

November 28, 2011



An Interview With:

**COACH URBAN MEYER
GENE SMITH**

GENE SMITH: Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you for being here. I appreciate you taking the time out of your schedules to share a great announcement with us.

We just had an opportunity to speak to the football team. I'm sure Urban will talk about that. And had an opportunity to spend some time with President Gee earlier today.

We're really fortunate to have this opportunity to announce our next head football coach at The Ohio State University, Mr. Urban Meyer.

I think we all know that Coach Meyer is known for a lot of things. He's a great football coach. But more importantly, he's an outstanding person.

He's a great leader in our industry. He's from Ohio. Born and raised. And when we went out looking for a football coach, we were particularly looking for an individual that had integrity, that demonstrated outstanding leadership.

And when you think of people who understand what leadership is, they're usually those people who have been through a multitude of experiences in their lives as leaders.

Urban's background has provided him a unique opportunity to lead different programs in different environments with different cultures. Bowling Green State University, the University of Utah, and the University of Florida.

He's also had an opportunity to step away from the game and reflect back on the experiences that he has had to allow him to form the leadership skills that he has today.

As you all know, we're the total sum of experiences in life. He is without a shadow of a

doubt one of the premier leaders in football. It's represented in his record. But more importantly, it's represented in him, the man.

The other thing we were looking for is someone who was an outstanding coach, but outstanding recruiter, someone who understands that in the state of Ohio we're blessed to have great high school football coaches, great high school football coaches who create great programs, who young men have an opportunity to grow in and ultimately dream of the chance to go and play at a collegiate level.

We wanted a football coach who understood that, who would create the environment here with the aspiration for every single football player in the state of Ohio is to be a Buckeye and come to The Ohio State University and have no other thought.

Being from Ohio, born and raised, having an opportunity to coach here under Earl Bruce, fortunate enough to marry his boss from Ohio; he gets it. At different times in organizations, teams, groups, whatever, there's the right time for certain leaders. This is the right time for Urban Meyer to lead our football program.

He brings to our environment an understanding that to be a great leader you have to implement different styles of leadership, seamless and indifferent measure, depending on the business situation. His experiences afford him that opportunity to do that here.

We're blessed to have him as our football coach. Let me also take this opportunity to thank Luke Fickell. There's no question, we all know it, that Luke and this staff took on an unbelievable challenge to lead this football program through this particular year at this particular time, and he was the right leader for that time to lead this football program.

And I think we all saw it on the field of play, different situations at different times, that he responded. So I want to publicly thank Luke and the staff for taking on the challenge and leading these young men through this challenging season.

Coach Fickell will continue to be our coach for the Bowl game. He will be the head coach for the Bowl game. Coach Meyer will take on the task of forming his staff, putting together his organizational structure that fits his leadership style, and recruiting. But Luke Fickell will be our head coach for the football game.

I want to share with you a little information about the process because I know you have questions on that. Urban and I go back quite a ways and have known each other for a while.

Our first conversation about this job was on Sunday, November 20th. There was no previous conversations about this job until Sunday, November 20th.

We had a search committee that President Gee formed that included myself, President Gee; Chris Kelley, our Vice President and General Counsel; Jeff Kaplan, our Executive Vice President for Advancement and Special Assistant to the President; two trustees, Alex Shumate and Robert Schottenstein.

I took a slate of candidates to that group to discuss, and ultimately we vetted it down to Urban Meyer being the individual that we wanted to talk to, and I talked to him on November 20th. And ultimately we went to see him on November 23rd and spent time with him.

This past -- yesterday -- I'm forgetting what day it is -- yesterday, Sunday, we actually presented an offer to Urban Meyer for the job at The Ohio State University, and this morning he accepted it. And that is the process.

We're fortunate to have a man who gets it, who has great understanding of the rich history and tradition that is embedded in The Ohio State University and embedded in being a Buckeye. So I want to thank he and his family for taking on this leadership role. Congratulate them for coming home, because at the end of the day they're coming home to Ohio.

Let me introduce to you our head football coach, Urban Meyer.

(Applause)

COACH MEYER: Thanks, Gene. I'm deeply honored and humbled that Dr. Gee, the trustees, and Gene Smith have selected us to lead The Ohio State University football program.

It's a great opportunity to come back to my home state where I was born and where I grew up, where I went to school and met my wife, who was the Miss Junior Ross County Fair Queen, something like that, 19 -- what was it, Gene says 1983. That's exactly right.

I began my college coaching career at Ohio State in 1987, working for Hall of Fame

Coach Earle Bruce. My relationship with him is extremely close, second only to my father.

