

Texas Tech University Football Media Conference

Monday, August 29, 2016

Kliff Kingsbury



Q. Coach, what do you think you accomplished the most in the fall camp?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: That's a pretty broad question. I felt like we developed a really good chemistry, offensively and defensively. We practiced well together. After the first couple of days, there weren't a lot of fights, weren't a lot of guys on the ground. Guys were learning how to practice, taking care of each other. Felt like we really came together as a team, so that was encouraging.

Q. Can you give us some insight on how Gibbs feels about the defense?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I'm not sure. As you know, he keeps everything pretty close to the vest. I know how I feel about it, but he likes to tend to downplay things. But I think it will be a group that understands his schemes better. I think it will be a group that can play hard. I think we'll be more physical up front due to some of the size that we've picked up.

So that's exciting. We'll find out what we've got Saturday. But I do think we all feel like it will be an improved group.

Q. Where have you seen the most improvement on that group on defense?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I think the numbers on the defensive line, last year we asked those guys to play 70, 80 snaps a game, which wasn't fair to them and wasn't great for our defense. Now we'll be able to roll some numbers through there and keep guys fresh, and hopefully that will help them be more effective.

Q. What's it say about Luke Stice? He just gets here and he's already team captain?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Like I said all along, the intensity he's brought, the leadership, max effort every single rep with everything he does. So it didn't surprise me. Those guys have fallen in love with the kid and what he's about, what he stands for, how he works. So just a testament to how he was raised and the type of character he has.

Q. Is that a team vote to choose the captain?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yes, it's a team vote.

Q. What do you remember most about the buzz in the air around a season opener, going out there

and playing the first game of the season?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Just a lot of excitement. Every year you start over, everybody starts over 0-0, so there's great expectations, and this year's no different. I think our team really feels like they've come together and have grown together and have a chance to have a pretty good football team.

Q. I know Justis missed some time about a week ago. Is he 100% good to go? I know you have him listed first on the depth chart, but see any bumps or bruises with him?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: No, he's good. It was just precautionary. We just wanted to get him into game week. So he'll be fresh and healthy and really fast and explosive, and that's what we want to see from him on Saturday.

Q. Do you feel the offensive line at this point is still a work in progress? I know a couple weeks ago Terence was a left tackle, looks like maybe Baylen moved back there, and Paul was at center, and it looks like Tony might have made up some ground. Where does that stand at this point?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, it's a solid group. I think it shows we have a couple bodies that we can slide in there and not skip a beat. So excited about that group. Bigger, stronger, more athletic than we've been, and just have to get some experience.

Q. Can you speak about SFA's defense (indiscernible)?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, both guys were very productive last year for them. And they had a good defense last year. I think, personnel-wise, they're one of the better defenses on that level and made a bunch of plays, have a bunch of confidence. I think they have eight starters back. So it will be a good test for all of us to get out there and see where we're at as an offense.

Q. Your depth chart shows (indiscernible) starting left tackle, Jack Reichel starting left guard. In terms of right tackle, is that all accurate?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: We'll have to check it out Saturday and see how it rolls out there. But as of today, that's how it's listed.

Q. What do you think about bringing Manny Ramirez on to the staff can help your team with?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Everything, really. I think we have him in that player development role. His story, the way he's grown as a man since I first met him as a freshman and what he's accomplished in his life. He's a big-time Christian and treats people the right way.

I can't imagine a better role model for our players to be around and be able to connect with on a daily basis than Manny Ramirez. And that was first and foremost our thought. Obviously he has great football knowledge, but, to begin with, that's going to be the capacity he'll be in.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Not too long. I knew he was trying to figure out what he wanted to do next, and he wants to coach. We felt like this was a great way for him to get his foot in the door and help us and help him. Coach Jones had the role last year and obviously progressed into a position coach. So I think Manny is excited about this opportunity. Just to.

Q. Just to clarify, that role doesn't allow any on-field coaching?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Right, right, no on-field coaching.

Q. With regard to your receiver group, all of them have an "or" by them. Is it based on how well they play in practice this week?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: It is. We've taken the approach it's day-to-day at that position. We feel like we have such good depth that if you want to come out and show up late or not bring it one day, you'll probably be the backup the next.

And that's what we've been striving for at every position. We feel like we established that at wideout. So it's literally day to day, who practices the best will go out there and be the starter.

