

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Rob Sale

Press Conference



Q. Who would you say made the most gains this year of your guys, that you saw, he's really taken off this year?

ROB SALE: Are you talking about in the season or are you talking about spring ball to now?

Q. Since spring to now.

ROB SALE: Guys that really showed up, I would say Jake Slaughter, Knijeah Harris. There's some other guys, but those two guys off the top of my head really stand out, guys that we know that we can count on and going to mix it up here in the next few days and can count on them to play good football for us.

Q. This is kind of a rebuilt unit in some ways, retooled. You lost two guys with 90 plus starts. What gives you confidence that this unit can be a better unit than a year ago?

ROB SALE: For a lot of those guys, it's their second year in the system. The cumulative amount of reps that we do and our year-round plan, we've got Damieon George who came from another school that's run similar concepts, now it's just word association, getting him in there to play good football and gelling with his teammates next to him, and he's done a good job, as well.

Q. Austin Barber, what's going to make him an effective left tackle?

ROB SALE: You know, the more reps he gets, the better he's going to get. At the end there he was playing with pretty good confidence, and now you've done it in spring ball, you turn around June, done your OTAs and replay the process in July. He's getting better and better with every snap that he gets.

Q. His skill set, what does he bring to that position?

ROB SALE: Just the standard of effort and toughness and finish. It jumps off the tape, and you want that to be

infectious attitude to everybody else across the board.

Q. The loss of Kiyauta as far as the tackle rotation, who are some guys who could potentially step in there?

ROB SALE: We've still got enough bullets in the chamber there when it comes to Damieon George. You've got Lyndell, and you've got Jordan Herman. So we've got guys there that can play football for us.

Q. What stood out to you about Lyndell when you guys evaluated him and what led to you guys acquiring him?

ROB SALE: You watch his tape, he has the movement skills that you're looking for, and then you've got to trust your plan and develop how you get guys caught up to speed there. That's our part, to get him to play that way.

But you watch his tape, he's a guy that can change directions, long, hard to get around. So we're expecting good things from him.

Q. Considering he graduated out of the program, how important was it to add a guy of his experience?

ROB SALE: Yeah, he's played snaps, and obviously hasn't played in the SEC, but experience matters, getting snaps underneath your belt, definitely.

Q. Playing as a freshman is hard, but you mentioned Knijeah Harris is someone who's impressed you. What has he been able to do to get to that point?

ROB SALE: Man, just football comes easy to him. He looks like he's been around here three or four years, and he's a freshman. Everybody, it kind of gets them a little bit different, different times. Some kind of need more reps, some kind of get the concept, okay, I get it. But he's a guy that is a good teammate, good person, obviously a good player, as well.

He's going to be a good player for a long time around here for us.

Q. He played center in high school, but you have him at guard now?

ROB SALE: He played both. He played all inside three, constantly moved around. So I think that's easy for his transition and where he came from. Has pretty good coaching.

It makes it easy for him to be able to move around. Even though he hasn't played center and put the hand on the ball for us, he can go out there right now and play it, which is hard to do. It's special.

Q. Talk about how Jalen Farmer has transformed his body this off season.

ROB SALE: Yeah, he's took a lot of pride and hard work and done a good job with nutrition and Hocke and transformed his body, taken about 15 pounds off, which we could all use that a little bit. He's done a really good job.

I know he was limited in spring, but he's had a great June and July, so he's primed and ready. He's another guy for looking for big things from.

Q. He was O'Cyrus's backup for a good portion of last year. What do you think it did for him playing behind that guy?

ROB SALE: You know, it helped everybody in that room to watch O'Cyrus never complain, buckled his chin strap, when it's time to pull the pin, and the way to practice with good practice habits jumped off the tape. It obviously helped Austin, as well.

But for Jalen to be able to see that and to kind of see what a future pro is going to look like and how it's going to look like, he definitely benefitted from it.

Q. We talked to Coach Napier last week and he said Micah Mazzucca was close. I don't know if he's going to be ready or how that impacts where he fits in in terms of the guard spot?

ROB SALE: Yeah, he'll just be there in a limited capacity the first couple days, but he'll be ready to go soon.

Q. Who's your guy that you just talked about O'Cyrus, who's your guy this year that when he does it, everybody watches and tries to emulate him?

ROB SALE: We've got several of them, which is a good thing. You're not just picking out one guy. But Kingsley does a good job when it comes to practice habits and

playing the right way and attention to detail in meetings and the sense of urgency that it requires throughout the day, not only on the field, but Austin Barber would be another one, but we've got several guys that they can turn to and look at.

Q. What's different about the culture compared to a year ago at this time?

ROB SALE: To me, it's night and day, which is obviously a great thing that you want. The chemistry, the culture, the togetherness, I know the players can also speak on that, but I'm anxious to see now when it looks like putting all three pieces of the puzzle together out there on the field in fall camp.

It's a year-round process. It's hard work that takes everybody in this room to help build that, not only each position but units, everybody throughout this building.

I'm glad, and I'm anxious to see that go on to the field.

Q. Rod Kearney played center in the spring game. Does he stay there at guard or how do you view him going forward?

ROB SALE: No, he's going to be a center for us. I know he had a few snaps there in the spring game, but he had a cast on his wrist. Give him a yard pass on that. He's going to be a great player, does everything the right way. He's tough, comes from a great family, which now he's a product of the way he was raised, but he's going to be a great center for us, so I have no worries about that at all.

Q. Austin seems to have a gnarliness about him, an old-school mentality?

ROB SALE: You're talking Roderick?

Q. Austin.

ROB SALE: Oh, Austin? Yeah, it showed up on his high school tape if you go back and watch it. That's just the way he plays. He finishes.

That's constantly the standard that we want to set in the room, finish on every single play. He's a good player for us and going to be a great player for us.

Q. What do you expect from Kingsley to take that next step?

ROB SALE: The second year in the system. You've got a lot on the plate when it comes to the center position. Mike declaration is calling the front, we've got a lot of motion,

boxes, changes. He'll be nothing but better, just no different than any other position. The more you stack those reps with all the different variables that come at that position, you have no choice but to get better. There's technique things obviously we talk about as our evaluation on a player that he has to clean up and move forward to get where he wants to get.

He's done a good job. He's conscious of the things that he needs to do to get to the tape that he wants to play, have out there, so yeah.

Q. When you played it was two-a-days, 30-some practices. That doesn't exist anymore, and it's changed in your coaching career. How have you guys adapt today that, and what challenges does that present?

ROB SALE: Well, that's a deep question. Obviously there's more resources and knowledge that you have when it comes to that, hydration tests, all those things that come with it. You're always trying to find new ways to teach when it comes to meeting rooms, to walk-through, you get a little bit more of that. I think the old-school grit of the toughness that it naturally gets out of it, you've got to find ways to get it out of your players.

I remember those 12 two-a-days in a row. It's a little bit different age now. But the more you can embrace it, the more you can get the players to produce within the parameters that you have and redefine how you're doing it is the key to the drill. Everybody has the same amount of time in the day, and how you get your guys and your team to buy into the schedule and what you're doing from individual to group to team is what's important.

Q. Does it make a rebuild more challenging? Does it make putting the pieces together more challenging?

ROB SALE: I don't think so. I think it goes back to what you do to try to fix the culture. I think with the practice schedule and template to that, how it all marries together.

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