

Penn State University Football Media Conference

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President Neeli Bendapudi Athletic Director Pat Kraft Coach Matt Campbell Press Conference



NEELI BENDAPUDI: Hello everyone, and thank you so much for joining us today.

Character. Culture. Community. Excellence. These are not just words. These are principles that we discuss and do our very best to live by in my leadership team. Every one of them will tell you we talk about these.

At the heart of that pursuit is bringing in exceptional leaders who share our values. It's for that reason that I'm truly so thrilled that Coach Matt Campbell is joining our Nittany Lions family.

Coach, we are equally honored to welcome your family here today to Penn State and to Happy Valley. Erica, Katie, Izzy, Rudy, and Rocco. Welcome. You now just have become part of a huge family, just so you know. It's not just our 800,000-strong alumni network, but the millions of extended family. The Penn Staters by marriage, Penn Staters by affinity, they will all embrace you with warmth and generosity, make you part of this family just as they have done with all of us.

Character. Culture. Community. Excellence. These are the words that Coach Campbell used to explain to me what he thinks success looks like. I knew immediately we have the right person. He has a special ability and a proven track record of building and elevating winning programs, cultures, and people. He has shown determination in developing elite athletes, but equally as importantly, young men who excel academically, personally, and professionally. These are men who are better people for having been coached by him.

We talked about how we need to prepare our student-athletes for life beyond the last buzzer. Because it doesn't matter if you play at the college level or at the pros, at some point there is life beyond that last buzzer.

Interestingly to me, people who have known Coach Campbell for decades and people who tell me they've been tracking him and trying to recruit him for years, every single one of them speaks to his integrity. They speak to his grit, his relentless pursuit of excellence on and off the field and in all spheres. Apparently he's pretty fierce at intramural basketball. That's what I've heard.

So first of all, thank you for our vice president for intercollegiate athletics and our athletic director, Pat Kraft, for leading the successful search to find the right leader for us.

Before I turn the mic over to Pat, there is a few people who deserve a special shoutout today. As your president I first want to acknowledge our football team. You young men, every single one of you, you make us proud with your resiliency, focus, commitment, and your character every day, but especially now during this difficult transition.

Thank you for our athletics and football staff. Thank you to our fans, to our donors, our supporters. Thank you to my administrative team for stepping up in a big way to help us get to this day.

So legal, HR, strat-com, my chief of staff Michael Wade, thank you to all of you. I thank our trustees. Thank for your support and commitment to building a championship football program. Thank you Chair Kleppinger for being here representing our board.

Importantly, very special thank you to Coach Terry Smith. Thank you for stepping up and showing us what true dedication to Penn State and our student-athletes looks like. I'm truly proud to have you as a Penn Stater.

Today, today ushers in a new day for Penn State. For Penn State athletics and for our flagship football program. I have the highest level of confidence in Coach Campbell as he works to build this football program that brings a new era of winning to our university, that places our student-athletes' success on the field, in the classroom and in life at the center of everything we do; that meets the challenges of a changing college sports landscape while also seizing the new opportunities that lie ahead for us, and that stands unwavering in its commitment to integrity.



... when all is said, we're done.®

I so look forward to seeing the lasting impact that Coach Campbell will have for Penn State and our student-athletes. With that, I will turn this over to Pat.

PAT KRAFT: Thank you, Neeli. Good afternoon. Thank you everyone for being here on what I believe is a pivotal day for our athletic department. I want to begin by expressing my gratitude by President Bendapudi in this process. So many people were important and influential in this process. I do start with our amazing president, who has been a great leader and mentor for myself and so many of us on the cabinet.

Board Chair David Kleppinger, vice chair Sokolov, the President's counsel, who many of you are over there, and Michael Wade Smith for his partnership, leadership, their unwavering support and belief in what was right for the future of Penn State.

It was a true effort by everybody to get us to this day, and we're so excited for that. I want to thank my staff, all around here, coaches and all. It's a journey, and when we're all moving in different directions everybody did an absolutely remarkable job holding down the fort and getting us to where we are today, and I'm so grateful for everybody in our ICA family.

It takes everyone to get to this point in finding a new head coach. I am so appreciative to our student-athletes. Obviously you know how I feel about our football team. We're excited to go and finish this season off against Clemson in New York.

