

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

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Pasadena, California, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions

Dr. Robert Kraft

Press Conference

PATRICK KRAFT: Appreciate you all coming out literally weathering the storm. Hopefully not too much of a problem. All right. Wide open. Let's go.

Q. Thanks for taking your time today, as always. Back when you first arrived you were talking about where you guys were from an NIL perspective. Since then what kind of headway have you made, and where do you feel you are now compared to kind of the rest of the nation?

PATRICK KRAFT: It's a good question. Obviously I felt like we were really behind from a total NIL perspective in educating our student-athletes.

The collectives obviously had picked up steam in the -- I don't know how long I had been here. Five months, six months. To be honest, the legislation from the NCAA has changed drastically. I'll put that all in there aside.

Infrastructure, I think we're in a really good spot. We're selling all of our athletes' jerseys, which was an important piece, through OneTeam. And Fanatics picked up about seven of the sports on Campus Inc., so everyone will be able to do their own uniform. So that very visible credit piece in recruiting they'll have. We now have all the back-end support for our athletes.

Here's what I will tell you. I just had a meeting last week. We've been scrambling to get everything buttoned up and all these programs out. Now we've got to -- and KP and I were talking about this. We have to put it together so it's easier to comprehend.

From an internal perspective I feel really good infrastructure where we are. Success With Honor has been really, really strong, and the fundraising efforts there, those are starting to pick up. We now can obviously help promote that from the NCAA. Tony Misitano had a \$1 million gift there. We sent that note out the other day.



I feel like we're really in a good spot. I don't lose as much sleep over that anymore. Do we have to get better? Yes. This is here to stay. This is part of the world we're living in.

I think it's really hard for those of us -- I said this when we started -- to really walk through this NIL space. It's counter to everything we all grew up with in the industry.

When you speak about it and you try to educate not only your students but your fans and your base, it's okay to do these things.

Now, here's what I will tell you. My objective is to make sure I protect the 800-plus student-athletes. Tax implications. What does it mean when you put your name on stuff? That's where now we're getting to the point I'm going to give you every opportunity to be successful in NIL. Some run with it. Some don't. Some don't want to run with it, but I'm going to give you every opportunity. Let's make sure we're doing the right things and understanding your brand.

We have the Brand Academy that's started. There's just so much there. Long-winded answer. I feel like you could tell it's kind of convoluted. As a department we're in a better spot. Now it gets to the... I think we're in the education and information stage of it all.

Q. To follow up on Mark's question with the NIL, you said there's been improvements since you arrived. Have you seen tangible results when it comes to attracting student-athletes here, whether it be football or any other sport?

PATRICK KRAFT: I don't know if I could answer that really. I'm being very honest with you.

What you are hearing in the recruiting space is, and it happened with us just this week, people just won't come. They're throwing half a million dollars or \$700,000 if you come to X school. We're not going to do that. That's just not how it works.

What you will see is a lot of our athletes have had a lot of success in that space, so I don't know. I think it's too early



to tell. This is my first recruiting cycle, but it is absolutely a part of the recruiting process.

I think this is what gives us an advantage. We're Penn State. We're so big and powerful, and our alums are so engaged. It's harnessing that to help us in the recruiting front.

I just don't know yet what will come of that. I think we have to... I'm actually curious post-signing day and then getting into the spring, let's see where the dust settles and what's the impact.

Q. Beaver Stadium, it's been in the data collection phase for a long time here. Have you guys made a decision about what you want to do in terms of renovation? And if not, what's kind of the timeline?

PATRICK KRAFT: We're close. I think we're at the point we had a study that was done. There's a lot of studies going on. I mean, there were 19 studies done on this stadium, and nothing was done. In the past eight, nine years there were 19 studies done on Beaver Stadium. It's not for a lack of information.

Now I will tell you this, I feel very comfortable in the next -- you know, you have the holidays and January and February, but we will have a recommendation to Neeli and the board as to what direction we need to move in. So I do think it's coming. Now, what the board decides and how they want to move because it is a huge project, the renovation.

Look, I make no bones about it. I love this building. I love coming in this building, Beaver Stadium. I love the history of this building. When I walk the parking lots and I talk to people about having generations of memories in this building, so I want to make this building better and we have to do that.

We're very close. All the data is there. Now figuring out the financial models, how would it work, what's the recommendation, and so we're close.

Q. To follow up on that component of it, the question has always been if you spend X amount on this versus a new stadium, what is the threshold? What's the point of no return where if you have to spend \$600 million, \$700 million, \$800 million to renovate Beaver versus another, how does that weigh into the equation?