Every step of my career, every part of my family life, Coach Bruce has always been there. So close that he was graciously enough to speak at my father's funeral just last Friday.

I made the decision to step away from coaching a year ago to focus on family and determine if I could some day return to a profession that I love and I realized I missed so dearly last February.

I did that, after having an opportunity to work for ESPN, watch my kids compete, and also reflect and research on ways that I could improve.

ESPN has been an exceptional experience. And I'm grateful for the opportunity; and if it was but for the coaching position at The Ohio State University, I would not have coached this coming year.

I welcome the opportunity to once again work with the state of Ohio high school coaches and re-establish the many relationships that I had that existed the previous 25 years.

Our objective is simple: It's to make the state of Ohio proud; recruit student-athletes that will win in the classroom and win on the field.

I'm going to go about and try to assemble the best coaching staff in college football. Our goal is to compete and win Big Ten championships. I'd like to introduce my wife, Shelley, my son Nate, my sister Gisela - Gigi - and my brother-in-law Jim Escoe. Thank you very much, and I'll certainly answer questions for you.

GENE SMITH: Questions?

Q. Given what the program has been through in the last six months to a year, what's the biggest need? What's your first job? The on-field product or the conduct or the way this program carries itself off the field?

COACH MEYER: Well, I don't think it's broke. I've done a lot of research. I don't think Ohio State's broke. I think there's some obvious mistakes made on the grand scheme of things, mistakes that are very correctible.

My goal right now is to put together a fantastic recruiting class and I've had -- I've been very fortunate -- if you look back at the last 10 years of being head coach I've coached with arguably the best group of assistant coaches a good majority of them either been head coaches, they are head coaches now.

I think Ohio State deserves the best group of assistant coaches in America. Some will be on this staff. Some will be from anywhere in the

country. The calls I've been getting and people of interest in this great university is overwhelming.

So that's my focus right now. And I just met with the team. Had a great team meeting. Good-looking group of players. I asked them to play and be respectful of this great school of the coaching staff and go out and find a way to win a Bowl game. Have a good taste in your mouth and let's start on January 2nd moving forward.

Q. Healthwise, how are you? That was part of the reason you stepped down. And the contract is for six years, are you hoping to fulfill the entire six years?

COACH MEYER: Healthwise I feel great. I had a health scare a couple of years ago that made me sit back, reflect. I didn't feel right. But I feel fantastic now. And I gotta -- I just took that opportunity to do two things. First of all, get my health get my family -- I wanted to go spend time -- I missed so much of them growing up.

But I also went out and I researched and I spent time with colleagues, colleagues that I respect in this profession. And I don't want to be one of those guys that's sleeping in the office saying I missed this, I missed that.

Believe it or not there's lot of quality coaches out there that are still able to have a little bit of balance. I was proud I had balance for quite a while. I lost that near the end.

My health is in good shape. I've been checked out over and over again. I feel fantastic. And I'm ready to go.

Q. Did you think -- could you even wrap your mind around a year ago that you would be standing here now, and is it surreal that you are?

COACH MEYER: Well, a year ago I was -- in my mind I was convinced I was done coaching. I was concerned with health issues. Family. I just wanted to be around them.

Also I didn't like the state of college football. A lot of stuff going on. I'd hear about all kinds of things going on. And I just didn't want to be a part of that.

Then I moved away. Went on with ESPN. And I did a lot of travel, spent a lot of time with my kids. And then I didn't realize I'd miss it so bad.

I remember Shelley and I went for a walk one day, and I looked at her and I said: I don't think I can do this. She started rolling her eyes at me again. She's had to deal with me for 22 years, really 27 years.

But I said I want to do this again. I had no idea thinking it was going to be in a year. Certainly

Ohio State had a great football coach, great football program. If this was the one, then that would be the one.

But to answer your question, absolutely zero thought about coaching at Ohio State.

Q. What are you looking for in a coaching staff and which of the current staff members are you planning to keep and what role?

COACH MEYER: That's a great question. I think first thing you look at is fit. And fit means it's a Midwestern school. It competes in the Big Ten conference. You have to recruit Ohio and the surrounding areas. That's critical. Ohio background is key.

If you can find any guys with any kind of Ohio background; however, I would not put that in front of quality coach.

The players deserve -- the way I do it, if you're the best secondary coach in college football, I'm going to try to get you to come here coach at Ohio State. If you're the best offensive line coach, I'm going to do my very best to get you to come here.

I was very fortunate, in 2005 -- I know this is a little biased -- I think we put together the best coaching staff, group of assistant coaches maybe in college football history. I know that's a profound statement. But what those guys did, the recruits they brought in and the run that team went on, with the great players, the style of offense, defense and kicking game, my goal is to find that kind of group of coaches again.

