

Bad Boy Mowers Pinstripe Bowl: Penn State vs Clemson

Friday, December 26, 2025

Bronx, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

Penn State Nittany Lions

Coach Terry Smith

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for Coach Smith.

Q. Terry, can you update us on the number of opt-outs out of the game that you have, and particularly can you update us on the status of Kaytron Allen and Dani Dennis-Sutton for the game?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, Dani and Kaytron will be dressing for the game, so they're available. The guys that are out, Alex Birchmeier, Chaz Coleman, Zane Durant, Zuriah Fisher, AJ Harris, Vega Ioane, Kari Jackson, Daniel Jennings, Nick Singleton, Alex Tatsch, Elliot Washington, Zakee Wheatley, Nick Dawkins, Khalil Dinkins, Nolan Rucci and Drew Shelton.

Q. Terry, can you clarify the status of Deion Barnes, and will he coach in this game?

TERRY SMITH: Deion is coaching, yes, and he'll be a part of this team tomorrow. We're just focused on this game, and he's going to help us win this game.

Q. Coach, with the number of offensive line starters you just mentioned as out, how do you feel that unit will perform on Saturday, and who are some of the guys you expect to step up?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, a lot of those guys, Cooper, T.J., Rulli, those guys have played significant snaps for us throughout the year. We expect the same results. It's a next man up, and with the experience that those guys provide, we don't expect a drop-off at all.

Q. Over at defensive end for this game, without Zuriah and obviously Chaz moving on, who are we looking at that you expect to maybe step a step forward? I know Yvan has played a bunch. Are there some young guys that have put together a solid month of bowl practice and are ready to contribute in a bigger way?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, Jaylen Harvey and Yvan have to step up. Yvan has played a lot of football for us here down the stretch. Looking forward to him continuing to progress and continuing to get better and an opportunity for Jaylen Harvey to step into the forefront of the team.

Q. You talk about -- you're very well versed in that cornerback room. AJ and Elliott obviously played a lot of football for you this season. When you look at the guys behind them who are going to have the opportunity to step up, we've seen a lot of Daryus and what Audavion can do. Who are some other guys that have impressed you during these couple weeks of practices?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, Daryus Dixon continues to impress us. He's going to play a lot of football for us. And Jahmir Joseph will play a lot of snaps on Saturday, as well.

Those are the two young guys that we're looking forward to stepping into a bigger role. Obviously Kenny Woseley will continue to play behind Zion at the nickel position. It's the next man up. We feel like we're going to be ready for tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned a large group of players that have opted out, and right before you came on, Coach Swinney was saying that your team has a tremendous amount of momentum coming into this game. How disappointing is it that such a large group have opted out for this final game of the season for you?

TERRY SMITH: Well, we're not disappointed. We have a tremendous opportunity to finish this season off the way the last three games have gone, and here's a moment and an opportunity for these guys to step forward. It's the next man up. This is today's college football. We're adapting and adjusting, and we have a game to play tomorrow, and that's all that matters, and a result will come from that, and we're going to play hard and get after it like we've done the past four or five weeks.

Q. Terry, you mentioned adapting and adjusting. How are you guys preparing for the weather tomorrow, and



how are you adapting for it?

TERRY SMITH: We practice every day outside in this weather. It's cold, and the guys are adjusting to it. We're all from the north, so cold weather is not really a concern for us.

Q. Terry, in talking about your reinforcements on the offensive line, you mentioned Cooper, T.J., Dominic Rulli. All those guys have been on the interior. You've mentioned two tackles being out for you. Who is maybe ready to step up on the perimeter? We haven't gotten a lot of long looks at some of these younger backup tackles to this point. Is there anyone in particular on the right side or left side for this game?

TERRY SMITH: No, Coach Trautwein is doing a great job with those guys, just preparing, moving some parts around. It's a juggle.

Come game time, we'll figure out what the right people in there are, but for right now, the guys are practicing really hard. We're going to get after it.

