

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

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Boston College Eagles

Coach Bill O'Brien

Mason McKenzie

Anthony Palano

KP Price

Press Conference



this time of year is always training camp. I think training camp is a good time to really lay the foundation of your football team from a bonding standpoint, from a toughness standpoint, from a conditioning standpoint. All of us are excited about training camp, and that will get going here at the beginning of August. Got a couple more weeks of summer conditioning.

These three guys actually, believe it or not, worked out at 3:00 a.m. this morning to get their workout in because we left at 5:00 a.m. We flew up here from Boston this morning. Just tells you something about these guys right here.

With that, I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Syair Torrence has been something for you on that defensive side. Got injured last year. What can you say about his comeback, where he is at right now and your expectations with Syair moving forward this season?

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, Syair is a guy that, unfortunately, did get injured last year in kind of a fluke play in practice, but he's done an excellent job with our training staff of coming back and rehabbing, and he's out there. He's out there this summer. He's had a really, really productive summer. He's still a little bit noncontact. I believe he'll be contact when training camp starts, but he's a guy, a young player, with a great upside.

I appreciate you asking me about him because we're really excited about him being back ready to go, healthy for us when training camp starts.

Q. You talk about the new coaches on the staff, including Ted Roof. What is it like having an experienced coach with head coaching experience on your staff coming in and going forward from 2026 on?

BILL O'BRIEN: Right, Ted and I have been together a long time, right? We started in the mid-'90s at Georgia Tech where he was a great player. He and I were position coaches there. We worked for George O'Leary at Georgia Tech. Learned a lot of football there. We were both

THE MODERATOR: We now welcome in the Eagles from Boston College. Head Coach Bill O'Brien will offer an opening statement.

BILL O'BRIEN: Good afternoon, everybody. Really appreciate all of you being here today. I'm joined today by three great young men. Quarterback Mason McKenzie, linebacker Anthony Palano, and safety KP Price. A great representation of our program, student-athletes all the way, leaders, really good football players and really have done a great job of leading this football team this offseason.

We have a brand-new team. We have a brand-new team. We have basically about 50 new players. We have about 25 guys out of the portal, 25 guys in high school recruiting. We have six new coaches, including defensive coordinator Ted Roof. We also have a new general manager in Kenyatta Watson. It's a brand-new organization, a brand-new team from last year, and we're excited about that.

Last year is in the past. We moved on. When the team returned to start workouts in January, they've done a really good job. Had a really good winter conditioning, really excellent spring practice, and really have had a good summer.

We're excited about training camp. We're excited about the upcoming season. Really enjoy coaching these guys each and every day. It's really just fun to come to work because these guys work, and they're really smart football players. They work hard. They give us everything they've got, and we're fired up about this team.

I think that one of the things that I look forward to during



coordinators there. This is our fourth stop together, so that tells you how long we've been doing it. 35 years for me; 40 years for him.

We were together at Duke. We were together at Penn State, and now we're together at Boston College. I think he's brought a great energy to these guys.

I'm sure KP and Anthony can speak to it also. He shows up every day. He loves the players. He really connects with the players. He knows how to communicate. He's demanding. He's fair, but he makes it fun. He coaches an attacking-style defense, a very difficult defense to go against for us in the wintertime and in the spring and now in the summer. It's really helped us offensively. I think Mason would attest to that, too, because we see a lot of different things every day.

So excited about having Ted, and got some other guys on the staff that we're excited about, too. It's great to have Ted back.

Q. You talked about, hey, we have essentially a brand-new team. You brought in three new offensive linemen transfers. How have you liked them? How are they meshing into this program for you?

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, we're excited about those guys. We have got a new offensive line coach, Kurt Anderson, that's done a really good job of teaching the schemes and the things that we want to do from a run game standpoint, a protection standpoint. These guys have really done a good job of improving. You can see, like, the improvement from winter to spring to where we are now in the summer.

Yeah, we've got three guys that transfer, but we've also got some guys that are coming back from last year. Rob Smith will be probably our left guard, one of the best guards in the ACC, an excellent player. We've got Michael Crounse, our center back from last year. We got Pape Sy. Pape Sy is one of the most improved players on our team. He's taken on more of a leadership role and things like that and plays left tackle.

