

July 27, 2009



An interview with:

PENN STATE HEAD COACH JOE PATERNO

JOE PATERNO: I would just like to answer some questions. I don't want to get into some things as to where our football team is exactly because I'm not quite sure right now where we are for a lot of reasons. We're going to have to take some young people and put them in key spots. There will probably be a couple of kids I haven't seen play yet. But that will go on for a while. So why don't I just get into some questions you guys may have. I don't want to make this too long if I can help it.

Q. What makes you come back year after year?

JOE PATERNO: Oh, I'd miss you guys. (Laughter). What would I do on a nice beautiful day in July? (Laughter).

I just enjoy it. I've enjoyed coaching, I've enjoyed the competition, I enjoy the challenges that go on with coaching at the level we're at. I enjoy being around young people. I don't know what else I'd rather do.

There's going to come a time when I'm going to have to look in that mirror and say, hey, you're not doing a job and you have more of an obligation to the University than just going out there and going through the motions. I don't think I've reached that yet. But that day will come, and then I'll decide to get out of it. But right now I'm enjoying it. I think I can do a good job. I've got a heck of a staff. We've been able to recruit fairly well, and we're looking forward to the kind of competition we have in the Big Ten.

I think we came into this thing in '93. I didn't realize that it would be quite as competitive as it has become, and that's been a real challenge,

and it's something that I've honestly enjoyed. I've enjoyed the associations I've made with some awfully fine people who are fellow coaches and some athletic directors and everything else, and I'm just reluctant to get out of it right now.

Q. Could you talk about Daryll Clark, what he does best and his skill set, and what else you'd like to see him improve upon this year?

JOE PATERNO: Well, Daryll had a fine year last year, but he's got to grow on that. I think people will know a little bit more about him. He hadn't played a lot of football before last year, and that probably was my fault. Jay Paterno, who coached the quarterbacks two years ago, wanted to play Clark more, and I thought it would discourage the kid that we were using, and I thought the kid we were using had the potential to be a good quarterback, and I blew that one.

But Daryll, when we played him, he made some plays and he's started to get better and better. He's really got a fine arm, a good release, he's got a good feel for the pass game, and he's one of those kids, he's big enough, he's tough enough, he can run with the football.

He loves to play, and he carries people with him. He's a dynamite guy in the huddle. In your winter program he's a guy out there pushing everybody, one of the guys that we have. And he's just, I think, going to have a fine year.

But you've got to get better at the little things you do well and all of a sudden not try to jump too far ahead. I think if we can just keep him progressing, he'll be a really good football player.

Q. You've talked in the past about how the Big Ten often goes into hiding in between the end of the regular season and bowl games. Now teams like Illinois and Wisconsin are adding a game the first weekend in December. Is that something your program is looking to do, too?

JOE PATERNO: I didn't quite get all of that. Are you saying that Illinois and Wisconsin



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have added a game after the regular Big Ten season? Is that what I heard? And whether we ought to do that, too, so when we go to a Bowl game we're not that far away?

Q. Yes.

JOE PATERNO: We haven't considered doing it. I try to stay out of the scheduling because we schedule so far ahead, and obviously I can't be looking who we're going to be playing in the year 2020. I'm dumb, but I ain't that dumb. (Laughter). And I'm optimistic but I ain't that optimistic. (Laughter).

I think it would be -- I think Illinois and Wisconsin are doing a smart thing because I think we are at a disadvantage. I felt that way when we played Southern Cal this year. They had two games after we played, and it's a home game for them. So I think it's a tough deal for a Big Ten team to go out and play a team that's had two good tough games after we've finished and we're sitting around. You can go out there and do some things, but there's not that intensity, there's not that kind of edge that you're going to need.

As a result we didn't play very well in California, and I didn't do a very good job of coaching. I didn't have them quite ready. So I think that's a good idea and something maybe we've got to look into.

Q. Your new hip, what does it allow you to do in terms of participating in practice?

JOE PATERNO: Well, there's no reservations on it. The only thing I have found out is that I get a little tired -- I used to be able to walk. I came back from the beach a couple weeks, ten days ago, and actually I used to walk four, five, six miles every morning. I went about two, and then the leg would get a little tired, back would get a little tired. So I'm working up to where I can do what I used to do. But I don't have any pain. There's no reservations on it. I've just got to keep working on it and getting it stronger.

