

Purdue University Football Media Conference

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Coach Ryan Walters

Press Conference



RYAN WALTERS.

Q. ... (in progress.) Had just an incredible game last Saturday.

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, he is fun to watch. It is fun from my perspective seeing both he and Nic on opposite ends of each other, the just way they complement each other's game, really what they allow us to do defensively, because you can't slide a protection one way or the other because you got two people on both ends that have similar capabilities.

I think the way he plays is the way you want your team to play. He plays with discipline, physicality, toughness, and has got an unbelievable motor and a will to go compete and win his individual matchups.

Q. Just you've obviously broken down the Michigan tape. You know about that defense. Just best defense you think you've seen to this point in 2023? How do you crack that defense?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, you know, if you got an answer how to crack it, let me know. There has been a lot of that people struggled this year. I think what's unique about Michigan in its entirety as a program is, yes, they have really good players. They also have a really good scheme on offense, defense, and special teams. So they pose problems and try to take away what you're good at. They've got really good players that are able to do so.

So when they are out of position, albeit a few times, they've got guys that can make up for it and overcome some of the maybe schematical errors or mental errors throughout the course of a play.

I think that's what makes Michigan special right now. You know, I'm excited to game plan for it and go compete against them in a great environment.

Q. You watch the news. You look at your social media. You know what's going on at Michigan, the

allegations. How do you think that will impact them Saturday night?

RYAN WALTERS: Impact them?

Q. Yeah.

RYAN WALTERS: I'm not sure. My focus is on us and our team. Obviously we're very aware of what the allegations are out there.

We'll plan accordingly.

Q. And then just speak to their quarterback, JJ McCarthy. He really looks like the straw that stirs the drink up there this year, even more than their running backs.

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, you can definitely tell his improvement from last year to this year. Obviously we played against them when I was a coordinator at Illinois.

Very talented. Can make every throw. Can get you out of trouble with his legs on the ground. I think where he's grown this season. Last year he had some questionable decisions at times and tried to make hero plays at times that kind of got them in trouble offensively. You don't see him making those mistakes this season.

Looks like he's more seasoned, more mature, and has a good understanding of not only what they're trying to get done schematically, but the situation they're in on the field, what's the downs and distance, what area of the field are they in.

So he didn't make mistakes. He's playing the way he's playing because of his talent and because of his progression this season.

Q. What can you do as a staff to kind of spark the offense? Is it a matter of scheme? Matter of personnel? Sort of a mix of both?

RYAN WALTERS: That's a good question. There are problems everywhere, right? There are some things I think we can do schematically to calm us down and take

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advantage of opportunities when they present themselves in games.

Then we also just as a roster need to execute the plan. You know, for instance, last week you go back and you watch the tape, and there were plays to be had out there, and for whatever reason the ball didn't find the right guy, or we missed a block here or there, or we drop a pass here or there.

You can't point to any one person, any one position group. I think that's where as a team we have to all get on the same page and take accountability for doing your individual job and doing it at a high level.

So we talked about really trust and belief and confidence in what we're doing no matter the outcome of the previous play. You got to go back and reset and refocus and retrust the plan, your teammates, and your own ability.

For example, like I think I was talking to Hudson, every snap you got to trust you're going to get protected, trust the receiver is going to run the right route and be at the right depth, and then you got to trust in your arm and deliver the ball accordingly.

And if you throw a pick that play or you get hit that play or the receiver is not in the right spot that play, the next snap you got to retrust that all those things are going to happen.

If we do that, we'll have a chance to continue to improve. If we don't, then we're going to see the same results.

Q. After the loss on Saturday and then looking ahead to Michigan this week, what's the mood of the team right now?

RYAN WALTERS: I think naturally there is frustration, there is anger, disappointment. I did think we had a very productive meeting on Sunday. You know, we sat in and watched the game in its entirety as a full team, staff, players, coaches alike, and really talked through every play, the good, the bad, the ugly, and what we need to accomplish in those certain moments.

I think we aren't playing like complementary football right now, and really that's been the case this season for whatever reason.

You look at earlier in the year, I thought offensively we were a little ahead of where we are defensively, and they were making plays and we were struggling on defense.

Then sort of as the year has gone you see the defense is starting to hit its stride and make some plays, and now

we're struggling a little bit offensively.

So just got to keep continuing to put our head down and go to work and improve in areas where we see we can improve right now, and continue to go compete and fight. That's what I want to see moving forward, is just I want to see guys fighting to go win a ballgame and not waiting to see what happens or hoping that something -- some spark happens and some magical recipe to kick start us.

