

# University of Iowa Football

## Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Phil Parker

### Press Conference



PHIL PARKER: Thank you guys for coming. Obviously it's this time of year. In the springtime, it's unique because we haven't lost a game yet, so that's good. I think it's a great time to develop some younger guys, and I think that's happened.

Obviously we have some guys up front, Hurkett, Craig and Graves are playing very well.

But you look at Llewellyn, he is a guy that's at it a little bit more, you see them growing a little bit.

I think Pittman has done a good job, and Allen up front is also doing a good job. You start building a little bit more depth up front. Obviously when you lose guys you have to replace them, so that's helping us a little bit.

At the linebacker, obviously Jay, Nick, and Fish, those guys are very experienced at the second level, but when you see a guy like Harrell or Sharar he's coming around a little bit.

Rexroth is doing a good job, so we're building more depth there, and it's nice to see that.

Obviously on the back end, the third level, you have Castro that I thought had a real productive year last year.

Quinn Schulte, solid guy in there, but we need some other guys to step up.

I think Xavier has improved a little bit, so everybody is moving forward in that little group, but the surprising thing is there are some young guys like John Nestor who has really came out and he's been playing well. I like the way he's playing.

Obviously Deshaun Lee is getting a lot of work and TJ Hall.

But the guy that maybe a surprise a little bit -- not a surprise for us, but Lutmer has really done -- Zach Lutmer has really improved at the safety position. He's made a lot of good plays, and he's moving forward there.

With all that, where I think guys are going and where we're at with guys to help us out for next year. Obviously we have eight guys returning, but that doesn't mean anything going into next season.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the defensive line. The correlation between Iowa's success defensively has come, a lot of cases because you've had a lot of good depth and you've been able to rotate guys. Where are guys, say, 6 through 9 on that unit? Are they as far along as you need them to be or want them to be, or how far do they need to be before you feel like going into the fall you can throw eight guys out there in a given game?**

PHIL PARKER: I think we're getting a lot closer to that point. There's some guys over there that's taking some strides, and you look at them, and you look at Pittman say last year, he was a guy just trying to figure out where to be on the field a little bit. There are some things out there that he's stepped up his game a little bit, and I think -- obviously he's done a good job. Llewellyn, like I said, he's improved now.

Are we two deep all the way across? Can we find another guy over there? I think we have some other guys, Gaffney, or you've got Hubert -- these two guys have been grinding in there, and I think they do a good job, especially when they're both in there together.

So we'll find another guy. Maybe it might be two or three guys adding to that eighth guy, but we'll have enough guys.

**Q. If I'm doing my math right, you have eight returning starters, a lot of fifth-year, sixth-year guys. How do you balance giving them their time and maybe setting aside some time for some more developmental guys to get maybe some time with the 1s?**

PHIL PARKER: You know, at the beginning of -- we kind of told some of these guys that we're going to make sure we cut the reps out because we needed some other guys to step up a little bit.

I think they've been pretty good, but after a while, after the first or second practice, these guys are standing on the sideline and they jump in there when they're not supposed

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to be in there, or at least I didn't think they were supposed to be in there.

I think it's good, and it shows a little bit of development, leadership for them guys. It's hard to go out there and not practice for a little bit and then sit here and jump into a game situation.

They want to keep fresh, too. They don't want to get rusty, which is a good sign.

**Q. Phil, you mentioned Zach Lutmer and being kind of a surprise for you, maybe more a surprise for us than for you, but in what ways has he shined to you this spring?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, the opportunity is when you put him out there and I see him move around, and obviously he has a great skill set and moving-wise, but his reaction and how he falls into some plays that he's made that you sit there and say, that's pretty impressive that he's -- he might be chasing a guy, and how hard and his effort and his commitment to trying to be better.

I've been flipping him around between free safety, strong safety, and cash. I think he can play all positions, so to get that, it's rare to do. It's hard to find those guys.

I think he's just shown a little bit. He still needs to grow. He still needs to mature and be a little bit more vocal. Being a young guy coming in and trying to control the back end is not easy. You're the one who has to be confident, and I think he's gaining confidence by the day.

**Q. I wanted to ask, obviously this is not your first off-season losing seniors and all that, but how do you replace the leadership that you lose from somebody like a Joe Evans on the defensive line? Are you looking for a new leader, seeing somebody step up? What's that process like from your perspective?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, losing Joe, which was obviously a great leader, Logan Lee I think is another guy that's leadership over there that you can do it.

But that's the whole growing up aspect of some of the other guys that are coming up. You look at Aaron Graves; might not have been the top leader last year in that group, but now you start seeing him come. The better he's playing, the better that you can lead.

I see like Hurkett, I see him the same way. Like hey, the better he's playing right now, the respect that he has and the way people play, that's how you become a leader, and I think it's the way you go about your business and the

demands that they have.

Obviously Joe was very vocal and he was fun. Obviously what was he, six years, five years, he's been here a while. I think he left some of that stuff, and that's what's been fun to see, these guys gelling together.

**Q. You had a lot of guys on defense that could have left, decided to come back. How did you see that unfold from your perspective, and was there any notable instances of guys telling you they're coming back or anything like that?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, it's always kind of hard when you're going through that transition of like, hey, you're going to go out into the real world, whether you go into the NFL or whether you're going to go to dental school like Quinn is going to do, and he had an opportunity to push that back so it gave him a reason that he could come back and start it.