But I'm so proud of them and Terry what that they've done to handle this adversity. It's been pretty remarkable to see. We are excited to cap the year off.

I am real appreciative to Nittany Nation. You are the best, most passionate fans in the world I believe. I am really, really grateful and thankful for each of you.

Over the past several weeks this community has been tested. We've been challenged and we been reminded that Penn State football is woven into the very fabric of this institution. Through this process we found the right person to lead the most storied program in all of sport. This program has been built on toughness, humility, and togetherness.

Penn State football today emerges tougher, clearer, and more driven than ever before, and we turn a page to a new era. We are introducing a leader who embodies everything Penn State stands for: A builder, a fighter, a standard bearer of what this place can be at its very best; a coach

whose teams compete with a chip on their shoulder and conviction in their hearts; a coach who's committed to shaping complete men, mind, body, character, and purpose, because he believes greatness is forged way beyond just the practice fields.

He doesn't just coach players. He cultivates leaders, scholars, teammates, and future fathers who carry Penn State's values with them for the rest of their lives.

Matt Campbell is one of the most respected coaches in the country and he has earned that. Matt Campbell is Penn State: Hard nosed, humble, relentless, a developer of young men, and he's built for championships.

He embraces our expectations not as pressure but as a privilege, and with him Penn State football enters a new era of toughness, discipline, accountability, and identity.

Our fans, and I reiterate, our fans, are the absolute best in the country. You deserve a team that plays with fire, passion, and purpose. Matt Campbell delivers that. Coach is here to unite this community, energize our locker room, and restore our championship mindset.

Along with Matt, equally or maybe more important, we are welcoming a new family to our community. Erica, Katie, Izzy, Rudy, and Rocco embody everything we value: Character, heart, and commitment.

Great programs, elite programs are built around great people, and this is a great family we are bringing to Happy Valley.

So make absolutely no mistake about it, Penn State football is once again a program that no one wants to see on their schedule anymore. I am honored, humbled, and can't tell you how excited I am for you to get to know Coach. I would like to welcome the new head coach of the Penn State Nittany Lions, Matt Campbell.

MATT CAMPBELL: Thank you. I'm going to take a second. It's been a whirlwind. I'm going to say this: I'm humbled, honored, grateful to be standing before all of you, this world-class university, world-class athletic department, and truly one of the greatest football programs in the world. It's an absolute honor to be the next head football coach here at Penn State University.

The last five days have been a whirlwind. They have been. As fate has it, it's this full circle moment in my life, our family's life. This young boy that grew up in Madison, Ohio and all you heard about was Todd Blackledge. You understood his excellence and what he stood for. Watched my father compete against him.



To, man, spending so much of my child need Carmichaels, Pennsylvania. My great grandfather who worked in the coal mines, my grandparents who worked in Carmichaels, Pennsylvania, and all you heard around these family discussions was Coach Paterno and the toughness and the character of the Penn State football program.

To the 16 year old tight end who started to get recruited and couldn't stop watching No. 81, this Kyle Brady, and all you kept saying is, man, someday I want to be like that guy. It's a dream come true for me. It's one of the greatest honors of my life, and I couldn't be more grateful to be here.

I do want to thank our incredible leadership team that has believed in me. I know this: Culture and excellence is always built on leadership. We talk so much in our program that everything rises and falls with great leadership.

From the first moment this process started, you could feel the excellence of leadership that exists at this great university. I know that vision starts, President Bendapudi, your conversation, who you are and what you're about, is unbelievable. You're authentic, you care, and your belief, you can tell, breeds excellence into every orifice of this university. I promise you I will represent this university and you with absolute honor and integrity every step of the way.

Pat, you're one of the most finest accomplished athletic directors in the country. Your competitiveness and passion jump off the conversation. I love that you demand excellence every step of the way. Your vision, work ethic, wow, it's incredible. The team of people you put around you, the coaches, it's created the best athletic department in all of college athletics.

We'll demand the same standards every day I walk into that facility.

And Nittany Nation, I'm going to say this: Man, I hope -- no, I'm going to demand a similar standard of excellence that the last great Iowa State coach that came here. That last great Iowa State Cael Sanderson. I can't thank Cael enough. He spent 45 minutes with me on the phone two nights ago and we talked about our similar journeys and similar pasts.

