

# Big Ten Football Media Days

Thursday, July 27, 2023

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Purdue Boilermakers

## Coach Ryan Walters

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Purdue head coach Ryan Walters.

COACH WALTERS: This is awesome to be able to sit in front of you guys as head coach at Purdue. Humbling experience.

I've known for a long time I wanted to be a head coach one day. I remember sitting in a staff meeting as a student assistant in 2009 at the University of Colorado, and Dan Hawkins is running the show there.

I just remember that first staff meeting saying, man, this is what I want to do, this is who I want to be. So to be here before you today is awesome.

We've got a saying at Purdue. It was coined by our corners coach. His name is Sam Carter. He said, at Purdue we're trying to bless you, not stress you. I definitely feel blessed today.

Blessed to have a community and a career path that has put me in contact with people that have tremendously influenced my life, not only as a coach but as a man. Blessed to be at such an unbelievable institution as a first-time head coach with tremendous leadership, administratively, that supports you and that encourage you and treat you first class and are competitive. Blessed to be here with three young men that will accurately depict what it is like to be a member of the Purdue football team and blessed to be part of a conference that is the best in the country, that I have familiarity with.

Every coach this time of the year, they're excited. And I think the thing that is interesting is every coach is excited for different reasons. And so for me I'm excited for this season, first and foremost, because of the guys we have in the locker room. They have embraced us with open arms, the new staff, the change in culture.

They have attacked what we put in front of them, every challenge we put in front of them on a daily basis with great attitude and effort.

I'm excited because of the staff that we have in our facility that attacked their daily duties with passion and intent.

Those guys do their jobs on a consistent basis and always approach their work with no ego and understand that it is the players' experience that is at the forefront of our jobs.

I'm excited to show Purdue faithful what we've been working on since January. We've got 39,000 season ticket sales up to this point, which is the most since 2008. Ross-Ade is going through renovations right now where we'll be able to run through the Tiller Tunnel -- in honor of the late Joe Tiller who set the standard for what it means to be a successful football coach at Purdue University -- and to be able to do that in its 100th year as a stadium will be awesome when we play Fresno State.

I'm excited just to start this new journey, to figure out what it is like to be a head coach in this great conference that is filled with tradition and history and excellence. I'm excited to be the head coach at Purdue. I'm excited for the season.

**Q. Ryan, I know you're still relatively new to West Lafayette. Got to ask you, have you been to Triple XXX and tried the peanut butter burger?**

COACH WALTERS: I have. It was for breakfast. The peanut butter burger doesn't sound appealing, but I'll try it. I've lots of great things about it. And there's definitely some great food joints in West Lafayette.

**Q. Obviously when you first came in you gave Devin Mockobee a scholarship right away. Talk about how you plan to use him and how good of a back and how big of a weapon he can be for you this fall?**

COACH WALTERS: Kudos to Coach Ro and our strength staff. Devin Mockobee looks like a different player. He's transformed his body. He obviously has talent and skill set to have success in this conference. That's proven.

We're excited about his growth and maturation with the scheme and his ability to run the football and break tackles.



Obviously he can be a huge asset for us on the ground.

**Q. Purdue ranked sixth last year in offensive efficiency in the Big Ten. With players like Aidan O'Connell, Devin Mockobee, Charlie Jones and Payne Durham to lead that charge, how do you plan to fill those gaps with players that aren't inside your system right now?**

COACH WALTERS: That's a great question. Obviously they had a lot of success last year, lost a lot of production from last season. It was awesome for us to go through the winter workouts and spring ball to evaluate who we have on the roster and where we need to go attack the transfer portal.

We had guys that stepped up that were currently on the roster that we feel really good about being able to fill those production numbers.

We also attacked the transfer portal and gained guys to our locker room now that have had some experience and played at a high level in collegiate football that we feel really good about heading into the season.

**Q. Ryan, when you spoke with your players, when you first arrived at Purdue, what was your message in terms of establishing a culture that you wanted to lay down with them?**

COACH WALTERS: When I first arrived, my message to them was that I need to learn what it's like to be a Purdue Boilermaker. They've obviously had success at Purdue. They played in the Big Ten Championship game a year ago. It's my job to get to know them and build trust with them.

I think in turn they recognize the authenticity. They recognize the approach and as a result they've embraced us and have done everything we've asked them to do with maximum effort.