PATRICK KRAFT: To build a new stadium, there's a threshold. Let me just put it that way.

To build new anywhere, it's expensive. Let me just put it that way. I don't know. We have some numbers, but if you're building new...

Look, I'll tell you, we are very proud of having 107,000 and over 100,000 fans. No one is building 100,000 seat stadium. That's important to us. I think that's an important piece to who we are.

So, yeah, there is a financial threshold that building new just would be -- it could be infeasible, not feasible with the financial piece.

Q. You said back to the NIL, you said there are schools that are going to say to a kid, hey, half a million dollars to come to our school, and you're not going to do that. Do you have enough, I guess, oversight of the collectives that you can guarantee that that won't happen?

PATRICK KRAFT: Yeah, because in recruiting it's still the coaches involved in the recruiting process. So why I feel really comfortable, especially with the Success With Honor crew is that's not what they're there for. They know that. They're not doing it, and they're doing it what I believe what we would always say is the Penn State way.

We're going to do it on the up-and-up and make sure this is the way it should be. It's really the coaches that have to make that plea. We're just not going to come and try to pay you to come here.

Now, I'm going to say this too. You will have the opportunity to maximize your value when you come to Penn State irregardless of your sport because we've got gymnasts that have a social media presence that are doing extremely well. A lot of it is driven through the social media.

You've got -- it isn't just your starting quarterback. It's not just Cliff. Cliff is very engaged. It's all your athletes.

So if we can tap and harness and I can give you all the opportunities to be successful and then you tap into our alumni base, and we have the second most CEOs in the country, and their businesses start to utilize our athletes to tell their story, that's where you can be really successful. That's really why we're trying to harness the energy.

A lot is made about the collectives, and they're very helpful, but that's a portion of the NIL space. Corporate is big. Utilizing internships and jobs and education. We're just scratching the surface. I think you have to find a sustainable model.

What we have right now is not a sustainable model, and I don't believe that the way that it is now currently situated across the country is sustainable. There's a lot of misinformation on what people are being offered.

And I think you're going to find as time goes on, wait, they told me I was going to get X, and now I'm not. So I think that's this new NIL world that we're living in. We're still trying to find our way through it.

But, yeah, I feel really comfortable about where Success With Honor is as a collective and what's happening.

Q. For the longest time I wanted to do a story about how many season ticketholders there were, and for the longest time people said that it's not really a piece of information that we want to share. I think people in this room have been curious about how many studies have been done, and that's not always necessarily a piece of information that Penn State historically has wanted to share. You've shared both of those things sort of off-the-cuff both between now and a few months ago. What is sort of your balance between Penn State has always handled information this way versus what harm does it do to tell anybody here some interesting things to contextualize the decisions that you are making?

PATRICK KRAFT: I'm just going to be really honest with you all. I don't know any other way to do it.

First off, saying that we have 92,000 football season ticketholders, I don't know anywhere in the world that that's a bad thing. I think it shows incredible support from our base.

Okay, 19 studies. It's fact. There were 19 studies done on Beaver Stadium. There will be always stuff that we won't be able to discuss for a myriad of reasons. It's who I am. I'm going to be really honest with you. I don't see it any other way.

I can't speak to what happened in the past. I can't speak to other philosophies of the past, but... right? I don't know. 92,000 season ticketholders, pretty darn impressive if you ask me.

I think it shows -- I think it's bigger than just that. I think it shows how passionate this base is about Penn State football. That number alone shows it.

I don't know. I don't know if I answered your question, but I think it's just fact.

Q. James is often referenced in kind of trying to climb

that ladder in college football. The need to retain your top assistant coaches and coordinators, not have them make a lateral move. We haven't seen much of that in recent years, but I know there's going to be targets on the staff because it's the time of year that names pop up. How do you feel like you, the university, and this program are positioned to make sure that James kind of has that stockpile of minds he wants on his staff?

PATRICK KRAFT: I think you're right. I think you got it. Continuity is huge, right? You want to keep that continuity. There's going to come a time where people -- it's probably better for them to move on to have -- everyone aspires to be whether it's a head coach, whether it is to be a DC or OC, whatever that is.

I will always be committed to keeping our staff together no matter what. Like the stadium, there becomes a threshold where you are, like, do we need to invest in that or do we feel like we have to move in a different direction? That will always be in concert with James.

I've told James. I said, James, what do we need to be successful? What do we have to do to win a national championship? I think keeping staff is critical.

