivers.

Some of these guys may have gaudy numbers in terms of catching, but their run game blocking and things like that is disgusting and NFL people watch that and they see that.

So real football people know what to look for. And I think Marques Hagans, and those wide receivers in that room have done a really good job of making plays at critical times, being explosive. I think they are getting better. Omari's play on the sideline I thought was a big-time play last week.

I just think that's been probably -- there has not been enough stories written in my opinion about that because there sure was enough articles written about the opposite, and -- and they have been a huge part of our season, and our development, and again, at a time in college football and in society where maybe that's hard to do in terms of every receiver wants 80 catches and a thousand yards.

Those guys are a big reason that we've won the games we've won and that we're where we're at at this point in the season. Because if you don't have it, those two running backs are not getting the yards that they have because people are loading the box up. The fact that we have been able to get down the field vertically to receivers and tight ends has had a huge impact on our running game as well.

Q. Back in August, you told us that you felt like Omari Evans had a real chance by the end of the season to change the way people are talking about him and viewing him. How important has his vertical presence been for the team, especially of late and what's next for him in his development?

JAMES FRANKLIN: You've got to remember, Omari was a high school quarterback with a super power. Could run-run. Came to camp and, like, ran. Like ran-ran. Like back to the combine with Deion Sanders and Troy Apke, and you know, safety debts up from Penn State and runs 4-3 and Deion goes, who is this guy, fast-fast? Omari is a fast-fast, but he's starting to learn and embrace all the other things that go with it. If it comes down, he made a great catch on that one down the sideline and when he hit the ground was not able to finish it. But that play still scares people when they see it on tape. He's going to make those plays.

I'm proud of him. He's blocking. He's being physical. He's making plays vertically down the field and I think we are using him in the right way and as he continues to make plays and his confidence is soaring right now, you are going to see the other plays like the play on the sideline where he jumped up and snatched it over the guy and went down the sideline.

The scary part is I don't think Omari is anywhere close to where he can be. I think as we continue to play this year, he's just going to keep getting better. I feel like the same

way about Trey and line of scrimmage and the other bunch of wide receivers in that room. That's exciting, right.

And to me, you know, we talked a lot in the preseason about that question mark and that position, and we have felt like we've had the talent in that room but it needed to be developed, and they needed to run with it, and they have.

I also will give Julian credit because I do think coming into that room, he has brought some maturity into that room. He's brought competition into that room. You know, sometimes you're going into the transfer portal to fill a hole. Sometimes you're going into the transfer portal to create more competition, to bring out some of the confidence in the personality and the competitiveness in the room that you need, and you've got to embrace that.

I think Julian has done that in that way, as well. He's brought -- his work ethic is second-to-none and I think that's showed up, as well, and I think that's helped the room.

To me, it's exciting because we are adding more pieces to that room. But we feel like the foundation is finally in a place where we can win at the highest level, and it's only going to get better. And those guys, again, they have got more games this season, and they have got more games in their future, and I think you're going to see a bunch of draft choices come out of that room. I think there's going to be some surprises this year, as well.

So I think that's probably something that has not been talked about enough is the development and the growth of our wide receiver room and that's a credit to those kids and that's a credit to the coaches.

But I also think, you know -- I also think, that's harder said than done. Tuning out all the outside noise and putting the team first, and they have done a great job. I'm proud of them and I'm happy. I'm happy for them.

Q. You talked earlier about whatever decision Nick makes you'll support him, but how are you balancing the reality of preparing for 2025 as you finish this season playing later than you ever had before?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I talked to a buddy at another really good season and they said that was a mistake they made is that they put everything into that season, rightfully so, but then a year later, you're paying for that. That's the challenge. That's where having these staff sizes are so important in trying to balance those two things constantly. Right now we have kids on campus for official visits, right.

That is challenging.

What we have been trying to do, and I've been talking about this with our team, it can be a real different Shea tore, and it can be a real super power if you can compartmentalize, which is easier said than done.

So what we've been trying to do, this week was harder, again, because we had less days, but the days before we get into the game week we are trying to sit down and meet with as many guys as we possibly can about their futures, about NFL decisions, about their futures at Penn State, about NIL, about all these different things. Because the most important thing that we can do is retain our current rotter for the future.

But then you do that, you do that two days ago, and then I need them to put that on the back burner because we are in game week and there's no more talking about it. We're in game week. That's easier said than done. It's hard for me at 52 years old now and been doing it for 30 years, and I'm asking 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-, 22-year-old kids to do it, and their families, as well.

To me, the programs that are able to do that, are the most successful programs at this time of the year because as we all know, the calendar does not reinforce that. The calendar does not support that. In a lot of ways, they are in conflict of one another.

Trying to get our guys to understand that, talking to the leadership counsel about it and talking to the captains about it. What I said yesterday after practice is, if you're struggling with doing that, be honest with me and come into my office and talk to me. I'd prefer not to, but if you're struggling doing that, come into my office and have a man-to-man conversation with me and let's talk through it so I can understand where you're coming from. Or if you're a captain or you're on the leadership council and you know it's happening, come and tell me about it so we can address it and be as transparent and authentic about it as we possibly can.

But I thought the last two weeks, we've done a really good job of managing it, and we're going to have to continue doing that. Because again, it is easier said than done.

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