Then we have Juju and Kristian Phillips and Tre Humphrey that are transfers that have come in and done a really good job. We've got some young players, like Judah Pruitt, an offensive guard for us that we feel is going to be really a good player.

We're excited about the O-line and the improvement that they've made, and looking forward to training camp with those guys.

Q. I just wanted to know a little bit about how you

build your roster as far as the transfer portal versus the freshmen. Is it a fairly equal balance, or are you looking to have more experienced players come in, or how do you build your team?

BILL O'BRIEN: I think moving forward I think at Boston College we always want to be primarily a high school recruiting program, right? If you put percentages on it, we would say about 75% of our roster to come through high school recruiting and 25% to come through the portal.

This year was a different story because we lost guys to either they transferred or graduation or whatever it might be, so we had to, in my opinion, replace experience with experience. So we were able to go out. We have two of them up here this afternoon with Anthony and Mason and some other guys that have just really done a good job of coming in and understanding the culture of Boston College.

So it is about 50/50 right now, but I think moving forward it will always tend to be more of a high school recruiting philosophy. I think one thing that BC did is BC made a much bigger commitment to football in January when they allowed us to expand our staff. We were able to expand our personnel staff, hire Kenyatta Watson, our GM. We have Julian Rowe-Cohen our assistant GM. We have a number of people that can help us. Now you can divide up, hey, these guys are in charge of high school recruiting, these guys are in charge of portal recruiting and evaluating the tape and finding the right fits for BC.

It's been a good process and something that we'll continue to build on, but we think we're on the right track.

Q. You disclosed to ESPN that Kaelan Chudzinski tore his Achilles. Can you talk about that injury, the impact it's going to have on your offense, and does that change anything you want to do schematically this season?

BILL O'BRIEN: No, I don't think it changes much. It is a loss. Chud had a really good freshman year. I feel terrible for him. But if you asked him where he's at in his rehab right now, he'd tell you he's going to play this year. You know, the percentages tell us that he's probably going to miss the season and be back in January.

We did move a man named Bryce Lewis who was a defensive end for us who had played tight end in high school. We moved him back over to tight end this summer, and he's had a really good summer, and we're excited about him.

We have guys like Zeke Moore and Brady Clough and Danny Edgehille. So we feel good about that position, but



obviously Chud was a very productive player, so you don't really replace that right away.

We feel good about the position, where it's at right now, and we just continue to move forward.

Q. You spoke about hiring Kenyatta Watson as your new general manager. Just what does that mean in the world of college football now? You've been in the NFL. You know team GMs. What does that look like for BC and this new role of GM over the last few years?

BILL O'BRIEN: I think the way that college football is now, just my opinion, the more that you can set it up organizationally using the model of the NFL organization where you have a head coach and a GM and then you have your coaching staff and your personnel staff. I think in college you have your portal recruiters, your portal evaluators. You have your high school recruiters, your high school evaluators. The similarity there in professional football would be your college scouts, right, your pro scouts. That's kind of how we have it set up.

So Kenyatta is in charge of the personnel side of things. Football-wise I oversee the whole thing, but he's got the personnel side of things.

I think it's gone well so far. We're in the first six months of it. It just really became that way in January, and I think we've definitely improved the football team, but we're always looking to tweak and figure out ways that we can do it in a better way, whether it comes to the budget of what we're allowed to spend or just the recruiting itself.

I think we're on the right track, and it's really helped me a lot. It's helped to take some things off of my plate, which has allowed me to coach more football, which is pretty cool for me. I'm happy about it.

THE MODERATOR: I'm curious, it's a great definition of culture that culture is the accumulation of a million choices made by each colleague, but when the colleagues change every year, how do you maintain culture through those millions of decisions?

BILL O'BRIEN: I do. I think that's a cool definition. I do believe that culture is defined by the people within your culture.

I believe that we've done a really good job of bringing in the right guys that understand the value of playing great football in a great conference in the ACC and the value of an unbelievable education, but also the philosophy of Boston College where, you know, we're going to develop the whole person at BC.

These guys are going to -- they're busy seven days a week. You know, they're giving back to the community, doing a lot in the community, going to class, playing good football. That will always be the philosophy of BC. So the more we can find guys that fit that culture that take pride in putting that uniform on and playing for Boston College, representing all the great players that came before them, that's how we're going to win.