We've watched Cael from afar and talked about building excellence in a program the way Cael has. To be able to link arms with him, I couldn't be more grateful. And Cael, I really appreciate your time.

I also want to thank Governor Shapiro. His time, words, and encouragement during this journey and this process were incredible. To be able to have him take the time to call Thursday night and talk to me about the integrity and the grit and the character of the great people of this state and what this institution means to the state of Pennsylvania, I couldn't be more grateful. And Governor Shapiro, we'll make you really proud of what this football program stands for.

In my own journey, I want to say some thank yous, and I have to start off at Iowa State. The hardest thing for me was leaving the great people at Iowa State who took a chance on me. I want to say thank you to Jamie Pollard, athletic director. Man, at 36 years old he gave me the keys to build a football program and said, we want to do something that hasn't been done here before.

We built an incredible staff that's foundation was built on care, unifying, and inspiring the young men that come into our football program and day out; to build great men of character; to stand for what's right on and off the field.

I also have to say I can't thank our players enough. For ten years they trusted in myself and our staff every single day. Their belief and commitment to stay the course with me. One of the hardest moments of my life was Friday night to walk in and to leave so many of our great young men that believed in me and believed in our coaches and that signed up to be a part of our great program.

What I do know in our ten years we rewrote history. Every single step of the way we rewrote history. From 3-9 to the greatest era ever in the history of Iowa State football; one of the best BigXII programs in the country, we went face to face with everybody that had more than us and we competed with them and beat them every step of the way.

I also want to thank the great community and the alumni base and the former players who embraced us at Iowa State. They made it bigger than just winning football games.

They made it about, man, serving a community; the impact of making a difference every step of the way. Our team GPA was a 3.4 the last two years that I was there. We had 100 players out of 120 that had over a 3.0 GPA, 54 of them over 3.5. You know when that showed? When it got really hard, when it got really tough in the fourth quarter, man, after a tough loss. Our ability to respond was because our young men's ability to how they did everything -- how they did anything is how they did everything.

I also want to thank you the University of Toledo, Mike O'Brien. Took a shot at a 31-year-old offensive line coach



and offensive coordinator to be the head coach at the University of Toledo. Had no expectation that was going to happen, and I know I wouldn't be here without Mike's belief in me and all those great Toledo football players, and I'm so grateful for each and every one of them.

For my football mentors, I had three of the best. First of all my father. To grow up with a father that is a high school football coach, one of my greatest memories from my brother and I were being on the sidelines at two-a-days and the opportunity to watch him impact and inspire young men. He taught us work ethic and do the right thing every step of the way.

My high school football coach, who is one of my greatest mentors and one of the winningest head coaches in the history of Ohio high school football, you walked in as a 16 year old kid and you left as an 18 year old man because he taught you the values of attitude and effort and how to wake up every day and demand the best in yourself.

Then this unbelievable journey in college for a gentlemen that is the winningest coach in the history of college football, and that's a gentleman by the name of Larry Kehres and the opportunity to win three national championships and play under this unbelievable mentor. And everybody was trying to figure out, man, what's going on at Mount Union? Why is there all this success?

Nobody could figure out there was only one sign and it said this: Faith, family, football. He engrained it into us every step of the way, and it's allowed me to love my life the right way and I am really grateful for him.

The greatest blessing in my life is my family. This is awesome, but the greatest win is what's sitting in front of me. To my wife Erica, we've been married 20 years. She's been my rock. We've been through a lot and it hasn't been easy, but she's the most selfless human I've ever met. What she's done for myself and our kids and our family, it's hard to repay you.

For Katie and Izzy, two unbelievable daughters, 18 and 16. Gosh, who you have become and what you're about and what you stand for, allowing me to do this every step of the way and being some of my greatest supporters, I can't thank you guys enough.

And to my two young sons, Rudy, probably going to be a defensive end someday. We had to get this Courtney Brown -- I had to go back in the archives, man. Defensive end for sure and show him Courtney Brown. This Browns fan at some point had to talk about Courtney Brown and his great success.

My little guy, Rocco, is going to be a great quarterback someday. We kind of started talking about Kerry Collins and all those great Penn Staters.

