

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Maryland Terrapins

Coach Michael Locksley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Mike Locksley.

COACH LOCKSLEY: Good morning. Excited anytime I get an opportunity to be here in Indianapolis.

In the summer, I'm just getting back from vacation, and during the summer I usually try to find a little inspiration for going into the season. And it's ironic because the inspiration I found happened in a tiny airport in the British Virgin Islands about ten days ago. And there's nothing worse than finishing a great vacation, and then on your way home be stuck with about a 14-hour delay in getting out of there.

My family and I were stuck in Tortola in the British Virgin Islands in a really small airport there in Lettsome Airport in Tortola. And I got an inspiration.

There was a little newsstand inside the area where we were stuck for about 12 to 14 hours, and as the guy named Joel, shout-out to Joel for the job he did, there was about 70 people being affected flights canceled, not being able to get home, we were stuck without a lot of amenities, trying to figure out how to get home.

When you deal with airlines, sometimes they don't understand customer service anymore and you get very few answers. But when I looked over at that little newsstand after about an eight-hour wait, I saw Joel there, and this guy had tremendous customer service.

He made the best out of a tough situation for a lot of people. And he did it with a smile on his face. He delivered food over to people, turned his TV around so people could watch TV as they waited.

It made me think, a coach's job is to take players where they can't take themselves. And with today's college -- the landscape of today's college football, players are getting their just due finally, with NIL transfer portal and all these things, but what I took from that 14-hour delay at the airport was customer service is at an all-time low.

And seeing the way Joel navigated and handled all these people that probably weren't in the best of moods at that time, it kind of gave me a shot to say, you know what, one of the things I feel like we do a great job at Maryland is we want to give our players the best college experience they can get. And I know they're getting paid now with NIL and they're doing tremendous things, and they're well-deserved. But I still think it's our job as coaches to provide this great experience.

The best thing we've done at Maryland since I've been back -- and I wanted to take some time to thank a couple of people -- we created a mentorship program. And this mentorship program takes some of the top CEOs and Fortune 500 companies located right outside of our campus, and 85 of our players have mentors that are CEOs, powerful business leaders, political leaders that are within the Maryland community.

And it's been the best thing that we've done -- and I want to thank David Gordon and Jeff Leventhal for setting up this mentorship program. Anybody that's been recruited by us, have heard us talk about this program -- and I look at that as providing something outside of just money that would benefit our players for not just the next four years but the next 40 years.

So, again, I want to thank David and Jeff for the job you guys have done with that mentorship program.

Excited about the direction of Maryland football. Back-to-back winning seasons. Back-to-back bowl game wins. Really excited about where we are academically in terms of preparing our guys for opportunities outside of football as well as opportunities to compete at the next level.

We had 22 Academic All-Big Ten selections. Ten guys of our team have earned their degrees, undergraduate degrees. We have one player, Jashaun Jones, who's earned an undergraduate degree, a master's degree and working on a second master's degree. To me those are the types of things I'm really proud of when you talk about our program.



When you talk about developing them for the NFL, we just had seven guys here in Indianapolis for the combine, which is the ninth most nationally.

We had five guys drafted off of our '22 team. Ten total guys from last year on NFL rosters as they start camp.

What that says is you can come to Maryland and get a great experience that prepares you for life after football while also being developed to have opportunities to play at the next level.

It also speaks to us being a developmental program, and I use that term a lot. When I say "developmental," we are a program that we're going to take players and we're going to find ways to make them better because of the time they spent in our program, whether it be in the classroom, on the field or just in life, and have a positive impact on them.

Our strength and conditioning program led by Ryan Davis has done a tremendous job of helping with the foundation that we've built the last four years, and I think has been noticed by just about anybody that's seen us play.

We've created some recruiting momentum. The thing for us in recruiting we're looking for smart, tough, reliable guys. We feel like the last class that we signed we really hit those areas. We've been able to get some help, immediate help from the transfer portal and are really excited about seeing just what this team can be.

With us today we have three players -- Tarheeb Still, we have Lia Tagovailoa and we have Roman Hemby representing us. And these three guys are exactly what we talk about when we talk about representing the Terp way.

And really excited that you guys will have an opportunity to spend some time with those three individuals that I think really reflect what being a Maryland Terrapin is all about.

I'd like to end by sharing an impactful quote I read. "Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

And for us our program is at a point finally we can say we're here to compete for Big Ten championships. You haven't heard me say that in the previous four times I've been in front of you guys, but I think now is the time.

But we're not going to let goals like winning championships get in the way of doing the work, and our players understand that.

Q. You opened the season up with your alma mater,

Towson. How unique is that experience going to be for you?

COACH LOCKSLEY: It's a really unique situation. A place that has given me so much. The game of football has provided an opportunity for me to change the lineage of my family. Growing up in a tough area of D.C., and playing at Towson. And that four, five years that I spent at Towson has shaped and molded me into the man I've become today.

And the coaches that helped me along the way, I find myself at times mimicking some of those great coaches.

So to be able to play my alma mater with their new coach that just came in for an opening game is something that I'm excited about. It's the second opportunity I've had to play my alma mater, but this one is really special for me because it is my alma mater.

Q. You mentioned that the recruiting inroads that you've made, your predecessor as well, the program has developed well for the NFL. But most of that has come at the wide receiver position, defensive backs. Do you feel like you've developed this program to the point you can compete with the best in the Big Ten in the trenches on both lines of scrimmage?

COACH LOCKSLEY: This year we had two offensive linemen drafted and probably a third that should have been drafted, but we have at least three of our four starters from a year ago all in NFL camps.

We really feel like we have done that. You look at the defensive line and on the O line, we all understand to win in the Big Ten, it starts with how you play inside the trenches.

So there's been no doubt that we put a premium on how we recruit to prepare to play in the Big Ten. And to me it means winning in November. And the way you do that is by establishing the ability to run the football and as well as stopping the run, and we'll continue to recruit those positions in that manner.

Q. You got this program now, a lot of people believe top 30 in the country. How much pressure is it on you now to maintain that? And then also you were talking about some of the transfers. How important is Sheppard, the defensive back from Cincinnati, going to be to your program?

COACH LOCKSLEY: When you put yourself in the position where we've laid the foundation, we don't feel the external pressure.



I think any pressure that we have to deal with as a football program or a football family, it starts from within. And for us every year we have to start from ground zero. There's no building on what you did a year ago. What happened a year ago at being 8-5 has no bearing on how we'll play this year.

I think it's really important for our players and anybody that's part of our football family to understand that there's no building on last year. You start from ground zero, and what you want to do is take the work you put in a year ago, try to find a way to do it a little bit better, and I think we'll get the type of results we want at the end of the year.

Q. Several first-year coaches this year in the Big Ten. Is there anything that 2023 you wishes that first-year you would have known in this conference?

COACH LOCKSLEY: Because of my experience here having been at Illinois and having been part of building that program with Coach Zook, knowing the way this league is, I came in with a pretty good understanding.

I do say that the 2023 me understands that to win in the Big Ten, good teams don't beat themselves. And there are a lot of things, when you look at last season, that some of those games where we were close that we didn't necessarily do the things or take control of the things we can control. And it's going to be really important, if we want to take the next step, which is to compete for a Big Ten championship, it's going to start with us and by us.

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