I think that's important for not just James, but all of our teams. I think that's really something that if you have a great staff and you have great people, you want to keep them as long as you can because every time you turn that over, especially in the coaching ranks, it's just different philosophies. It just becomes a bigger -- it just takes longer to get the process going.

Q. There are a lot of collectives. In NIL for a traditional fan base is maybe a little hard to explain beyond we will give you money and then good things will proceed to happen non-specifically. How has the translation been for you talking to people that you are targeting and saying, look, you can help us with this process, and this is what's going to happen? I think sometimes people can look and say, look, here are a bunch of things that are going to help student-athletes. If I gave you \$20, I'm not sure what any of these groups would do with it. Where do you think the translation part is?

PATRICK KRAFT: It's the biggest challenge, right? Honestly, that's not the conversation I'm having with them. I will put you in touch with Success With Honor or the collectives and then have that conversation.

My job is I'm going to talk to you, so everyone always thought it would cannibalize development. It's not. There's enough people that have interest in brick and mortar, in scholarships, and now this becomes a part of it.



I'm not here to raise money for Success With Honor. I'm here to say, hey, if you want to do that, that's great. Here's the collective. You talk to them. Awesome. But I am not also shy to say that that's important, and the collectives are important.

Now, the infrastructure on the back end, there are contracts that they have, and it's probably a good conversation that you should have with the collectives on how they do the back end business piece.

My sole focus is to support whatever is in the best interest of our athletes, protect our athletes. Yeah, it's a very -- it's a confusing topic. I know a lot of attention once again goes to the collectives, but there's other ways the NIL space is impactful too.

I think that's what we're really focused on for us. Yep, you saw I sent emails out. I support Success With Honor because it supports all 31 teams. I think there's great programs that they're doing.

I think one of the things that's come across to me is a lot of our athletes are doing work through that and meeting different audiences that are, like, wow, PJ Mustipher is an amazing person. That is what's kind of neat with this process, which I don't think anyone really talks about that.

Q. Going off what Tyler said, you talk about retention of coaches and everything like that. Do you feel like the athletic department is in a position to where if someone like Micah Shrewsberry, for instance, with men's basketball and a program that hasn't necessarily always gotten its funding, do you think it's in a position to retain someone like that long-term if bigger schools do come calling?

PATRICK KRAFT: Yes. Absolutely, my man. Yep, absolutely. I'm committed to keeping -- Micah is a great coach. Micah is a really, really, really good coach.

Now, Here's what I will tell you and I said it before when I got up here. It's not just about paying the coach. The great coaches know that.

It's about keeping the staff, being able to hire staff that if you lose staff, which is part of the process. It's also about putting the infrastructure behind them to be successful. Where can I recruit? How do I recruit? How do I feed my athletes? How do I keep my athletes healthy?

That infrastructure, which I think has lacked for a lot of our sports, is where I think we have to invest in now. We started already doing that.

So paying the coach is great, but the great coaches understand it's all the other stuff that helps you eventually win a national championship.

Q. In terms of facilities, you're going to have two wrestling matches at Bryce Jordan Center in the new year. How important is that for exposure and also for using Bryce Jordan Center in different ways? And what do you see as the future for Rec Hall both for wrestling and other sports?

PATRICK KRAFT: It's amazing. I think we sold one of them out in, like, two minutes.

I'm excited to see it. I've been to the two at Rec Hall for wrestling, and I think there is a balance of the BJC environment, for which I haven't seen yet, for wrestling and then that intimate excitement of wrestling in Rec Hall. I do think there is an opportunity to -- we're really looking at BJC and how we can use it more.

We're a tenant at the BJC. Everyone knows that, so it's not like I can just go in there and roll down mats and participate.

But I think it's an interesting question about Rec. I think it's an interesting question about Rec. When I look at Rec Hall, and it's a little bit like East, we are focused right now and let's use Cael, for example.

We have a nice wrestling facility, but we have to find enhancements there. We're looking and exploring at how we can enhance that. The training room there is absolutely inadequate. We are working on studies to focus on enhancing the training room.

You have the two volleyballs there. You have wrestling. Right now we have men's and women's soccer. We're actively working on finishing the fundraising for men's and women's soccer.

When I go back to some of these questions about the coaches, if you don't have the sports med piece, sports performance piece, then you're not going to reach your full potential. So when I look at Rec right now, those are the enhancements that I'm working trying to figure out and trying to do in very short order.

