

# Big Ten Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Maryland Terrapins

### Coach Michael Locksley

#### Press Conference



KEVIN WARREN: I'll call the Maryland football coach to the stage. Coach Michael Locksley is the founder of the National Coalition of Minority Football Coaches, which has done an unbelievable job of preparing, promoting, encouraging more diversity in the coaching ranks.

Also, he's coming off a big bowl win in the Pinstripe Bowl against Virginia Tech. I enjoyed watching that game. I know they're poised for a great football season this year.

Coach Locksley, welcome to the stage.

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: Good morning. Excited to be back here in Indy. Looking forward to seeing all you guys throughout the day. I want to thank Commissioner Warren for his leadership.

Last year for us was a big step in the building process of the Maryland football family. We had a winning season, both victory, moved into a brand new facility, the Jones-Hill House, and saw our team really come together up in New York.

We have high expectations for ourselves this year. When you have the type of year we had last year, the natural reaction is to say let's build upon it. We don't see ourselves building on it because last year's version of Maryland football is no longer here, and I hope what we can take from last season is the work that we put in, the necessary process that we put in place for us to have that type of year.

So we're looking forward to this year's version of the Maryland football family doing the necessary things, playing with the type of discipline, the type of toughness, the type of effort, as well as being committed and connected to take the next step that we need to take as a program.

We have high expectations for ourselves heading into the '22 season. It's probably the deepest football team that we've had since I've been back here at Maryland. On offense we have over 163 starts, 15 different guys that

have started a game. On the defensive side of the ball, we have over 113 starts with 16 different guys having started a game.

I'm a strong believer in continuity and leading to success. And for the first time we have a coaching staff, whether it's the offensive coordinator, Dan Enos, coming back along with Brian Williams, our defensive coordinator who took over the last couple games of last season. Both those guys have done tremendous jobs on those two phases, and I expect them to take that next step.

Taulia Tagovailoa returns for a third season after breaking numerous Maryland football records. I don't think there's a more underrated player in the country than Taulia Tagovailoa, and I'll continue to say it, as he's a guy that has really been the catalyst to making us go on offense.

All five of our starting offensive linemen are back, and to me that's the most improved unit on our team, and I'm looking forward to seeing us take that next step.

Consistency in the coordinator room, as I talked about earlier. Dan Enos has been a Godsend for me. Being an offensive guy, he's one of those guys that has come in and called plays with his personality and really did a good job of leading the offense last season. I expect us to continue to play really well and be explosive on the offensive side of the football.

Brian Williams was elevated to the defensive coordinator position right before the Rutgers game, and I thought he did a tremendous job leading the defense from the front of the room. He's been with me since I got hired in 2019.

We brought in some new coaches on both sides of the ball that I think have continued to bring and add to what we do.

I want to give a lot of credit to our players. These guys have really put the work in. Like all great programs, they've done a great job of buying into all the things we've asked them to do, as well as our strength and conditioning staff, headed up by Ryan Davis, who continues to be the glue for our program.



We report to training camp in exactly one week and are really excited about seeing what this version of the Maryland football family looks like, and I really truly appreciate all that you guys do in terms of covering college football and really looking forward to this season.

With that, I'll open it up to questions.

**Q. I want to ask about Dontay Demus. What can you share about his recovery process? Do you expect him to be ready for week 1?**

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: Dontay is ahead of schedule. Really, really impressed with how he's returned. Our training staff, led by Brian Simerville, has done a tremendous job of getting Dontay back. I think last week he broke 21 or 22 on the catapult, which means he's got that explosiveness back.

We do expect him, barring any setbacks during training camp, which we'll do a good job of trying to protect him and get him to that opening game, but there is the expectation that we'll see Dontay Demus playing in the first game.

**Q. In what areas have you seen growth from Taulia in this off-season?**

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: The biggest thing with Taulia, as we talk about in our program, every player has a shelf life, meaning when the play is over, it dies. For Taulia, he's a guy that puts a lot of pressure on himself. There's nobody that has more expectations than he does.

And what we've seen him do here from I say midpoint of last season on, is I've seen a maturity in how he manages himself, whether it's a good play, not letting that good play get him too high, or if it's a bad play, not letting it get him too low. We like to keep him at that neutral position.

I see a growth out of him. I see a comfort level in our system. That's probably one area we want to see him improve in is just the emotional maturity, and we've seen that out of Taulia.

**Q. Being on the East Coast, what's your reaction to this Big Ten expansion, adding USC, UCLA, that flight you guys will have to take every now and again, how it changes things for your student-athletes and the future overall?**

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: I think it's a win for the conference. Obviously, the commissioner and the powers that be felt that they are a fit for the Big Ten, very like-minded, the two universities are very like-minded to what the Big Ten is all about -- great academics and great athletics.

So to add those two type of teams that have storied history is a win for the Big Ten.

As far as the flight, it is what it is. For us, we'll play the games that end up on our schedule. We'll manage it and come up with a way to hopefully allow us and get out there to play our best. But great to have those two storied programs come to the Big Ten.

**Q. A lot of talk of course with Maryland's offense. First off, congratulations on the winning season since 2014. The question I have is your front seven on the defense. Where do you see some improvement at? Because your back end looks pretty good. Talk about the front seven if you could for a couple minutes.**

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: The biggest thing I'll say about the front seven, first of all, we've got a lot of experienced guys, with Mo Kite coming back for a third season, Ami Finau. We've had a lot of injuries. That's been our Achilles heel on the defensive side of the ball. We've had a lot of injuries. Durell Nchami is healthy, one of the best pass rushers in our program.

Like you talked about, having our secondary back, a guy like Deonte Banks, Jakorian Bennett, Tarheeb Still -- all three of those guys lost games last year due to injury. Having those guys healthy, as well as the second level of our defense last year. We lost Fa'Najae Gotay in our opener, a veteran player who's played a lot of football. There's been the addition of really talented players. We brought two freshmen in midyear, Caleb Wheatland and Jaishawn Barham, we think will add tremendous depth.

The biggest thing with our front seven on the defensive side of the ball, we have experience and we're healthy, and we need to keep those guys healthy.

**Q. I just want to get your view on the current state of NIL and what are some improvements you personally think should happen?**

MICHAEL LOCKSLEY: NIL is one of those things, as we've all said, it's good for the student-athlete. They deserve it. As you continue and as we continue to kind of figure it out as coaches, there are some guard rails that we need to put in place.

Obviously, once they're in your program, for them to take advantage of their name, image and likeness, and for a place like Maryland, being located between two major metropolitan areas, you've got over ten Fortune 500 companies in that area, I think it would be very beneficial for kids in our program.

But what we've got to do is control it and how it's being used in the recruitment of players. For me, that's where we've got to continue to find a sweet spot with how it's managed and how it's used.

I'm all for it. I've been on the record for being all for NIL. We'll continue to navigate it as we learn it.

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