**Q. Obviously you created a very unique defense. How will that unique defense help both offense and defense in conference play?**

COACH WALTERS: Hopefully that's a huge advantage. That's the goal, that's the plan. Obviously we're going to air it out and be creative in the run game on offense.

We'll be aggressive and strategic and try to create chaos for the quarterback on defense to try to eliminate explosive plays and keep points off the board. Hopefully it will be a formula for winning football.

**Q. You've been coaching around the Midwest for a while. I wanted to ask, how important is it for you in your first year at Purdue to get the in-state recruits, establish your culture with them, make sure you're getting them while you're getting this current roster (indiscernible) the culture?**

COACH WALTERS: In-state, the blueprint for success in any program, you've got to take care of your home state. That is the makeup, the general core of the locker room that those guys will take pride in, in being from their home state and playing in front of their home crowd. That's definitely priority number one.

So that was our main operative when we hit the recruiting trail, is to take care of home state first and then venture out to our footprint where we have connection to fill our roster that way as well.

**Q. You and the rest of the defensive coaching staff spoke glowingly about Nic Scourton, formerly Nic Caraway, this whole spring. You made posts about him and talked about him. What about him did you guys see this spring that excites you so much?**

COACH WALTERS: One, Nic loves ball. He eats, breathes, sleeps football. The way he practices is hopefully going to be the way he plays. Obviously going against him and watching his production and his profile tape when I arrived at Purdue, you saw flashes, you saw the skill set.

But I think what we do defensively sort of heightens what he's good at, and it will showcase what he's able to do from an athletic standpoint and really allow him to flourish as a defensive player and hopefully a dominant one in this conference.

**Q. You mentioned coming through the Tiller Tunnel. Are there concerns that's not going to be completed before the Fresno State game? If so, what are some alternatives for entrance into the stadium for the team?**

COACH WALTERS: I've been in constant communication with administration who has been in constant communication with construction. All is going according to plan right now. There is no plan B for the Tiller Tunnel.

I think the only thing that won't be ready by Game 1 is the elevator in the south end zone. They haven't had an elevator in there in 100 years. We'll be fine without the elevator. But we're looking forward to the experience and starting a new era with new toys in Ross-Ade.

**Q. You're a defensive guy. I'm wondering,**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**philosophically, given that the last few Big Ten have been won by Michigan State and Ohio State playing two different styles, how do you construct a defense that can defend both?**

COACH WALTERS: You've got to be creative and game plan and be specific and intentional with when you're aggressive, when you're conservative, and really you've got to put your roster in the best possible positions to have success.

And I think a large part of that is evaluating your roster and adapting and changing as a coach to who you have in the locker room. It's not the players' job to adapt to us, it's our job to adapt to them and give them tools to be in positions to make plays on game day.

**Q. You were hired on your defensive work, brought in Graham Harrell on the offensive side. He's obviously a big piece to get. What's it been like working with him so far, and what do you anticipate that relationship to be in season from a game-to-game perspective?**

COACH WALTERS: Graham has been awesome. I knew being a defensive coach and having my background the way it is and the history that Purdue has had offensively, I knew it was important for me to hire an offensive coordinator that would be able to attract quarterbacks and offensive skill guys.

Graham was a no-brainer. He's been a home run thus far. Obviously, we haven't played a down of competitive football, but I've been really impressed with his approach to teaching and to motivating and holding everybody accountable on the offensive side.

We've got great rapport. I played against him when I was in college. He won't like to hear this, but I did intercept him twice in one game. Won both of those competitions, by the way.

We're competitive at Purdue. But we've developed a great chemistry and rapport. We work out together all the time, every day. And he and Kane have that good back-and-forth going through spring ball.

**Q. With so many new roster additions these last few months, how are you making sure the team chemistry is good at camp and making sure these guys are meshing together ahead of the first game?**

COACH WALTERS: That was definitely a concern when we figured out how many pieces we would have to add post spring ball. The thing that I think we did a good job of was finding the right type of guys that not only had the right

requirements from an athletic skill set point but the right type of people.

When you have a locker room that might not have a lot of experience together but they have a common ground in that they love football for football, we've got a bunch of guys that love the game for the game. It's not for Instagram followers or Twitter "likes." They love the game for the game.

When you have that common ground, you can organically develop chemistry and have real relationships. That has shown throughout the spring and through summer workouts, and I'm excited to see what that looks like when we face adversity coming this fall.

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