I would say the same at East where we have our lacrosse and field hockey and tennis. What are we doing there? We have nutrition stations going in each of those. We are looking at --

For example, in East -- this isn't what you asked about, but

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the roof leaks. All the weight, it rusts. What are we doing?

So we have to fix the infrastructure, and we're looking at moving the locker rooms and giving them -- the rosters are getting bigger for all teams.

So those are the things when you look at our facilities, okay, how does it impact the student-athletes' experience?

Volleyball, great atmosphere, great game day. Down the road would I love to explore what we could do with Rec? Yes. Right now I've got to focus on the student-athlete, and that piece of it is really, really more important.

Q. When it comes to NIL, you've talked about how much things have changed just in the year-plus that it's been here. How do you kind of balance in the conversations needing to get up to speed and catching up with knowing that things could change? How do you get people to kind of take the long view in terms of what is working now might not necessarily be the model down the line?

PATRICK KRAFT: It's hard. I'm just being honest with you. I think it's really difficult. The NCAA a few weeks ago came out with their rules and regulations. I couldn't understand them myself, and that's what I do for a living.

I think it takes time to really mine through that so when you have these conversations... I think on a one-on-one personal kind of interaction it's really hard to kind of explain it.

The corporate business piece is not because it's a marketing objective that you can utilize, which is normal, right? Endorsements. So that I think is an easier conversation to have with folks that have businesses that can utilize athletes to promote their business.

I'm not sitting here to tell you it's an easy conversation. Well, here's how it works. I mean, we just talked about it. Explain Success -- well, have Success With Honor give you their whole how they do it. They have contracts. They're very buttoned up.

It is a very difficult kind of conversation to have in the sense that they're always moving the target on us, but we have the ability to continue to do this at a high level, and we've had the most success with mostly business owners who understand it from that perspective.

Q. We've seen you Utah sell out its allotment of Rose Bowl tickets. What is your ticket sales for the Rose Bowl? What kind of response have you seen from your fan base?

PATRICK KRAFT: I mean, we're sold out. We have no tickets left. Someone had told me the other day it was, like, three minutes we had sold out our center -- well, you can call me on it, but I don't know the exact number. It was quick.

So there's been a lot of excitement. When there was word that there was potential to go there, look, I'm a Big Ten kid. I get goose bumps thinking about it now. I've heard nothing but amazing stories when James and the team went last time.

So we've had great, great response. We had the Rose Bowl in town, their representatives, last week. They're fired up. I'm fully expecting Penn State Nation to take over Pasadena and LA. We're fired up. We're fired up for that.

Q. I'm going to go back to the football assistant coach salary pool for a second. We don't see assistant coach contracts here, which always leads to a lot of gray area questions from fans. Where does football salary pool rank in the Big Ten? Do you know? I mean, we were told a couple of years ago it was top three.

PATRICK KRAFT: It is. It is. And it's a moving target, right? But it is. It's top three, yeah.

Q. And you mentioned taking care of your student-athletes for NIL. With the PIAA earlier this month passing NIL for high school athletes, how did you react to that news? And now that NIL is expanding into high school, what are your thoughts on that?

PATRICK KRAFT: I really didn't even know it happened. I'm so focused on what we're doing here. Look, I'll say the same thing I said for when this all kind of bubbled up with our -- I think it's great.

If an athlete can make money with their NIL and do it, awesome. I just always go back to make sure that we're doing it the right way. There's a lot of sharks out there. If we're having troubles now keeping people away, what's a 14-year-old or a 15-year-old or a 16-year-old dealing with?

I think it's great. If that's what happens, that's awesome. Candidly, I haven't -- no disrespect. I just haven't even -- I'm so focused on what we're doing here. I'm trying to figure out ours.

But I would say the same thing. If you can do it, amazing. Good for them. I would just caution on just how we protect all of the high school student-athletes through this process.



Q. I'm sure you had an impression, a strong one, of James when he took this job and got to know him over the summer, but we saw you traveling to road games and really a part of the process. What stood out to you learning about James spending time with him in season and watching him through the wins, through the losses, how he dealt with that?

PATRICK KRAFT: Yeah, you know, that's a really good question, and I'm glad you asked because being embedded with them, you know I've known James for a while. My first take-away is, man, he loves, he loves his players. There is a great love between both of them, which for me is really, really cool. Like, I love my student-athletes. I haven't had a chance to get to -- so I really appreciate that perspective.