I believe we're on the right track with these three young men that are up here today, plus all the other guys that are back at BC working out today. We feel good about where our culture is at. I think that would be a good question for these guys. They'll talk more to that because they're in that locker room every day. I believe we're headed in the right direction with our culture.

Q. If BC exceeds expectations in the ACC this year, what do you believe will be the key factor to making that happen?

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, that's a great question. I think, you know, one of the key factors in any football season is health. I think these three, start with these three, they've got to stay healthy. We need guys to stay healthy. I think that's a big deal.

Then we have to play better on defense. I think we've got to take better care of the ball on offense, play better situational football overall as a team. But I think that we've shown that we can do that. We're a much more competitive football team in practice. A lot of times in my experience that tends to lend itself to improvement on the field during games, but those are some areas where we have to improve if we're going to improve on the record.

Q. What went into targeting Mason, and what traits on and off the field give you the impression that he can be the leader at BC you want him to be?

BILL O'BRIEN: Yeah, the first thing we felt like when we got done with the season and we evaluated that position, you know, we had guys leave, so we knew we had to replace. We couldn't just do it with rookies. We had to go get somebody out of the portal, at least one guy out of the portal.

We had somebody that was not only an efficient accurate passer and could understand our passing game, our protections, our reads and things, but also a guy that was mobile, that could make plays with his feet. We weren't going to be a team that's going to drop back 55 times in a game and have a guy just standing there like a statue. That's not going to be who we are.



We started to track that, and we started to really scour the portal, which a lot of our guys had already been doing that during the season. So this was -- Mason was a guy that came up right away as soon as I saw his film. And I knew the level of competition in that conference because I had looked at Trinidad Chambliss the year before, and knowing Pete Golding, coaching with him at Alabama and what Trinidad had meant to that program.

This was a guy that I knew from the level from that conference that had played good football and was very productive. Had almost 6,000 total yards. You're talking about passing and running and very productive and a winner, and was the Player of the Year in that conference this past year.

So we went out. We contacted him, and he came and visited, came with his dad. Right away we liked him. You know, very sharp guy, learns well, can communicate, puts his mind to it, really prepares every single day, comes into the meetings. Fun guy to coach. Same guy every day. Very consistent guy.

So really looking forward to continuing to work with him in training camp and then into the season.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. We'll spend time with Mason McKenzie.

Q. Mason, the magnitude of a Division II school to a Power Four school, that difference is tremendous. Obvious aspects are different: speed, size. What are some less obvious differences going from that, you know, magnitude of a smaller school to this one?

MASON McKENZIE: Well, I mean, we get to have, like, free breakfast every day, and we get lunch fed to us. That's definitely a blessing.

Coming from a Division II school, you kind of realize that -- and coming up to Division I school, you don't realize -- or you realize how good these guys have it here. I get to kind of feel blessed every day to have this type of stuff because when I was at Saginaw Valley, we had peanut butter sandwiches for breakfast, and now we have a full omelet station and get French toast. That's a little difference that you get at this level, and it's definitely nice.

I've been able to put on weight, so that's definitely played a factor into that. That's a little bit of a difference there.

Q. From your time at Saginaw Valley State, what are some of the pieces in your game that you worked to develop that you feel like this staff saw in you to make

that jump from DII to DI? What was that conversation like of what they saw on tape? And then for you personally, why do you feel like you're ready?

MASON McKENZIE: I think that the main reason that Coach O'Brien kind of touched on is I can make plays off schedule. I can make a lot of plays that other people can't make. Just being able to -- I can make the on-schedule play, but when things break down and we need to make a play in a certain moment of the game, I can kind of make something out of nothing and make that happen and make the play for the team.

Q. Mason, you are a part of one of the many starting quarterbacks from the state of Michigan that played their high school football in the state of Michigan. It's a state that doesn't get necessarily the recognition or credit in terms of producing talent, but how did Michigan high school football and playing against Catholic Centrals, Cass Techs and all that in the world prepare you for college football?

MASON McKENZIE: Yeah, I think in the preseason Heisman rankings, Michigan high school football, there's probably three quarterbacks in the top 5. I got to play against Bryce Underwood my senior year in high school. I played him in the state championship. There's guys like Dante Moore and C.J. Moore and Trinidad now too. There was just a lot of talent and a lot of competition.