The run game is still going to be critical to our success. I won't pinpoint a number of touches for the backs, but we're going to have to run the football and establish that run game to have some success for tomorrow.

Q. You talked I think it was last week or maybe two weeks ago about the running back behind Nick and Kaytron. Which of those guys has stood out to you in bowl practices after those guys missed some time, each of them, throughout the course of the regular season?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, I think Corey Smith has done a really good job. He's run the ball really well. He's really dynamic. He's a real change-of-pace back, real shifty, explosive type runner.

Quinton Martin had a really good bowl prep season for us. Look forward to him getting some opportunities. Then Cam Wallace will also get some snaps. He's coming off a major injury from last season but has done a great job this year.

Just looking forward to those guys carrying the ball and trying to protect our quarterback and just being efficient in what we do and taking advantage of their opportunities to be on the field.

Q. Terry, with Zakee having opted out, he played as many snaps as everybody on the defense, I think aside from Amare. Where do you see the safeties room, and

how are you expecting guys to step up in his absence?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, Dejuan Lane has to step up. He's got to play a lot of football for us tomorrow. Vaboue Toure has to step into a bigger role. Possibly Lamont Payne has to step into a bigger role. Then obviously King Mack has to hold his role and play every snap from his position so we just need to worry about the other safety position.

Those guys, once again, it's next man up. We can't make excuses. We just have to produce results.

Q. What's it been like working with Coach Matt Campbell and his staff during the course of this bowl prep? I know he said a few Mondays ago that he wanted to stay out of you guys' way, but what's it been like interacting with him and the people he's brought here so far?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, it's been great. He's made himself really accessible to the staff. The communication has been terrific. We're just trying to piece together and retain roster and bring in new roster players. But he's been very, very good. The guys that have come with him so far, they've been awesome, as well.

We're just learning each other. Right now, the building has been kind of split because they're trying to build a roster while we're still preparing for this game. But they've been awesome and amazing.

Q. What would you tell us about Jordan Lucas, the job he's done the last couple of months in that cornerbacks room and maybe his future in this coaching profession?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, I think Jordan has progressed much like I've progressed as the interim head coach. The first couple weeks were kind of questionable, and then the next few weeks we got better. He continues to get better.

We're all just works in progress. We don't reach the top ever until we can sit down and reflect on it.

We'll make adjustments. He'll make adjustments. He'll continue to get better. I think he's going to be a great cornerback or DB coach here in the near future. He'll be ready to take over his own room soon.

But he's doing a great job. He's got a great story to tell. He's a great teacher, a great mentor, and he relates to those guys.

Q. Jaylen Harvey was a guy you mentioned earlier as somebody having to step up on the defensive line.



What have you seen from him this season, and what would you say is the biggest improvement from the beginning of fall camp up until now?

TERRY SMITH: Yeah, he's an athletic defensive end. He can really create havoc off the edge. The biggest thing of growth for him is just his attention to detail and being consistent. He's had a good month of bowl prep. Hopefully it translates tomorrow, and he'll be consistently good each play, no highs or lows but just consistent effort is the key.

Q. Terry, will Matt be on the sidelines? Is there any kind of plan for that?

TERRY SMITH: Matt will be there, but I wouldn't -- I don't know if he's going to be on the sidelines or not. He wants to stay hidden away and allow us to run the game. So I would imagine he's going to do some media obligations but not necessarily on the sideline with the team.

Q. Terry, when you look at this program right now, you've got coaches and players who have already gone their own way. There's more coaches, more players who are going to go their way Sunday. What's the message leading up to this to everyone that you have in that locker room when you have the chance to talk to them? What are you trying to impart on them right now?

TERRY SMITH: Finish writing the script for the '25 season. Six games ago we set a vision to write the chapter the way we want to write it, and we still have that opportunity, and we want to write this final script to it.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Smith, thank you for joining us. We will see you tomorrow.

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