Current staff, Luke Fickell -- I met Luke three years ago. I believe he came down -- as a matter of fact, it was before we played Ohio State in the '06 game. So it was spring of '06. Luke and Tim Beckman, a former coach of mine now at Toledo, obviously, came down. First time I met Luke. I watched his defenses over the years.

I have great respect. I know what kind of guy he is. He's an Ohio guy, a Buckeye. I knew him from afar. I watched closely how he handled the situation. I thought he's a man's man. Obviously he's everything that you hope for for a Ohio State former player.

I wanted to research what kind of coach he was. And I did a lot of research. I called some of the colleagues that have worked with him. I've watched his film over and over again. That's the greatest thing about coaching, it's very evaluation-friendly. And then I needed to meet with him.

So last night, Shelley and I -- and without

asking he brought his beautiful wife, Amy, and they sat with us three, almost four hours.

And I wanted to do the due process and due diligence, and we said we'll talk to -- I asked him to come back and have coffee with me 7:00 a.m.

Shelley and I prayed about it. We talked about it. We took our time. Next morning, we woke up. I looked at her again. She's a better judge of talent than I am. And there's no doubt I wanted him to be a part of this team. And he was very open and shook my hand, a big smile on his face, and we called Miss Amy and she was great. And it was a very good moment for Ohio State.

Q. How daunting is it that there's still NCAA final sanctions that haven't come down yet and it could entail a Bowl ban or additional scholarships that you might have to deal with next year?

COACH MEYER: I think that's where the faith and trust has to come in. I have great trust and faith in our athletic director and president, Dr. Gee and Gene here, that that conversation was had.

On my own, I did a little bit of research. But at the end of the day I asked the same question you did: Is there anything behind Door No. 2, 3, 4, and I feel very confident and have great trust that there's not.

We'll have to deal with the scholarship issue, and I have great trust that we will and we'll move forward.

Q. Urban, you have a reputation for being a very committed coach, a very intense coach. How much do you feel you will be pretty much the same guy you were at Florida or how much in the end do you think you'll be a little bit different in how you coach right now?

COACH MEYER: I coached at Florida I went through stages. I hope I'm the same guy -- not hope -- I will be the same guy that the beginning of the tenure. And that was a guy that did have balance, a guy that took care of himself, a guy that did not try to get involved and change everything.

I think as it rolled on, we were dealing with magical things there. I call it the pursuit of perfection. I think at the end of the day we all know there's no such thing. I fell victim to that.

And so I'm not going to -- I've been to a place I'm not going to go back. And I'm sure there's a lot of people in this room maybe been places they don't want to go. And I was there. I'm not going back.

Q. When you hear the name Braxton Miller, what goes through your mind?

COACH MEYER: I just met Braxton. And I wanted to meet Braxton. That was very important. All due respect, everybody in this room, that was the highlight of my day, not this.

Sitting there shaking hands with that good-looking quarterback with a nice smile and a very humble player. I watched him play throughout the year. I've watched him compete in the big game.

And to say to tell you I'm excited to coach him, I'm not using the correct adjectives. And because there's mixed company around I'm not going to use the correct adjectives, how excited I am.

So I think you get it, right? Really excited.

Q. What did you not like about college football that might have influenced your decision to step away, and how has it become more to your liking in the last 12 months?

COACH MEYER: That's hard. I want to say this the right way. I tried to do other people's jobs, because I'd sit in the staff room. I'd hear about all the nonsense going on and where were recruits, why they were going here, and what's going on.

That's age-old. And I tried to, maybe a fault, I think some things were going on, obviously there were, because all you do is read the newspapers for the last 12 months or last two years, and we all make mistakes, but willful and intentful mistakes I have a real problem with that.

I let that not destroy me, but ESPN -- we were at a little seminar this summer, and a guy made a great, gave a presentation. He talked about just keeping it in center field. ESPN does a great job keeping it in center field.

And I'm sitting doodling, making notes, my problem was I left center field. I tried to cure NCAA issues, started trying to cure agent issues, maybe drug issues, whatever. I went out of center field.

There's people that get paid a lot of money and very professional, that's their obligation and responsibility to fix those things.

And after spending time with the NCAA and evaluating and sitting back, and you know what, that's their job, that's not my job. So I'm going to go about it and keep it right in center field. And that's do what I do, enjoy doing, coaching guys like Braxton Miller and some of these great players here at Ohio State.

Q. How would you describe your style, what you want out of a football team if you had to put it into words? I've got two questions. I want to ask that one first.