Q. In a game like this, you mentioned the depth there. Would you like to get players more work? Ideally, how many carries does like a Justin Stockton get before you try to get the younger guys? You mentioned on the conference call kind of wishing you might have gotten Justin more reps last year?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, just whatever it takes for us to win the game, really. I don't set a number. I just know that he's a dynamic talent. I think you see the type of explosive plays he's had so far since he's been here. But the touches have been less than what they should have, because he had a great player in front of him. But he's going to get a bunch of touches and we'll get him involved as much as he can handle it now.

Q. Can you talk about Devin Lauderdale and where

he's come from last December around the bowl time to right now?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: It's night and day. The young man I've seen this summer through training camp is a different young man than what we saw previously. I think he got a taste of the real world and he knew what he had lost and didn't ever want to feel that again.

So he's been focused. He's been locked down. He's been early to everything. He's been working harder than he's ever worked. So he's had his best camp by far. It's been fun to see. It's been good for those young wide receivers to see the way he's worked, the way he approaches every practice, and I'm very proud of him.

Q. How comfortable are you with all of the -- I know this is no surprise, obviously, but all the true freshmen that you're going to be playing at linebacker?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, we're excited. I think you look at their size, their athleticism -- I mean, there's no substitute for experience, but they're big enough, strong enough and physical enough to play, now it's just about getting them reps and ready to go.

But I'm just excited to watch them play. I've seen them in practice. They've done a good job there. So now when the lights come on, we'll see how they react. But it's been good so far.

Q. Trying to look at the progress over the spring and summer, the penalties and cutting those down, first of all, is there any sense they'll be better at that this year? And what are you looking for in practice to try to measure that? I know it's tough not in a game situation all the time.

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, I think it's more overall perspective from discipline as a team, doing everything right on and off the field. But if that's an indication, this is a good group. I thought we made huge strides last year in those areas. If we can make that same step, it will really help our chances.

Q. Having night games last year was well-documented. (Indiscernible) is that something you guys pay attention to too much or not really?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: No, I think our fan base likes a night game, so it's great for them. It gives them time to enjoy the entire day. When you get out there, there's something special about being in that stadium at night. So I know our players are excited. I'm excited. And it should make for some fun home games.

Q. Did you cross paths with Gary Crowton or know him very well?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I do not. I remember him as a

play caller, but I don't have any association with him.

next game after that.

Q. What do you expect from his offense?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: He'll be very multiple. Does great stuff at every level he's been at offensively. So they'll have some great things schematically that we haven't seen, I'm sure, after having all summer to be prepared for it. So we'll have to be great in our responsibilities on defense.

Q. This has kind of been labeled the greatest college football weekend with all the match-ups non-conference. You have a big one coming up in a couple of weeks, but how do you feel the playoff has changed, the philosophy of scheduling? Do you feel like it benefits college football overall?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I do. I think everybody's going to at least play one of those big-time match-ups every year now. It's great for the fans, great for the sport. It wasn't always like that in the past. Interests probably didn't pick up until later on, and now it's starting from week one on that you have these big-time match-ups, so I think it's great for the game.

Q. Another question about your young linebackers. Obviously, Johnathan Picone was here in the spring, and you spoke well of him. What did Jordan do to move in front of him?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, I think he's just -- John played more of an end-type position there in high school, so still learning the position of linebacker. Jordan's been a linebacker his entire life. So I think just some of the instinctive things that he does naturally, he was able to pick up on quickly and slide in there.

Q. Coach, do you like playing a team that's not in the Power Five to kind of get things going and get an assessment of your team and get the rust knocked off and get yourself out to a potentially good start?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I think you just play whoever they put in front of you, you know? I like the way our schedule sets up. I think Stephen F. Austin is a talented team with a bunch of returners, so it's a good test early at home to see where we're at.

Q. After playing Arkansas the last couple years in non-conference and Arizona State coming up quickly, does that change anything urgency-wise when you have a Power Five team on the schedule early in the year?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I don't think so. I think you look across the country, playing the 1-AA teams there, and quality opponents. In the last couple years, they scored quality points on us. So we approach Game 1, throw everything into that, then we worry about the

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Patrick Mahomes Justis Nelson



Q. Going into the opening game, where do you feel this offense is right now, and what do you like about how fall camp went? What do you think you guys still need to work on?