But everybody has different philosophies or reasons why they want to go. I just thought that the connection that they all had and saw the opportunities here, what could they do this year, how can we be better than we were last year, and I think the connection is really good with these guys, the way they've been together so long and playing together. It's hard to leave because once you leave, there's no coming back.

**Q. I wanted to ask about the NFL Draft which is a week from today. You may have your first-round defensive back since you've been at Iowa chosen, but you've had a lot of successful defensive backs in the NFL. I'm curious, what would that mean to you to have a first-round pick in the defensive backfield? And also, why do you feel like Iowa defensive backs are so well prepared and almost over playing where they're picked typically at the next level?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, I don't want to jinx them, but it's scary, I think -- obviously I think he has the ability to play in that league, and where he's actually drafted varies with every team. What's their need and where they're going to play him at. Are they going to play him at corner or inside at the cash or are they going to play him at safety.

So me, I just know he's a good football player. I know that wherever he goes, he's going to be successful, and I think the opportunity, the way these guys study the game of football kind of helps them out in their further career, and I think they've seen that with other guys that went through this program and are playing in the league right now. And obviously some guys are getting their second contracts that they're kind of aware of and how they went about their

business.

I think they see that, and I think most of the guys that come out of here that are draftable, they seem to stick on the team just because of the work ethic that they have and the routines that they set during the week of how they've got to prepare, and I think the same thing is going to carry over to the NFL, and I think that's what helps them out a lot.

**Q. Twofold question: One, what's been challenging or different about the offense that you've faced this spring? What's impressed you there? Did you ever find out who set up the Broyles thing? You said you were going to find out who did that to you.**

PHIL PARKER: I think my wife had something to do with it. They contacted her. I don't know what I can do about it. So that kind of ended that.

But going back to what was your first question, the offense, it's kind of funny. There's 11 guys out there. They're either going to run the ball or they're going to pass the ball.

These teams go back, whether they want to get it out quick or whether they're going to go out and run some naked and some play-action pass, it's all the same thing. Now, is it reduced more or is it spread out?

What it does with some of the motion over there, you have to concentrate and focus on where your eyes are, and you have to be able to -- it's like driving in Chicago during rush hour. Sometimes it goes, but they're not always doing that.

So I think you have to keep things simple and know how to leverage the ball and understand it, and I think after the first couple days of seeing some things, I think our guys have been comfortable getting to know it. It's kind of like a standard thing right now.

It's just a way of doing something differently, but they still run the inside zone, outside zone, still run the naked, still run the same pass concepts.

But there is some motion in there that you have to make sure that you see things and don't be misfitting and making sure you can stop the run and don't give up the big passes.

**Q. You were mentioning Max a lot earlier. Is there a particular aspect of his game where you've really seen him especially grow in these last three or four months?**

PHIL PARKER: I think when we sit there -- we've only been out for the last couple weeks of practice, so obviously he's getting bigger, stronger and faster and all that, but I

think his ability, understanding what it takes to be a good football player and understanding the assignment football that you have to take care of certain things, I think he's been growing. He doesn't make as many mistakes, I guess, as you do, so that's helpful.

But I think just the way he goes about his business, he's getting better.

You see little jumps at a time, and then you keep on -- just like everybody, you start seeing him grow a little bit, and then all of a sudden they become a good player.

**Q. When it comes to losing a player like Cooper, especially when you've got eight other returners coming back, I guess what's it been like to have -- I'm assuming Deshaun step into that role again after he started several games last season? Does that provide you some level of confidence with what's going on outside despite losing a first-rounder at corner?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, you lose a player like Cooper, which he's very special, I think, as a player, I think other guys learn from him how you've got to go about your business, what are you doing in the days that we're not in the building over here, are you in here working out, what are you going to help yourself be the best player that you can be.

I think there's great examples of guys that can say, hey, this guy has really worked his butt off to get to where he was, to have this opportunity. I think between Deshaun Lee and TJ Hall and Nestor, I think these guys are really playing well right now, and hopefully there's some guys -- we're down to three right now because Harris is still trying to get back and I think he'll be ready for the summer.

I think we've got a good pool of guys out there, but everybody is going to have to be a little bit better. That goes from the defensive line to the linebackers to the back end. Everybody has to be a little bit better when you lose a good player. We lost a couple guys up front. We were lucky to keep most of the linebackers.

Everybody is going to -- if they improve a little bit, that hopefully we get back to -- potentially get back to where we were last year.

**Q. Seth got kind of an internal promotion, took on another title. What makes him so valuable to this program?**

PHIL PARKER: I think just the way he goes about his business. I know he was back here as a GA a long time ago, and I think he's very detailed in what he does. I think we really work well together, and he understands they way

I would like to call the defense and stuff like that.

It has been very helpful on doing some things with the front and manipulating the front. I think just the way he goes about his business. He's eager. He communicates well. I think he's done a great job coaching. He's been at all three levels, coaching with the defensive line, in the back end with me before then he's been the linebacker coach.

I think all the qualities you look at a guy with his leadership and skill-wise I think has been really good for me and has been helpful for me.

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