COACH MEYER: I think go hard. I mean, like relentless. I want a bunch of coaches that coach like their hair's on fire, and I want a football team that goes four to six seconds of relentless effort. You do that, you have a chance to win in every game you play.

Go out and recruit some good players. The formula is real simple. Go recruit some really good players that know how to compete, are tough, go surround them with the best coaches in the country, you usually find a way to win a few games. That's the formula we're going to use here, and we're going to go really, really hard.

Q. When did Ohio State just put its feelers out to you? Obviously November 20th is when you sat down or when you got contacted formally. When did Ohio State first start making some contacts or vice versa?

COACH MEYER: Last Sunday. I mean, I got like a ridiculous amount of letters and e-mails, you're not talking about that, I don't know how people got my phone number. But I mean --

Q. Word out that you were being courted.

COACH MEYER: But it was some 12-year-old wearing Ohio State sweatshirts, I think. Come on, Coach, let's go. It was last Sunday.

Q. Coach, through the years, especially recently, too, coaches from your neck of the woods down in Florida have been able to come up to our area and grab recruits. There was one particular person in Springfield that Nick Sabin was able to come up and get to. What do you think you'll be able to bring to the Ohio State staff to prevent people from going out of state?

COACH MEYER: That's tough. The SEC is hot right now. And I've recruited against Alabama as well. They're hot. But so is Ohio State. So we're going to do -- that all goes back to our best recruiters, and I just talked to our players about that. First are them, then it's your group of assistant coaches that you bring in.

So I'm going to -- you put together the right staff, you can -- I'm not saying stop that -- but you can --

Q. What title will Luke have on the staff, and two-part, your take on the OSU/Michigan game?

COACH MEYER: Question number one, Luke, I don't want to speak before I'm ready to speak. It will be a significant title and significant position on our staff. Luke and I, we have not even had that conversation. We will shortly. Because I want his expertise in helping me put together the staff.

Second, obviously that's the game of games. That's the game that I grew up watching. It's a game that I thought teams, both teams played very hard. It's also a team that the next game is 362 days away.

So I understand the significance of it. And I remember my experience in that game was the first year when Jim Harbaugh guaranteed to win here in Ohio Stadium, and the second one was Coach Bruce's final game at Michigan, and we were able to beat Bo Schembechler and Michigan. So the one thing I know about that game, as much as there is dislike and hatred across college football in some rivalries, there's a share of that, but there's also a lot of respect in that rivalry, and I'm looking forward to coaching in it.

Q. You've had the rare opportunity to look at the football team you're about to coach with a critical eye from the broadcast booth. I wonder what deficiencies you maybe see as you come into this job in the football team and how you might attack those best in recruiting?

COACH MEYER: Well, I think Luke's better at that, because I didn't have a good feel of who is coming back, who is hurt. Nathan Williams, I got to see him. I think he's not a good player, I think he's a great player. He's kind of the heart and soul. When he went out, that hurt us, hurt Ohio State.

I think Braxton Miller is a difference-maker at quarterback. You can build a team around what I saw.

But until I get my hands on them, obviously end of spring I can be real detailed. So what I see I'm really going to lean on Coach Fickell. I've already had that discussion with him. He made the comment we need depth at linebacker and pick that position up a little bit.

And some other areas I'd rather not comment on until I get my hands on it, though.

Q. You've had the good fortune everywhere you've gone as a head coach to have a good, inherit a good quarterback or

great quarterback. Josh Harris at BG and Alex Smith at Utah, and Chris Leak, and now Braxton. Can you talk about how that makes a job easier coming in the door when you have somebody like Josh Harris?

COACH MEYER: Josh Harris is right there, by the way. I'd like to think that -- I kind of -- that's not why you select a job. However, when you are getting ready to make a decision, you do look at that, because you don't have time to really build a program nowadays. You need to get going and find a way to win.

And I watched Braxton very close. But what that means -- at Bowling Green obviously it meant instant success. Josh was a tailback, converted to quarterback, that ended up being one of the best players I've ever been around.

Obviously that guy, that little skinny guy at Utah, Alex, is doing fine in the NFL now and great player, great competitor. And then Chris Leak, what a magical player. And obviously the guy that came behind him.

So we've been blessed to have some great quarterbacks. And I'm really thinking this guy can be -- I'm putting a lot of pressure on this cat already -- but he's special. What I've seen on film he's special.

Q. Urban, given your health issues and your situation at Florida, did you have any second thoughts at all about coming to a program like this where you've obviously been here before and you know the interest and the magnitude of the coverage and all that stuff?

COACH MEYER: Yes, second, third, fourth, fifth, a lot of thoughts. There's no people more important than my three children and my wife. They had some second thoughts. We had a meeting. As a matter of fact, I showed Gene this not too long ago. This is a contract that my kids made me sign before I was allowed to sign a real contract.