Like I said, I got to play Bryce, but I didn't really play any of the other guys. Just to be in the same conversation as some of those great college quarterbacks right now, it's a blessing. I think that that definitely shaped me into the football player I am today.

Q. There's already instinct comparisons with you and Trinidad Chambliss. Can you just talk about what that pressure? Do you feel that pressure? Whether fair or not, there's kind of an expectation now for you to perform at a level? How do you handle that?

MASON McKENZIE: I mean, from what I've seen online, I don't think anybody really has too many expectations for me. I take that as a chip on my shoulder. I'm excited to go prove people wrong. That's kind of what I've been doing my whole life. I've been told I'm too small, I can't throw the ball well enough, I'm not fast enough, not big enough. I just take that and put it on my shoulder and I want to go just prove people wrong and prove that I belong at this level too.

Q. Mason, other than breakfast, what was it that attracted you to Boston College? What do you like best about playing at Boston College?



MASON MCKENZIE: Yeah, there was a lot of different things. I mean, when I hopped in the transfer portal, I think -- and I got an offer from Boston College, and then I had offers from these other places, I had to look back at my little self and think what would I have dreamed of going to play? Would I have dreamed of going to play Group of Six football or would I have wanted to play Power Four football in front of 50,000 people? I think that decision was pretty obvious.

When I was growing up, that's what I wanted to do.

Then having guys like Coach O'Brien who has coached Tom Brady and Bryce Young, Deshaun Watson, to be able to learn from him was definitely big in my process of deciding.

Then, also, it's a great school. You get a great education for free. You can't ask for much more than that. It just kind of checked a lot of the boxes that I wanted. I still don't regret my decision one bit.

THE MODERATOR: Mason, thank you. We will spend time with Anthony Palano.

Q. What has stood out to you about Kris Jones in practices so far?

ANTHONY PALANO: Kris Jones is somebody we added obviously in the transfer portal this past spring and just somebody I always look for and I'm happy that we have here at BC as a great defensive line.

Kris is reckless. He can wreck a game, and I have seen that firsthand. I've heard great things about him. He's a great kid. He's a little quiet, but he's super humble. He doesn't have any ego. He easily could.

I mean, I'm honored and happy to be able to play with him and happy he's on my team and we're not playing against him.

Q. Washington State, South Dakota State, and on to Boston College. Going through the transfer portal and having the experience you've had, what can you say about your journey to the Eagles, and what advice would you give to someone considering the portal?

ANTHONY PALANO: I'm a big believer in Jesus Christ, so I know that He's got a plan for me. Out of high school, I only had one opportunity, one scholarship opportunity, at the Division I level. So I ended up taking it and went along with Coach Rogers and his staff. Then they ended up moving schools to Washington State, so I followed them

because they believed in me.

Then this past year they had left again to go to Iowa State. I wish them the best of luck, but I had to make my personal decision.

Something that we all preach and me and Mason have talked about, because we were in the portal, is to go somewhere that you're going to go and be able to play. At the end of the day, you can go chase these shiny things, can you go chase the money, you can go really be in the portal for the wrong reasons; but, I mean, it really depends on what you want as a player at the end of the day.

I know what I want. I want to come and play, so that's why I'm here.

Q. You attended the Field of Dreams event. Can you just talk about what that experience was like for you and the importance of community?

ANTHONY PALANO: You know what, I think that coming to Boston has been unbelievable. I have never been to Boston in my life. Being here and feeling so welcomed in such a big community has been unbelievable.

I love being able to have an opportunity to give back to the community, and it's cool that I have a whole team of 100-something guys who feel the exact same way.

There wasn't a single question from a single one of us to go help out and give back to the community. We know how much it means to them. Each and every one of us love going out there and spending some time with everybody and just building the overall culture and community.

Q. You are joining a tradition of excellent linebackers. When BC has been at its best, it's been led by the Luke Kuechlys and the Herzlichs of the world. How do you plan on making your impact in that legacy? And what is something if you had to give just a small little blurb about this is what you want your time at BC to be remembered by, what would that be?

ANTHONY PALANO: Yeah, I mean, I'm obviously honored to go to Boston College who does have such a great legacy of linebackers and players in general.