So I'm really grateful for each and every one of you. This was a family decision. We're going to surround ourselves, and we weren't going to surround ourselves unless it was going to be great people.

Thank you for believing in me, thank you for all you do for me.

I want to talk about my parents. I talked about my father, but I think sometimes who doesn't get talked about enough is my mother. She's one of the toughest and great humans in my life. You know, I think the opportunity for me to be back around, two and a half hours, three hours from their doorstep. My mom is tough, gritty. She is an educator and she is a public servant.

I've always said I think one of the greatest gifts for me is I got the greatest of both of my amazing parents and I am really grateful to have two have two great parents. Erica's parents, Melody and Tim, so grateful for their support in me.

I will finish with this, some acknowledgements. First and foremost, I want to talk about Coach Terry Smith. I got to meet Coach Smith during my time when he was the head football coach at Gateway and I was recruiting at the University of Toledo.

Terry was always such an inspiring human to be around. I loved going to watch him interact with his players. We loved to go recruit his players because you knew if you got a great player from Terry you know what they stood for and it was bigger than just football.

It's been so awesome to watch his commitment to Penn State, how he's led this football program and football team through tough and trying times. It's been rewarding. I know he's the cornerstone of this program as a player, as a student-athlete, and now as an incredible football coach. It is my honor to work hand in hand with Terry to build on this great foundation moving forward.

I would also say this: For Coach Franklin and what he built here at Penn State, I have the utmost respect for him, Coach O'Brien, and, man, what he stood for here in these great halls. I have the utmost respect for him and I understand it's my responsibility to continue to build on the values that those great men have instilled in this program.

To our current players, I can't wait to meet with each and every one of you today. What I would just say is the great



reward for me is I've always said the greatest climb in life is the climb back. To watch these young men be on a three-game winning streak here at the end of this football season as so much adversity has hit them, it's been inspiring.

They get this unbelievable opportunity to go win four in a row at the end of the season for these great seniors, for themselves, and for the future of our program. Man, to give us unbelievable momentum in 2026. I'm really proud of that those guys are around about. I can't wait to be around them and engrain myself in each and every one of your lives.

I think to a really special group, this Penn State football lettermen. I walked into Lasch yesterday and this incredible lettermen wall, 2200 names. You could almost feel goosebumps going down the side of your arms looking at some of these incredible names. Some of the best, Jack Ham. Some of the best ever to play the sport of football. You knew their excellence and what they stood for, a blue blood football program. No question.

The sacrifice, the passion of so many of you individually to become the best and collectively to have some of the greatest teams in the history of college football.

I know this: It's my responsibility to each and every one of you, every single step of the way to link arms with you, to unify us, and to continue to push this program to the greatest heights it's ever seen.

I know what I'm inheriting and what my responsibility. To be honest with you, to link arms with every one of our lettermen, former players, and to unify this football program into the greatest football power in the country, I can't wait for that opportunity.

Last but not least I want to say thank you to our fans, alumni, student-body. Your loyalty to Penn State football resonates all over the country. I know it's the greatest fan base. I know game days here in Beaver Stadium with 107,000 plus is one of the greatest environments in the world of football.

It's my mission to make you proud of this football team, how we play, how we do things. Truly appreciate your loyalty and faithfulness to Penn State football, and can't wait to make you proud of what we're about.

I will finish with this. And life change happens. Change is inevitable. It happens. Adversity happens. It's coming. It always is and always will. But greatness and how we respond to adversity is a choice. From this day forward we're going to wake up every single day in this football

program and build championship habits.

We're going to do it one day at a time and do it from the ground up. We're going to do it in a football program that's going to demand toughness, mental and physical. Discipline at every corner and demand most importantly togetherness. Selflessness and togetherness: One team, one program, unified to continue the great pride and the great tradition of Penn State football. I can't thank everybody enough for coming. I look forward to spending time with each and every one of you.

It is truly my great honor to be the head football coach here at Penn State University. I want to finish with this so I don't screw it up. I hear this is how we got to finish it, so we are?

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Penn State.

MATT CAMPBELL: We are?

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Penn State.

MATT CAMPBELL: We are?

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Penn State.

Q. Matt, welcome to Penn State. You've had other opportunities in the past to go other places, including the NFL. Why now? Why Penn State and why now?

