



2015 Big Ten Football Media Days

Thursday July 30, 2015

Illinois Coach Tim Beckman

COACH BECKMAN: Thank you. First and foremost, it's that time of year again when you get to step out and realize that you're less than a week away from getting football started. And I think that's what the Big Ten Media Day is all about.

First, I'd like to tell you about how excited we are as a football team as we move forward to next week.

Secondly, I'd like to express to you the three gentlemen that I have here with me today. The Fighting Illini of Walker nominee Josh Ferguson; Butkus nominee Mason Monheim; and of course, Big Ten nominee Teddy Karras.

If you have that opportunity to meet with those gentleman, please, I strongly urge you to. They're fine gentlemen. They understand exactly what college football and the student-athlete's lives are all about.

Before I get started, I would like to express something that I want to make sure that everybody understands about our program. We use the word Oskee not just because of the word Oskee or that it's a battle cry of the University of Illinois. But it also stands for something. That stance that we use that word for is our success equals the knowledge of being -- the K, the knowledge, of being a great student-athlete on and off the football field. Understanding how to be supportive. How to understand to be successful in the classroom.

The E stands for effort, giving all-out effort in everything you do each and every day. And then the last E stands for energy. Energy, being a positive influence on the people around you. Having that belief and that system as being a teammate, being a brother, the band of brothers.

So we're really, really excited about the future of this program. These young men have been working since September to make sure that the Fighting Illini are getting better and better each and every year.

I'm open to questions.

Q. Tim, in off-season, there's been some allegations made about your coaching style or mistreatment of players. I'm just wondering how you respond to those allegations. And if you don't mind, secondly, have you been asked to change your approach? Or do you feel like you will change your approach in light of the investigation and these allegations?

COACH BECKMAN: Shannon, I've been around football for 50 years of my life. I've been around some great, great individuals throughout my career, from high school coaches on up to the college coaches that I've been able to play for and work for.

You know, we're focused right now on a 2015 football team. We took off from last year after a great end of the year. And we've been focused since January on becoming a better football program. The philosophy that we continue to use is what these football players believe in football.



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Q. How much of the culture has changed since adding Bill Cubit as offensive coordinator?

COACH BECKMAN: I think Bill does a phenomenal job with our student-athletes. Heck, we just recently hired Riley O'Toole to come back and be a part of our offense as a graduate assistant.

Of course, Nathan Scheelhaase has also come back. I think again Bill believes in what we're doing. Our players believe. Josh Ferguson and Teddy Karras can tell you that the belief in what we can do offensively is there.

Q. Coach, how important is it to you and how meaningful would it be to your program if you were to get a contract extension?

COACH BECKMAN: Teddy, again, I am focused on the first football game. That is what this team is focused on. We know we've got a Kent State football team September 4th. We know we're excited about getting together on August 5th and then moving to Rantoul on August 9th. We know -- those practices are open. It's an NFL atmosphere when we go to Rantoul. And each and everyone knows that. That's one of the special things that doesn't always happen on every college campus. You're invited. People are invited to watch the Fighting Illini work. We're focused in on what we can be focused in on right now and that's Kent State.

Q. Hi. Coach, what did defensive coordinator Tim Banks show you especially towards the second half of the season when the defense improved, that you decided to bring him back for this year?

COACH BECKMAN: I really believe that our defense did an outstanding job at the end of the year. You're talking about a Penn State football team that had a very dynamic quarterback, and we were able to win that football game. And then, of course, going up to Northwestern and playing at a place that the Fighting Illini haven't won since 2002 and being able to take a defense that did an outstanding job in that football game and helped us provide -- or helped provide us with a victory.

So I think Timmy Banks, Mike Ward, Al Seamonson, Mike Phair, all my defensive staff do an exceptional job of preparing our players on and off the field.

Q. Coach, can you just talk about the maturation of Teddy Karras, how his knee is responding to his treatment, and give us an update on him.

COACH BECKMAN: Teddy has done a great job of getting himself prepared. His willingness to continue to strive to make himself a stronger athlete. I think what a lot of people don't understand is the commitment and the leadership that Teddy brings to us.

Teddy had a lot to do with winning those last two football games that put us in a bowl game. He didn't play one play, but he had a lot to do with who he is and how he leads this football team. It's an honor to coach Teddy Karras.

Q. Coach, you mentioned you've been around football for 50 years. How has the way you coach players and treat players changed over that time or has it?

COACH BECKMAN: Again, you grasp things. You're able to go visit a -- an NFL program where maybe an NFL coach gives you the key, as they say, to go out and learn. I think that's life. I think that's coaching football. You learn



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ways to enhance your student-athlete's opportunities to be better on and off the field. And if it's going to help us win football games, if it's going to help us become better students, better role models, then we're going to try to do that. And we're going to try to give that to our student-athletes.

Q. Just a follow-up. How would you describe your philosophy or the way you handle disciplining players and motivating players? Is there a point -- like, do you have a certain line you say you don't cross?

COACH BECKMAN: We're fathers. I think that each one of our coaches would say the same thing. We're in the process of providing avenues for our football players to become better men, become better football players. We want the best. We want a relationship for a lifetime as we talk to them. We want to be able to communicate with one another throughout their lives. So, as a football coach and as being the part of a football program, I think those are very essential parts of leading young men.

Q. Coach, what is your role in the medical evaluation of players and decisions on whether players, medically speaking, can resume play? How has that changed over the years?

COACH BECKMAN: I really don't think it's changed at all. We have doctors. We have medical personnel that understand injuries, and we utilize those things. We're excited about the current young men that we have. But doctors make decisions.

Q. With the allegations with the players and without the extension, are you feeling more pressure to win now this year?

COACH BECKMAN: I'm only concerned about one thing, and that's August 5th to September 4th. I'm focusing now on creating an atmosphere that our players are successful in. That's all I'm worried about right now.

As any football coach, we always have pressure and we always understand that it's necessary to win. But our program has gotten better each and every year with wins in a classroom and socially.

Q. Coach, can you just talk about your senior class in general and what they mean to this program?

COACH BECKMAN: Well, I don't know if I have got enough time. I've got 23 seniors. We've had 30 young men who have graduated from our institution in the last year and a half. Twenty-three outstanding young men. Heck, we've got a young man that's already graduated, already decided when he was going to be done last year, in Davontay Kwaaning and has come back for his last year. When he was ready to be done last year, he's come back for this year to finish up. So words can't express what these seniors mean, and this is their program.

Go Fighting Illini.