PATRICK MAHOMES: I think the offense is at a high level right now. We're really progressing fast, and I like how we are progressing throughout fall camp. I'm excited to see us get on the field, under the lights and see how everybody reacts and show who is really ready for the season to go.

Q. What's it like having Dylan back? I know it's obviously well-documented that you guys had a good relationship in high school and all that stuff. But what's it like having him back?

PATRICK MAHOMES: It's awesome. Having that chemistry on the field, it's hard to really replicate that with a lot of the receivers. It just takes repetition. Just having a guy you've thrown to since you were a little kid and he knows where you're going to be at and he knows where you want him to be at, really helps out a lot.

Q. What have you seen from Devin Lauderdale?

PATRICK MAHOMES: I've seen a lot of maturity. A guy who really came in off a little bit of the suspension, coming in ready to play and ready to prove why he should be here and what he has. And you saw it a little bit with Jakeem last year. A guy that was really out to prove something, and I'm seeing that in Devin Lauderdale this year.

Q. What is the biggest difference for you between fall camp and game-week prep?

PATRICK MAHOMES: I mean, Coach Kingsbury is really good about kind of preparing us for the game. Our last week of fall camp, the last few days we had a simulated game week. So not a huge difference. But just having that extra emotion, extra energy at practice will probably be a little different. I'm really, really going to be focusing in on SFA and trying to really prepare myself for the game.

Q. Coach was saying no receiver necessarily really has a starting job (indiscernible), everybody kind of has an alternate at their position. Have you noticed that competition, just working with those

receivers?

PATRICK MAHOMES: It's definitely benefited a lot, just having that competition every day. No guy really can come every day and expect: I'm going to be starting. They have to come out, go 100% in every drill and really try to earn their starting spot.

It's built great relationships. I feel like everybody has taken it well. They're really cheering for each other, and you like to see that. When you play in this offense, everybody's going to play. You're going to be two deep at least in receiver. So to see those guys out there competing is really going to help out the team.

Q. With the offensive line and camp, how do you feel like it's developed?

PATRICK MAHOMES: I feel like it's developed well. We've had some surprises with some guys that have really stepped up and stepped up the competition level. There's been a lot of movement, but I'm pretty sure it's pretty solid now. We've kind of run the same ones in the last few days, and I'm expecting to really solidify this Monday and have that offensive line for the rest of the week and rest of the season hopefully.

Q. Who are some of the surprises you mentioned?

PATRICK MAHOMES: There's kind of a six-, seven-man rotation. Paul Stawarz has really stepped his game up of being a guy that -- I don't know if he'll start for sure, but he'll be in the mix and have a chance to. And some other guys, like Madison Akamnonu who has really stepped up his game this fall camp, and then Terence Steele has been a really dominant presence out there.

Q. What difference do you feel like (indiscernible) in camp?

PATRICK MAHOMES: He's definitely helped out with a lot of confidence and a lot of swagger. There are a lot of guys that a few of them have played, but they haven't had that starting role. I feel like those guys really with Coach Foster have earned that confidence that they expect to really go out there and kill it this season. And I'm excited to see them get on the field and play.

Q. What would you like to improve on from a year ago?

PATRICK MAHOMES: For me, it's just stopping the bad plays. Really, just moving the chains, being more

efficient. Cutting interceptions down and really just being the best quarterback for the team and not just trying to make the big play at all times.

Q. Is that something you worked on in the off-season between last year and today?

PATRICK MAHOMES: Yes, of course, and just really worked on my pocket presence, and you'll for sure be able to tell. I feel like just stepping up in the pocket and making those threes, making those ten-yard outs and stuff like that instead of every single play running around. And there are some times you want to run around and make those big plays happen, and knowing where the line is and when you need to throw a five-yard completion to get the chains moving.

Q. What is the key for you recognizing those big moments and trying to make those big plays? I guess you don't want to tame that part down too much, but just going for more?

PATRICK MAHOMES: I feel like it's really just going through my progressions. I feel like last year there were some times you can tell before the play even started I was going to run, I feel like I had it in my mind, and it just goes back to my high school days of really just trying to make a big play happen all the time. But really going through my progressions, and when that isn't open, then running and making those big plays happen is where the line is.