MATT CAMPBELL: You know, COVID hit in 2020 and I became a head football coach at 31 years old I was drinking out of a firehose to be honest with you. Until COVID hit and then you had this grace period. You usually don't get that until they fire you.

You're sitting at home that spring and I remember looking at my wife, we had four children at the time and I said, this is what's going on at home? It was humbling, to be honest with you. I think we came out of COVID, and for us one of the things that really made me perspective, because I think I was the guy that, man, do I want to bounce around, do the next big thing? I said no, you better have some priorities in your life.

Number one, if you are ever going to leave or move it better be about your family. We're two and a half hours away from home. To be able to have my father and my mother and my brother and my wife's family be able to come be a part of this journey with me means a lot.

Number two, I always said you want to be around great people. You want to -- if we're going to lead we want to lead with the best. It was one conversation with Pat and



one conversation with Neeli. I knew what their demand is and they want to be the best for the right reasons ap.

Then I think the last piece is what do you want to stand for? The hard thing for me ever wanting to leave Iowa State at times and getting close but saying, you know what, it's just not the right time, is I never wanted to be that coach that was oh, man, I'm going to jump from job to job.

If we were to leave Iowa State I wanted to go somewhere and I wanted to finish my career and I wanted to stand for something that's bigger than Matt Campbell. It's not about me, but about the players and represents something bigger than myself and I found that.

I couldn't be more humbled and grateful for that opportunity.

Q. This is for Pat. Could you take us through your timeline with this search and at what point did Matt become a candidate?

PAT KRAFT: Yeah, I think I won't go deep into the end of the search because as you know there is a lot of things going on. We didn't really have a timeline, and I mean that. We were focused on finding the right person, and at all costs.

Probably be a Netflix documentary at some point. The way that Matt and I got to each other was through some twists and turns in the road, but we -- I needed a partner that I had trust and belief in to take that role because it was so important. This department needs a leader for this role and this institution.

So as things went around I would echo it was a late-night phone call for the two of us and I'll give you this. I was banging my head against the wall, like, why did it take so long for us to find each other?

He was perfect. We connected on so many levels. You know, I woke my wife up, Betsy, and I said, Oh, my God, he's the guy.

So look, there is a lot of turns and I appreciate the media speculating and putting things out there every step of the way that was true or not true, but we got the guy -- we really got the guy and the guy who is going to lead us to a national championship and bring us back to the best program in the country.

Q. Matt, Pat mentioned the twists and turns. This became very public in a lot of over the last ten or so days. Was there any apprehension on your part when you saw the public nature of this when the time came

to make a decision?

MATT CAMPBELL: The only apprehension that gives you is because you care so deeply about the young men at Iowa State. I love our kids. The only reason I'm sitting here today is because our kids believed in Matt Campbell and they stayed with Matt Campbell, and so I would be lying to say there wasn't apprehension, because I love the young men that played for us and played for me at Iowa State.

As things got public I knew -- Erica almost like slapped me in the head and said, what are you doing with any apprehension? This is meant to be. She was so right.

And honestly, President Neeli and Pat, their conversation you just said, you know what, we're going to continue this journey and find out if it's the right fit for us and it is the right fit for us.

Q. The Terry Smith part of this came together very quickly. Why was it important to get that part of it done? How receptive was he right off the bat, and will there be any other assistant coaches from either program already lined up?

PAT KRAFT: For us, Terry and myself were having conversations all along the way on the journey, and so it was very easy for me and we had discussed it too. They knew each other. Terry is Penn State. We made Terry the interim head coach because I felt he was the one person in this building to unify the team, and he's shown that.

So the Terry decision was an absolute no-brainer, easy. That's a testament to Terry. I think I've got best football coach in the country and I've got a partner for him who is Penn State who will fight for Penn State, lead his kids. I don't know about you, but I feel really good about our chances moving forward.

That piece speaks to both Terry and Matt. They knew either other obviously in the past. Terry has been incredible through the whole process. For me that was a no-brainer and very easy for us.

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I would just say it was critically important for me to keep Terry in my opinion. Terry and I have got a great partnership from his days at Gateway. I know what he's about and what he stands for. Building a staff is so critical because you need to build it around the same character values as who you are and what you want your team to stand for.