We got to go out there with a mindset of kick starting ourselves. That'll definitely be the focus this week.

Q. How do you make sure nobody is getting too low on the lows and that they kind of keep a level head?

RYAN WALTERS: That's my job as the head coach. I found, especially with this team, you have to let them ride the highs throughout the course of the game and some of the momentum plays. I think we feed off that when we do have some momentum, and it's my job when we get into the lows to bring us out of there.

You know, obviously like I'm human. I have the same human emotions, but as the leader, as the head coach, I have to look at the program in its entirety and bring us out of those moments.

So I think yesterday's meeting was beneficial and allowed us to do that.

Q. Abdur is on the depth chart, and I know he hasn't played the last couple games. Do you anticipate him being good to go now?

RYAN WALTERS: If we had to play tomorrow, I don't think so. Hopefully by Saturday he'll continue to improve, but he'll be out there when he's ready.

Q. And then Moussa is not on the depth chart. I assume he's done, right?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, I would say Moussa and OC, you know, I would be shocked if we get them back in some capacity this season.

Q. Going off that, Daniel Johnson is a guy that when you got here probably was going through some injury things. To see him elevate and get back to a position to help you, how big has this been for a guy that's playing out his final year?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah it's huge. I'm really happy for him. He's put in a lot of work. You know, physically he's what you want at tackle. He's tall, long, twitchy. Just had

an unfortunate string of injuries.

So to see him battle back and deal with sort of the pain of rehab, to be able to come back and play -- really if you look at the one bright spot on offense this past week, it thought was the offensive line. To deal with the type of adversity they've dealt with, kudos to Coach Johnson and to Gus as a leader at the center position and whoever else is in the lineup with those guys.

I felt like they gave us a chance to be successful on offense, and it just goes to show that that's what happens when you work together and you work hard and you go fight.

Q. You've been in this BigTen West and you know how crazy it is. Is it strange to sit here talk about being 2-6. Four games left and you're two games back. You're not out of this thing yet.

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, right now you really can't pay attention to the record. Our focus right now is like we need to improve, you know what I mean? It was maddening Saturday to come off a bye week and put forth that type of performance as a team.

Obviously there were positives in there at times, but this is a team game, a team sport, and we need to get better. So that is the focus. We'll make sure we do so.

Q. I know you're looking at one game at a time, but when you look at the makeup off your defense and you have a sophomore in Nick Scourton, a sophomore in Yanni Karlaftis, a freshman at corner back, freshman Dillon Thieneman, you've got to feel really good about where this thing is going on that side of ball years down the road when you get done with this season and into the spring, right?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, on both sides of the ball really. We're playing a lot of young guys. You know, when I got the job the goal is -- or for me and the administration -- is to set up this program where it can have long-term sustainable success, right?

So every decision that we are making is with long-term in mind. Like obviously everybody wants to win right now and win big right now. That is the goal. But you got to go through the process, and we a lot of freshman playing on defense.

Obviously we got Max Klare was a redshirt freshman and he was playing really well before he got hurt. You know, Hudson has years left of eligibility. You've got George Burhenn is getting more snaps at tight end.

We've got some freshmen wideouts doing well. Tibbs is inserted into the lineup now. You just mentioned all the guys on defenses.

So I do think we will continue to improve and those guys will continue to learn and get better. That's the goal, is to get better year in and year out. I think the experience that we're gaining from some of our younger players will be monumental to this program and our success moving forward.

Q. Devin had his seventh fumble. You guys just got to keep feeding him the ball, right?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah. I mean, unfortunate. That was one of the areas where we had -- we did play some complementary football. You know, he fumbled and we were able to go three and out and get the ball right back.

You know, it's a teachable moment, too. Like early in the snap he had it high and tight, exactly how you want it. Makes a guy miss and gets loose to the side. It's never the guy you see that's causing the fumble. It's the guys you don't see that are chasing from the stack and punched the ball out from behind.

So to me, that's a technique deal. We can coach that up. But you're absolutely right, you got to keep feeding him. You got to continue to obviously hold him accountable. He's not out there fumbling on purpose, right?

He got some hard-fought yards later on in that game. Nobody was more upset that the ball was on the ground than him, I promise you.

Q. You mentioned I think postgame on the blocked field goal you thought it was a case of a poor snap. Was that upon further view?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, it was a little bit high snap and then a bobbled hold. So it's hard to get that up in the air. Just unfortunate.

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