Q. I know this is only your second go-around, at least since the opening day started, but what's the biggest difference about the buzz in the air, running through the smoke for the first time and yet to open the season, the jitters in the locker room and what separates the season opener from some of those games down the line?

PATRICK MAHOMES: It's very different. You really have to manage your emotions. Last year I feel like I came out so energized at first. I kind of got tired in the second quarter. So I feel like I've really learned from that and managed that. You don't need to be extremely energized three hours before the game when you're just getting down there to warm up. You just kind of manage it. And it will build up. You run out that tunnel for the first time, it's going to be loud and you're going to be energized, but just kind of taking it throughout the whole game.

MODERATOR: Questions for Justis.

Q. Justis, how big of an honor is it for you to be voted team captain this year?

JUSTIS NELSON: I mean, it's a great honor. We have guys that work just as hard as I do, but the fact that the team voted for me to be one of the people to represent them, I mean, it doesn't feel any greater than that.

Q. Give us a scouting report on SFA's offense, and what has Coach Gibbs indicated how they were most likely to attack you?

JUSTIS NELSON: Yeah, they're a team that spreads the ball out. They've got coaches that have come from everywhere. I think one of the coaches even coached at Oregon for a little bit. So they have a wide variety of things. They like to run the ball too. And Coach Gibbs, we're still working on the game plan and everything like that. But he's going to have a plan for us, and it's just up to us to execute.

Q. What's the biggest difference for you personally when you're talking about fall camp coming into a game week?

JUSTIS NELSON: Just how fast the game's going to come. I mean, you can practice all you want out here, but it's nothing to simulate like it is out there on Saturday night. So just picking up the speed of the game, getting tired. Once you go 80 plays, you can't simulate that in practice either. So just that mental toughness and just making sure you're executing every play.

Q. What do you think the biggest improvement is going to come from the defense this year?

JUSTIS NELSON: I just think discipline-wise that's the biggest improvement. Guys staying in gaps. Guys being physical, tackling. That's something that we're working on day-in and day-out. So I think those are the biggest improvements. Just like I said, staying in gaps and coming up with a body part. Making sure we don't let any big plays.

Q. How about guys like Jordyn Brooks coming in as a true freshman and getting that start, what's most impressed you about him through fall camp and how he's come along?

JUSTIS NELSON: Yeah, he's been picking it up quick. He's a big guy. He's a physical guy. That's what the coaches like about him. He's fast. He has all the talent that you need to play linebacker, whichever position he's at. So we're just looking for him to be athletic, make tackles, and just do his job. Not try to do too much.

Q. Having a guy opposite of you in D.J. Polite-Bray, when he first came to Tech playing receiver and now transitioning. What's been his biggest stride? Is that some size and athleticism you feel like you've not really had opposite of you out on the field?

JUSTIS NELSON: I feel like D.J., like you said, he's made big strides switching from receiver to corner. He's starting to pick up the actual feel of corner. His footwork has gotten a lot better. His hands are a lot

better. He's making plays on the ball, just like he did when he was receiver. But he's just made that transition, and he looks a lot better. He's a physical guy. Like you said, he's about 185, 190, and he can tackle too. So we're excited about him.

Q. Speaking of tackling, Coach Gibbs said during the spring and in the fall that they wanted to tackle more. Have you noticed that in practice that you guys have tackled more than previous years?

JUSTIS NELSON: Yeah, definitely. We've got a lot more live reps against our offense. Just tackling guys out in space. They brought in some new equipment to help us tackle, so every day we're doing at least three, four tackling drills live. So going to the ground, actually wrapping up and finishing.

Q. Looking at the depth chart for the wide receivers, it seems there are a lot of ors there. Who is the toughest guy you've personally tried to lock down?

JUSTIS NELSON: I'd probably have to say Cam, Cam Batson. He's a shifty guy and he's physical too. So having him out there on the slide. He's fast, he's little, he has some of the best routes that I've seen on our offense, so he's probably given me the most trouble out of all the receivers.

Q. What's the difference in just the buzz, the atmosphere, the feeling in the air running through the smoke for the first time in a season opener that just separates it from other games on the schedule?

JUSTIS NELSON: Just getting those jitters out of the way. It's been a long time since we've been under the lights. We get tired of going against the same guys. As good as they are, there's nothing like a live game in front of 65,000 fans. So we're just ready to get that first game out of the way. Just ready to go out there and compete.