Ironically I think Erica and I were watching the Penn State-Nebraska game and you watched, man, the intensity



and the character and how this Penn State football team played. As soon as we got into discussions with this job it was one of the first questions that I asked, boy, I would really like to keep Terry; what do you think?

It was a resounding yes. The fact that Terry wants to stay and be a part of this, I couldn't be more grateful, I really mean it, to work hand in hand with him. And knowing what it means to play here, knowing what it means to coach here, and knowing what it means to lead here, that's huge for me.

As the rest of our staff, you know, we are going to spend the next couple days. I know there a lot reported out there; as usual, that's not all true right now. We're going to take our time, again, I think building -- if you're going to build a championship team you better have a championship staff.

I want to take my time and have a great opportunity to talk to everybody here in-house. I think that's really important. And then have the opportunity from there to meet with our players. And then have the opportunity to start to fill out that staff.

Now, are there some people I know I want to bring from Iowa State? There certainly are, and we'll do all those things at the right time.

Q. Welcome to Penn State.

MATT CAMPBELL: Thank you.

Q. Question is for Pat. Pat, since you got here you've been very passionate and fiery. Talked about the search in October, who were looking for and why it mattered. Respectfully, I wanted to ask you, because I felt that passion and that fire last week when a video came out of you addressing the Penn State team. I felt that and I wanted to ask about that for a comment, but also why you felt it was important to talk to the team with the search ongoing?

PAT KRAFT: We'll, I'll talk to any of my athletes whenever they ask me to talk. I'm passionate and transparent with my athletes, kids and student-athletes. What I will tell but that is that I'm embarrassed. I apologize to anyone that I may have offended with that video that leaked. Personally it's been challenging for me, but I am very passionate about Penn State. It was nine or ten football players that asked, wanted to sit down, and we had an open and honest discussion.

I fell short of the standard I should represent for all my staff that sits up there, all 833 athletes that I represent. You know, I can't apologize enough for those who I may have

offended. I've got to get better.

But every one of my athletes know they can call me at any point in time and I have open and honest discussions whenever they want.

So we're moving on. We handled it in the family. I'm proud of our guys. I'm proud of them and excited for them to move forward.

Q. Welcome to State College. Curious if I could ask both of you on this, three you got about three weeks with this team still engaged on the field, getting ready for a game. How do you go about discussions that will give you a real sense of who is staying, who is going, who is committed to what comes next and who maybe wants to explore their other avenues when that January portal opens? How important is that for you the next few weeks getting a feel for all that?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I think it's critically important. I think first and foremost, period, is to get to know the young men in this program. Trust, oh, buddy. If you want to win, if you want to have real success, trust has got to resonate from top to bottom in the program. It starts with the coach-player relationship.

I'm going to work with the staff tomorrow and try to get through every staff member tomorrow. For the next four to five days I want to meet individually with every player on our team. Why did you come to Penn State? Man, what's going on here? Who are you and where are you going and what's your thought process and how do we move ourselves forward?

When you do those things you start to understand how we move ourselves forward. To say, hey, we're going to do to this way, that's fool's gold. We've got to get the information and ask the questions, and I really can't wait to get to know the young men in our program and then we'll move forward no matter what the situation is and have a great program moving forward when the time comes.

Q. Welcome to Happy Valley. I think about what you mentioned, 31 years old at Toledo; that's one challenge. Then Iowa State is another challenge in building a program back to some success. You're inheriting a pretty successful program here. I don't know which ring Pat is wearing right now, but he loves to talk about the national championship --

PAT KRAFT: Latest wrestling.

Q. -- caliber of all his programs. How do you embrace this challenge, because it is different, and why is this



the right time to take on a national championship challenge?

MATT CAMPBELL: I've always said this: Our scars are our superpower. If you're humble enough to grow through success and failure, then you continue to put yourself in position to be the best.

It's when we stop growing that failure starts to seep in. So to me, we've had championship expectations every step of the way. You're talking to the guy that lost one game in four years of college and as won five national championships. I don't care what level it is, it's a fact.

From my end of it is your scars have built you for those moments if you use them wisely. We've had unbelievable moments during our tenure as a football coach, had some great learning lessons along the way, and it's always confidently prepared me to step into this role and to continue to build the greatest college football program in the country.