Everything he does is about helping their cause and what helps them reach their full potential. I think our staff is really talented. I think we have incredible young men that play this game for Penn State. If you have a chance to -- and you all do, but I don't think our base gets to really interact with them. Top to bottom, that locker room is really special. It's really been fun for me to watch that.

You know, James is an elite recruiter. I think he is a good man. I'll just tell you the story. So we have these meetings. We get together. Obviously I'm passionate about all our sports.

But he gets a call, and he probably won't like me saying this. Well, whatever. He gets up. It's his daughter. He is, like, I got to go and take care of something.

I texted him that night. I said, you know what, I just appreciate you doing that because my father I think I said is no longer with us, but we would call my dad at any moment's notice throughout the day, and he would be in a meeting, and he would pick up, and he would make it the most important thing to take care of us.

He didn't hesitate one second. That's James Franklin. That's what I love about the guy. I think his passion, I want to keep him loose, I want to keep him -- I want to make sure that he has every resource available to go win a national championship.

So being with this group, why I'm so happy that they're going to play in the Rose Bowl, why I know we're going to be elite and we're going to win a national championship and we're going to be great is because I believe he does everything the right way with those young men.

That's really what it's about. They'll sniff out fake stuff. They will. But he recruits great kids. He is a great person.

His family is great and the staff. We can talk Xs and Os and all that, but to me that's the stuff that really matters, if you are doing it that way and you care about the student-athletes.

I will just say this. We're blessed here because our coaches are really like that. They put the student-athletes first in everything, and that's how you can win championships that way.

Q. Another facilities-related question. With field hockey and Jeffrey Field for soccer, what's the latest on each of those? Any updates on timelines?

PATRICK KRAFT: Field hockey is off and running. It's a great thing we're building that facility. Char has this wonderful year and sitting in final four, and everyone is standing up behind the fence. That's tracking really well.

We're halfway to our fundraising goal on men's and women's soccer at Jeff. We're getting that thing done. That is the No. 1 priority.

I feel really good about that. We're having conversations there. So I feel we've got to get that done. What Eric and Jeff, what they do, both programs they deserve to have the best, as do all of our facilities. And we're working on some other facility projects as well.

Q. You mentioned giving James all of the resources he needs to win a national title. What are some of the areas that you think that still need to be addressed from that perspective? You just built a big weight room, a bunch of things happened. What still needs to be done to get there?

PATRICK KRAFT: This sounds probably silly to you, but I think food and nutrition is a real big area. That's for all of our athletes. I think we're behind on that.

The sports performance, honestly it's not too dissimilar from James as it is for all 31. All the focus is on mental health, sports performance, food nutrition. Those are the areas we're looking at. We're looking at a centralized training table for all athletes, which would be good. I know James has talked about that.

So those are the areas, but things come up where that we have to -- we can't just be, like, no. If you are committed to going and doing it right and I know we're talking about football, but it's everything. You've got to be able to go put your money where your mouth is. If you are committed to go winning a national championship and I am in everything, then we have to be able to do it and find the resources.

One of the biggest things we've had to do in the last five to six months is completely rebuild our budget to make sure we're focusing on those being able to be nimble and focus on the initiatives that help our student-athletes reach their full potential on the field.

It's not too dissimilar for James. I think that's where... it's not just one-offs, right? It's not. It's strategically what do we need to do to get everybody to where they can maximize their potential?

Q. Wrapping up with Beaver Stadium, going back to it, is there an added sense of urgency now with the moving up of the expansion of the CFP and the growing possibility of on campus stadium sooner than perhaps expected?

PATRICK KRAFT: I think, yes, but I would have that sense of urgency irregardless of the playoff. I do think it will.

Make no bones about it, if we were to play a playoff game in three weeks, we would play a playoff game in here. I don't care what it would take. We would go flush the toilets and keep the water running for a month before. We're going to play a football game in here.

But I do think there is a piece to that that now that's a reality that is coming, and it's coming fast. I also think the work that would be done on Beaver allows us to use -- we can use it more throughout the year as well.

I think it's not just solely football, but we've got to also find ways to help enhance the building and keep the life of the building. Our team is really working on how we can maximize Beaver Stadium more than seven days. So all of those things would play into any sort of renovation.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Pat.

PATRICK KRAFT: Thank you everybody. I appreciate you all, by the way. I will say this just on a note, you guys are unbelievable. I get off the bus, and I see the fans. Our Penn State fans, they're an amazing bunch. I get you guys travel so much. It blows me away. I tell KP. I appreciate all you all do. Have a wonderful holiday, and we are.

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