Q. How much did what last year's team did, how much did that just invigorate you or charge you or get you...

JOE PATERNO: Well, I think obviously when you can compete and you've got a chance to be successful in where you're competing, that has a lot to do with it. I've been pleased, a couple years ago we were having our problems, and I had some people putting pressure on me, and I said, we're only one or two players away from being

pretty darn good, and we've had four pretty good years since then.

And I think we have good football players. I'm not getting up here and telling you we don't have any at all and it's just going to take a miracle and you're going to want a coach and all that stuff. We have good football players and they're fun to be around. They've got a little personality and I can clown around with them and vice versa and the whole bit.

I think that's got something to do with it, sure. If I were with a bunch of kids that really didn't care and I had to go back in there and start all over --

But I would add the other ingredient, I've got such a good staff. I've been able to keep my staff. I've only lost one coach in about ten years. Brian Norwood went down to Baylor to become the defensive coordinator because he wants to be a head coach, but that's the only coach I've lost for quite a while. But those guys have been around, and it's an easy job for me right now. It's not a tough job. It's easy because I've got good coaches and got good players.

Q. Is it accurate to say that a lot of the season hinges on the offensive line, and how quickly in your experience can you rebuild one, reconstruct one?

JOE PATERNO: Well, that's one of the reasons I'm reluctant to get up here and start talking about what I think about the football team because there are some areas where we definitely have some concerns, and I'm not sure where we are. One of them is the offensive line. We have a couple of kids back who are good football players, but after that we're going to have to have some kids come along in a hurry.

It's a big concern of mine, and I think until we go through a good, tough preseason practice with some of them, there's a little pressure on them. A lot of them we've seen practice, and they've played some, but they haven't been anywhere where the success of a game rests on their shoulders, and they can't make dumb mistakes, can't jump offsides, can't lose hold of a guy, all those kinds of things. I'm not quite sure where we are up front, but I think it is a question mark for us.

Q. You have one of the great rivalries going as far as coaching, going against Bobby



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Bowden for the all-time wins in college football, but the NCAA is considering vacating some of Bobby's wins. Your thoughts on vacating wins that have already been earned on the field?

JOE PATERNO: I don't particularly like the word rivalry you use with Bobby Bowden. Bobby is a good friend of mine. I think it's ridiculous that the NCAA would take wins away from him personally. But I think that Bobby played with what he had and he won games with what he had, and I don't think there's any reason for anybody to say, hey, you're not entitled to have that win on your record.

It's no problem for me, I'm not interested in who wins the most games, I'm just interested in what I've got to get done from my end of it. Bobby is, as I said, a good friend, and I think has been a great credit to the game and has done a marvelous job. If it turns out he's got more wins when he retires than I have when I retire, so be it. Why the big fuss about it?

It bothers me a little bit that the NCAA would use him almost as a scapegoat for some things that went on at Florida State, and I really don't know all the things that went on that caused their problems. But I hope they let him keep his wins.

Q. Do you ever get tired of defending your nonconference schedule for this year, the fact that the four teams all had losing records last year?

JOE PATERNO: No, I really don't -- I couldn't tell you what their record was. I know Syracuse, we scheduled Syracuse, they were doing really well. You know, you don't know. I was anxious to reschedule Syracuse because at that time Paul Pasqualoni played for me and was a GA on our staff and was the head coach, and I was hoping that we could have a good thing.

We're playing Temple, and the head coach at Temple is a former player of mine, was captain of one of our teams and it's a Philadelphia game. We don't have to make excuses for that. We'll have our troubles with Akron. Akron is a well-coached football team. They do well. They're recruiting well.

You don't know. Look at what's happened the last couple years with people in their opening games, that they've gotten licked because somebody thought that the team that they were playing wasn't very good. I don't know how good anybody else is. I don't know how good we are right now. We haven't played a game. I haven't

seen these guys play a game yet. So for me to get up here and worry about what people think about our nonconference schedule, hey, you guys have got to talk about something. The fans have got to put something on those -- what do you guys call those things, Twittle-do, Twittle-dee? I haven't got the slightest idea what you're looking at, either.

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