Q. I hoping you could dive in a little bit to your philosophies on recruiting high school and portal and ass far as financially and geographically pertains to those things?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, let's start with the transfer portal to the high school piece of it. I think one of the great reasons being here is, boy, you're in the most fertile ground of the excellence of high school football in a six- to eight-hour radius. Everything will start with building high school football and continuing to do a great job in this state and our surrounding states. Nobody is going to attack more than us.

Transfer portal obviously is -- has become a unique advantage probably in some ways and sometimes can be a disadvantage. If you look at our history the last couple years, Jayden Higgins was maybe the 40th ranked transfer portal guy and Jayden Higgins was the No. 1 receiver taken in the draft last year.

You go to, man, in offensive tackle, Jalen Travis, who was drafted by the Colts, No. 40th in the transfer portal was the first transfer portal offensive tackle taken.

We have a process. We know what we're looking for in the transfer portal and have to use that to continue to supplement our football team. Nobody will be better at developing our student-athletes and our high school football players better than us.

We've proven that every step of the way. I think you can ask Brock Purdy, Breece Hall, David Montgomery, Will

McDonald. The flash, the stars, that's cool on signing day, but winning football games on Saturday is what we're going to be about.

That's development. We're going to have to be better than anybody in college football. You know, you asked a little bit tell me what -- where am I missing the question? There was one other good part of that question.

The financial aspect, I think is certainly unique. One of the great things that we have here is the sacrifice that Pat and his team have made to, man, be competitive at the highest level to give yourself a chance to build the best team.

Now, I think sometimes in college football we can get lost on the financial piece of it. Do I think it's important? Absolutely. But I think the reality is that cannot be priority No. 1.

I want young men that want to be here at Penn State and want to win championships at Penn State. It has to start there. Obviously with Pat, what he's done here to give us a chance to be able to compete with everybody in college football, I'm really grateful for that.

Q. Have some bowl practices coming up. How do you plan to handle that and what will you your role in that period?

MATT CAMPBELL: That's a great question. I probably need to think about that next. It's been a whirlwind in every way, shape, and form. We got practice today. The first thing I can do is not be a hindrance to this great team.

They have done -- again, to watch these guys climb back, it's been super impressive. My respect for Terry and the seniors on this football team, man, going to win four in a row, that's huge.

And so I think we'll figure out, Terry and I, where is the best place that I can not be a hindrance to this team. It allows me to be able to start to build for the '26 team, and yet still be around, and, again, that relationship's piece, really start to develop that relationship with our players.

So I'm going to have to honestly walk a really fine line, because that's going to be a unique challenge. I do look forward to it.

That's a great question. I don't know if I have the perfect answer because I think I'm going to have to work through it day by day.

Q. Nick Sirianni said the other day you guys left Mount Union with a doctorate degree in coaching.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah.

Q. How would you describe your relationship with Nick? Did he help at all during this decision making process and what you guys collectively learned as well as Jason Candle at Mount Union under Coach Larry?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, you know, I would say that experience that we had as players and Nick and I were coaches together for a year at Mount Union. We won a championship together as coaches.

Nick was coaching the corners; I was the offensive coordinator and O-line coach, and Jason was the receiver coach. The doctorate came because we had the humility of a leader in Coach Kehres that demanded to teach us everything he knew, which is really hard to find.

His ability to give us opportunities to grow as coaches, make mistakes, and fail at times and yet get better was so rewarding. And I think all of us, any of us in coaching today, are so grateful. Coach Kehres doesn't get the credit, but what that man has accomplished nobody has accomplished in the sport of football.

To be able to make everybody else around him better was humbling. For Nick and I, we've had this incredible relationship. You know, we've had it during our coaching career through some of our ups and downs Nick has been there for us, and hopefully Nick would say, man, through some of his ups and downs we've been there for him.

Uniquely, on Thursday morning I was -- I got to like a million texts from Nick. Nick can be a little -- like he's like I always say like four years younger than his maturity. Like trying to be like pecking at me.

I'm finally, man, what do you want? Man, are you coming here? I said, well, should I come here? He was like, well, I don't know anything about Penn State football. I'm like, okay. Well, shoot, you're not helping me.