I feel like I've got a big name to live up to. That's why I work the way I work. That's why I study the way I study because I know how much it means to them because, I mean, we have players, former alum, who come in all the time asking how we're doing, if they can help with anything. Like Zach Allen was in most recently as he was getting



married.

I mean, I want my legacy to be remembered as somebody who gave their all every single day. It didn't matter the circumstances. Just try to get 1% better every day, and then obviously everything is going to take care of itself.

I mean, I'm extremely blessed. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to be here, and I'm excited to put on in the fall.

THE MODERATOR: Anthony, thank you. You and KP can switch.

Q. We heard from your two teammates that are transferring in. You've been loyal to this program and watched it grow for the last three years. As you step into this season as one of the guys that has been around to build up the Eagles, what's your advice to the newcomers, and how would you describe this culture in Boston?

KP PRICE: First and foremost, I'd like to give all the honor and glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My advice this to them, we talk a lot about the season and offseason and just getting better each and every day. My advice to them is keep working, keep doing what they're doing.

Coach O'Brien has brought them here with us today. So that's a testament to the people that they are, the players that they are, and who we are and who we're going to become.

Keep working and keep sticking together, which is what we're doing right now, and we're going to keep going. We're ready to rock.

Q. Coach O'Brien has talked about building physicality within the program. How do you go about that with the mindset of a defensive back, and how do you get the rest of your team to buy into that mindset?

KP PRICE: By actually doing it, being physical, being tough, being the tough players that we are, and our practices are physical. We compete with each other. We get the best out of each other each and every day.

This team is amazing. Everybody has a similar work ethic. Everybody wants to get better. Everybody wants to learn from each other, and that's it. We just get at it step by step, day by day. That's really our motto. Keeping our head down, staying focused, and not worrying too much about the future, but what we can control right now. That's

what we do.

Q. First off, good to see you here again. Second off, you've been a captain on this team for multiple years now. You led in pretty much every relevant statistic for a defensive back, and you're highly regarded as a safety among safeties in the nation, not just in the ACC. What is it that kept you loyal in the world of guys playing for a bunch of different schools and a bunch of different years despite no turnover in the coaching staff and what is somewhat of a tumultuous season like Boston College had? What kept you put?

KP PRICE: Definitely in today's age, there's not much of that. This is the place I belong. This is what I was called to do. And I'm heavy on my faith, so I relied on that.

It's really just that I love it here. I love Coach O'Brien. I love the team that we have and continue to build. I didn't want to chase anything that was external. I wanted to get it all from within. I didn't want to hop on any type of bandwagon. I wanted to be a part of something that was being built and that could be remembered. We have a great chance of doing that. I didn't want anything else. That's what I wanted, and that's why I came back.

As far as stats and all that, just continuing. I know I can be much better than I ever was, so just continue to get better day by day and continue to grow and know that there's always more, there's always more.

Q. Boston College has always been known for its offensive line, and you're able to see this every single day. What's your thoughts on your offensive line this year?

KP PRICE: Ever since I've been here, that's been a big piece for us. Our offense line is good this year. I feel like I have a lot of confidence in them. I have a lot of confidence in the whole team in general, but offensive line specifically.

Coach named a lot of younger players as well that came, like Rob Smith. He's one of them ones. And transfers that came in, Kristian Phillips. The leadership that he has, just to point out as a transfer, the confidence that he brings to the team is definitely exceptional, because being a transfer you don't have to do anything. You don't really have to say anything, but that's being a vocal guy and just instilling belief in the whole offensive line.

The offensive line, in the trenches that's where the money is being made. So got a lot of belief and confidence in them.

THE MODERATOR: KP, you're a transformative education



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major. What do you want to be when you grow up?

KP PRICE: Yes, sir. My dream since I was younger was always to be in the NFL, but honestly I'm studying psychology and transformative ed. Never planned on being a teacher, none of that. I'm in a real estate -- outside of football I'm in it real estate big with investing, and I just want to be an entrepreneur.

If the road takes me to be a teacher and transformative ed, then that's where it takes me, but that's never what I planned on being. I'm just here for right now and my journey right now, and I'm excited to be exactly where I am, blessed to be with these guys. We're going to make it a journey, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: BC, good luck this season.

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