

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Wisconsin Badgers

Paul Chryst

Press Conference



PAUL CHRYST: Certainly is really good to be here and never thought I would be saying this but excited to be at media days and kind of having the opportunity to get back to the new normal. And certainly when you go to media days and it feels like the start of the season and obviously really excited for our season. Looking forward to many of you getting to know the three players that came with me down here. In cornerback Faion Hicks, linebacker Jack Sanborn, and tight end Jake Ferguson. But.

It was great having the opportunity to have spring ball and to have a good summer and really looking forward to training camp and then obviously all pointing towards the season. I really do like our team and appreciate the work that they're putting in and yet we have still got a lot more work that needs to be done to try to take advantage of the opportunities that will come this fall, but certainly looking forward to it.

Q. You guys scored 94 points your first two games last year and then scored 20 points combined the next three. What can you take away from those first two to replicate that offensively and kind of get away from the next three?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I mean, it's all about scoring more points than your opponent, right? There's so many things that you look back on each season, but for an individual player or as a unit, and you talk about scoring points, offensively, what do you have to do? Certainly you need to be more consistent and that falls on everyone of us to be more consistent and to keep developing our players and make sure that we're doing things that they can do well and fits into how we as a team can play our best football. But obviously you don't want those discrepancies, like you said, and we got to work to be more consistent.

Q. How do you encourage your players to be, like, I know the game is not defined to one play but that one play made a huge difference. How do you encourage them to make plays that sometimes make a huge difference and sometimes do not? Like, do you watch film that's like, is that play really the play that we

should have made to either win the game or lose the game?

PAUL CHRYST: I think that's a great question. I think you want your players to understand that you don't know, if you put a number, the first play, the second play, third play, all the way, we don't even know how many we're going to have total to play in that game, whether it's offensively, defensively, special teams. At the end of the game you can look back and say, That was one of those handful of plays that truly made a difference, and yet you don't know that that's going to be.

So what I believe you try to coach, and more importantly you try to play the game with, is an attitude and approach that every play is so important and you don't know when that significant play, when you look back, you say, That was one of those plays. So I think it's, sometimes there's personalities that are involved in it and some personalities it's freeing them up to go make those plays. Some personalities it's to find ways to relax them or to focus in on having enough confidence to go make that play and that's kind of the beauty of athletics and certainly one of the things that I think many of our coaches enjoy about coaching is how can you help them to actually go out and play the game.

But I think, I'm hoping I'm answering your question, but I think you just, you have to take advantage of each play and play it like it is that opportunity. And it may not come your way. You may be a cornerback and it was a run going the other way, but the beauty of it is you don't know. I think that's one of those, so often there's things that the game of football can kind of teach you and reinforces that is a great carryover to how you can approach your life.

Q. Obviously the state of Wisconsin is riding high off of the Milwaukee Bucks Championship run there. How do you harness that energy and momentum into your program after a tough 4-3 year last year?

PAUL CHRYST: Well, I think there's a couple things in that. One, congratulations to them, right? I think everyone, not just from the state, but certainly everyone one in the state is, it was exciting, it was meaningful, and



great examples. You know, obviously, I was a fan of the Bucks and certainly of Giannis, but as you see the whole team and Coach Bud and the organization and how they have kind of navigated everything, you can't help but just become bigger, bigger fans. I don't know that you say, okay, the Bucks won it and this is how we're going to take what they did and transfer it. But I also think there's great lessons to be learned in it and something in a way that certainly a lot of our guys followed it. Our locker room, we don't have, not every player is a Bucks fan, but when there's enough energy and they see their teammates get excited about it, there was a lot of interest in it. You pull up clips of press conferences and videos and you talk about how -- I'm fascinated by how Giannis goes about it and he kind of speaks about what we were talking about of being in the moment and taking advantage of it and opportunities, and the best way to take advantage of the opportunity is by putting it all out there. I think he backs it up and I think their team backs it up.

So there's great life lessons, there's great sport lessons in what they did. We have got another challenge and it's an opportunity to kind of write our own story and that's, every team in this conference has that. That's what the season's all about.

Q. What will it be like to open the season against Penn State, a team you played here in Indianapolis just a few years ago? And how much are you looking forward to doing it in a full stadium for the first time since COVID last year?

PAUL CHRYST: Right. I mean, there's a lot to be excited about. You're always going to be excited about your home opener and like many teams in the conference opening up with, in conference is a big deal. Certainly when you have an opportunity to play Penn State, that's always a big challenge and a big opportunity. We're obviously looking forward to that.

Not a lot of the guys played in that game and yet this year, their team this year presents a ton of challenges. Big game. They're all big games. But certainly we know that this one is and that's what we got to put our work into, not just for the Penn State game, but certainly that's where it all begins and we got to make sure we put the work in.

Q. Graham Mertz got off to a hot start last season his first couple games, had some ups and downs. What areas of his game did you want to see him improve most this season?

PAUL CHRYST: I think you're accurate, he did some really good things and has areas where he can improve upon it. What I appreciate from Graham is that he sees that and

recognizes that. And it doesn't matter if we're talking about Graham, any player, any coach, you're looking for consistency and you're looking for consistency at a high level and I think that that's, that he's capable of that. He's shown that he has the ability to do that, what I also love about this game is it's not just one guy, it's going to take everyone to -- he can certainly help them -- and whether it's guys on offense, our defense, our special teams, got to find ways to help them. I think that's -- I don't know that we're any different than any other team, we're at our best when our team is playing together and playing off of each other and playing for each other.

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