No, I think for me to have him regionally so close, we would fly out there and spend a bunch of time with Nick. I'll say this story: I take a little credit to that Super Bowl team a year ago. We got out there and here is the credit I took: I watched Saquon and it was literally the first three practices. He had me out and he said, man, can you come out? Awesome. Come out.

First I'm on the practice field and see these two incredible tackles. They were the first two guys out. Then I saw Saquon Barkley. And this is a credit to Penn State, too.

How that guy practiced every day that I was there, man, I watched this guy. When it was special teams, he took his position coach and he went and did individual every day. We walked off that field and I said, hey, listen, buddy, you're going to screw this up if you don't go win the Super Bowl.

So man, put a lot of pressure on that guy. No, Nick has been an unbelievable friend. We have a great relationship. We grew up very similar. His father was a high school football coach, his brother a high school football coach, his other brother we know a great college football coach.

That family has been great to me and I really appreciate our friendship.

Q. Pat, when you got here there was a football staff in place. Now with this reset and what you know on 2025, what do you want to do with the general manager role in this program? How do you think that should look, operate, find that person, and what's the plan?

PAT KRAFT: Yeah, that's actually a good joint question. Look, I think it's critical in this new space. We're getting closer and closer to the NFL. We're not there yet. We're recruiting young men, and that's why this hire is so important. They have to have a leader and a mentor. These aren't professional athletes; take the money aside.

The general manager aspect is critical and I think it's an important factor to the success of a program moving forward. There is a lot more to deal with. Your player personnel, you're scouting high school that we always had to scout. You're scouting every single college team.

College team. Not Division I, not Power Four. DIII. IVs, DIIs. So we obviously had the conversation about how do we build that to make sure we're getting the right talent and people on board.

So, yes, I think the GM is an important part. Then as you start to build the personnel department out, it's critical. And Matt can explain the GM piece.

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I think Pat is so right. You got to remember, we've almost had to be in what I guess some of the blue blood programs kind of got away with because they had the resources do it. We had to do -- we had to have a GM at Iowa State because we didn't have those resources.

So we almost had to be better evaluators in high school, better evaluators in the transfer portal, because it was the only shot we could get. How could we be early on guys? We have an unbelievable GM, Derek Hoodjer, who was



with us. I mean, we had to create our own collective, okay? We didn't have Pat running or like -- we had to do it all ourselves, and it's almost one of the great things, probably advantages we had. We didn't have an athletic director working with us. We had to build all those things from scratch.

I think it allows us to come and partner with Pat and Derek Hoodjer who was with me and really evolved into the GM role. I mean writing contracts. He created the contracts at Iowa State.

So the reality is we're really lucky. Derek is one of the absolute bright minds in all of football, and is already here with us and started that. And now Derek's role will be exactly what Pat said. We have to build out the greatest team underneath Derek that we possibly can. Not only a coaching staff, but certainly, man, player acquisition staff and retention staff that we can find.

We look forward to that journey.

Q. Congratulations.

MATT CAMPBELL: Thank you.

Q. You mentioned going into the Lasch Building and getting goosebumps. Can you trace your roots with Penn State a little bit more? Had you been here? And also, how much interaction -- did you know James and Bill O'Brien at conventions and had you ever met Joe?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, so I'm going to say no to all because that's honest. I've never been to Penn State. My greatest asset is what I talked about, Todd Blackledge, what his father has meant to me. Man, he's been a huge advocate for me from the University of Toledo to Iowa State, and what Todd's friendship has meant to me was huge.

Matt Millen who was doing our games at Toledo and I'm 31, 32 years old and didn't have any idea and just the mentor that he became to me through my journey in football. To the absolute honesty of my grand parents are two of the greatest humans in my life. They had a profound impact on me.

My great grandparents and their history and work ethic and the pride they took in Penn State football and Coach Paterno. To the fact of the matter it is I know we're at Linebacker U. I know might as well be in Running Back U. You can probably go down the line in almost every position group.

I know the history of this place and I really look forward to

spending time with all the great people.

James, Coach O'Brien, I haven't. Again you're not -- I'm not the guy that came up probably like some of those guys. I came up in the DIII football world, and so I'm all right with that. But I know they're great men and they did a great job here.

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