

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Wisconsin Badgers

Coach Paul Chryst

Press Conference



KEVIN WARREN: Our next coach is not only a phenomenal football coach but he's an incredible person, does a lot in the community. He's a passionate supporter of the National Football Foundation Scholar Athlete program at Wisconsin.

He and his family have a scholarship named in honor of his late father, George Chryst, and he does a lot of work for the Carbone Cancer research center in Madison.

It's so good having Paul Chryst in the Big Ten Conference. As I said, he's a wonderful person and an outstanding football coach. So I'd like to welcome to the stage the head football coach at the University of Wisconsin Paul Chryst.

PAUL CHRYST: Thank you, Commissioner. Truly am grateful to be here and to be here representing the University of Wisconsin. Never take that for granted and always an exciting time of the year as we wrap up our summer workouts and get ready to report to camp.

The one thing that everyone here knows is there's a lot of talk about how things are changing and all the differences in how things are so different than before. The one thing I feel very grateful for is that there are a lot of changes, but the one thing that hasn't changed for me is I get to work at a great university, and the players that I get to be around every day and coach and the group of people in the athletic department and our football program, I'm truly fortunate to be around them every day, and that hasn't changed.

I know there is a lot of change around us, but truly feel grateful that I'm at a place that, yeah, we're trying to get better and need to do that. I'm not saying we're staying the same. But the core values haven't changed, and that I don't take for granted.

We're here this day with three of our players. I think they're great representatives of our program in Keanu Benton, Nick Herbig and Graham Mertz. I look forward to you getting to know them. Three guys that truly represent our program in the right way, and obviously we're all excited for

the season. Every team this time of the year is.

The best part of the season is going out and each day going to work and becoming the best team you can be.

Q. How has Graham taken a leap in leadership this off-season, and how do you think he's progressing so far?

PAUL CHRYST: I've appreciated the way that Graham has approached this off-season, coming back in the winter and spring and summer. Last year he was a leader in many ways. He's continued to do that. He's taking ownership of the things that he needs to do and does a great job of communicating, working with the rest of our players. It's about all of us, right?

I think a good leader shows that you've got to lead by example but also how can you help others be the best they can be? He's trying to do that, and I've seen him do that. That, as a coach, you appreciate.

Q. Coach Brohm has become known for his creative coaching. What is the biggest thing you'll keep in mind when facing the Boilers this October?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I've had a ton of respect for Jeff. I think he's a heck of a football coach. We know that, and I think everyone in the league knows it, and you've got -- I think that's what's fun about playing them. You've got to be on your toes, and you can't get caught up in trying to cheat one way. He'll take advantage of it.

I think that's one of the things I love about being in the Big Ten is you get to go up against and face great competition, players on other teams, some of the best in the country, and I feel the same way about the coaches.

I think that's one of the great things about being in the Big Ten. Each and every week you're going to face really great coaches that have really good players. Certainly Jeff and Purdue, they do a tremendous job. You've got to be on that game. If.

Q. New offensive coordinator this year. How does that



free you up and let you handle other fires that are going on? And how does that really help the team overall?

PAUL CHRYST: I'm really excited about Bobby Engram having a chance to be with us and for me to get back and coach with him. Had a chance to coach a couple of years with Bobby, and just a tremendous amount of respect.

I think one thing that I always feel is important when you add a coach is you kind of think about your players. That's where I'm most excited, for our players to be around Bobby. I think that it's as much the chance for -- the timing was right for really both of us, but for Bobby to come. I think that with Bobby we're a better team.

So I think it does give me a chance to maybe do some different things. You can't spend enough time with your players. You can't spend enough time with all the things that truly matter. So hopefully I can continue to do the best I can in those areas but also don't want to -- certainly not looking to get away from the football part of it, but I'm really excited for our players with Bobby here.

Q. Ten days ago, Braelon Allen, Graham Mertz, Nick Herbig, a large chunk of the Badgers roster played in that charity softball game. What was your thoughts on the game, and was there any trepidation with a large chunk of the roster playing in the game?

PAUL CHRYST: No, I think it's -- I love it. I think we've been fortunate, and those guys get to do a number of things in the state. We've had other guys be part of -- when some of our players have moved on and playing on in the NFL, and they come back and do things with them.

It's a special thing to be a player at the University of Wisconsin, especially around the state. Anytime they're together, I think it's a good thing. I know they had fun with that one, and it was a really good experience for everyone. So how can you not be fired up about that?

Q. You're obviously familiar with Jon Budmayr. What do you think he'll add to the Iowa State defensive staff as an analyst?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I am familiar with him. I think the world of Jon. He's talented in a number of ways, and also Coach Ferentz and the rest of their staff, it's a good football staff. They'll figure it out. I'm sure he'll add a lot for them.

Q. Benton and Herbig have the potential to lead you guys to putting together another great defense. Can you talk about the potential for that and what they bring to the table.

PAUL CHRYST: In Keanu and Nick, you've got two guys that have played a lot of football and played good football for us. What I love about them both is tremendous leaders, not just for our defense, but for our team.

We've been fortunate. We've played really good defense. I'm grateful. I think we've got a heck of a defensive staff. Certainly a lot of people know about Jim Leonhard, but I think our coaches, we've got a really, really good staff. What makes them good is they know our players and they get to know our players.

We're going to have some names this year like Keanu and Nick that have played, and we'll have some new faces with some new names. But I think that it's a great starting point when you've got -- just today with Nu and Nick here, you've got some guys that didn't come but you feel good about and did a lot. With the addition of some other players and with the staff, we've got work to do, but I feel confident in that group.

I think we're all excited. We're all excited about it. We've got some younger guys that we feel like has good talent, and now this is their time.

So there's no doubt we lost some really good production from last year, but we are excited about the group that we have. Like I said, we're going to need training camp. We've got to have a good camp, but I like a lot of what we've got going on there.

Q. With the entire West Division seemingly getting more competitive all the time, how has that refocused your efforts in every aspect of the game to gain a competitive edge?

PAUL CHRYST: I think every year we're trying to do that. I can't imagine we're any different than any of our competitors, right? Every year you're trying to get that edge and you're trying to be the best that you can be to give yourself a chance.

There's more talk maybe about it now, but I've always felt there's a lot of competition. I think that's what's great about this game is there is -- there are no days off, and there is no week that you don't have to be extremely prepared for. Our guys know that, and that's why I think it's so important that you have great phases in your winter workout phase, your spring ball phase, your summer plan, and leading into fall camp. Those are the things that get you ready for the season.

I've always had a ton of respect for every team in this conference. Like I said before, and I mean it, you know



you're going to face some really, really special players, and I've got a lot of respect for the coaches across the league. When you know that every week is big and on your own you'd better do everything you can to try to find what it is to help give yourself and your team its best chance.

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