It's tougher than any other contract I've signed in my life. So, yeah, a lot of thought. I don't want to spend all day talking about that, but I feel very blessed to be able to stand here, to know where I was and where I don't want to go again. And maybe help others.

Because what's amazing in this profession I found out a lot of guys, you just -- not just this profession, what are we talking about, this is an age-old problem about the executive or the doctor or the lawyer or the teacher, the professor, the policeman that just gets so enamored or so consumed by their profession that they forget really

the purpose of our whole deal is, and that's to raise a wonderful family.

And so Gene and I have talked about this. There's ways to, whether it be teaching class, whether speaking, writing a book or whatever, that's part of the issues we deal with today, is when you see people too consumed with their profession that they let things go at home and then that costs them down the road.

So I don't want to get too philosophical on you, but that played a major role. When you said second, third, fourth discussion, that was a big part of it.

Q. First of all, two-part question. Have you made any determination at all on Mike Vrabel and his presence or absence on the staff to come?

COACH MEYER: I have not. I look forward to it. I have not met with Mike yet. I'm going to soon. I'm a big Vrabel fan.

I don't know him as a coach. I'm going to go watch a little bit. I have the ability to go watch. A that's never recruited. He played for a great friend of mine. I'm eventually reach out to Coach Belichick when it's time. But Luke Fickell would be the best expert on that because he's worked with him all season. And I'm going to lean on him quite a bit for this.

Q. Also different body type obviously between Tebow and Braxton, one's like a fullback and one is kind of a scat back, but how many similarities are there?

COACH MEYER: I don't know. I like the way he throws. I think he's a ridiculous athlete. But you can stop ridiculous athletes by loading you up. And I like his delivery.

We'll have some great conversation throughout spring practice and after spring. But I'm just real excited. I think he could be special.

Q. How do you describe your style in terms of a disciplinary coach when you lay down the law to your players to do the right thing; how do you go about doing that? What's your style? Can you tell us about that?

COACH MEYER: Great question. I know there's been some issues that we've had that I've had to deal with, not that we're proud of. We have a set of core values. Honesty, respect. Number one, treat everyone with respect. Number two, no drugs, no stealing, no weapons. Those are core value issues. You're either dismissed or you miss a good bunch of time playing the game.

Most everything else are mistakes. Sometimes you're in a college town where things get -- anything -- all of a sudden it's on the front page of the paper. So the issues we had -- I see numbers of arrests and the numbers I see are exaggerated.

I know what we've had to deal with. If we had one, that's too many. Our job as a coaching staff is to mentor, to discipline and to educate young people. And we've had a pretty good track record. We ran some bumps in the road at the University of Florida.

Does that mean we had bad kids? I'll fight that forever. No, absolutely not, we did not have bad guys. Did they make stupid mistakes. Yeah, I've made a few stupid mistakes. We're going to correct them. We're going to go really hard and try to recruit really good people to represent Ohio State. That does not mean we're going to give up on kids. So that's kind of the belief we have here.

Q. My question is I've been from Ohio. I grew up Ohio, was born here, raised. From the time I knew what Ohio State was I've always wanted to come here, Ohio State has been my passion. My question to you s how long has it been your dream to be standing up there right now?

COACH MEYER: You were pretty passionate. That's good. You went for about a minute telling us how much you loved Ohio State. As far back as I can remember.

The one thing I do remember is walking -- Thanksgiving time and walking around, and we had to go shopping. And I was with my mom for something. I remember the loud speakers in Ashtabula, Ohio. They were playing the Woody Hayes versus Bo Schembechler, Ohio State versus Michigan. I was enamored. The whole city shut down. That's all they listened to, as far back as I can remember. Other than those 60 minutes in Glendale.

I've always followed the Buckeyes, though. I will say this: My six years in Florida, Florida was my dream job. Everybody says: Is Ohio State your dream job? That's a term that's thrown around really loosely. To say I was this big and wanted to coach at Florida. No, I'm not from Florida. The way Coach Spurrier and the way I really became a huge fan, I wanted to coach there.

I will always be a Gator, will always be a part of that situation. Jeremy Foley, had a great conversation with him today and yesterday. Bernie Machen, the president down there, is one of my great friends. However, this is my home state. And it's great to be back home.

Q. Let me follow up with a tradition. You have a portrait of Woody Hayes in your house. And I think as a kid you wore No. 45. You were here the year before Coach Hayes died. Did you ever have a chance to talk with him, meet him here, speak, anything of that nature?

COACH MEYER: I sure did. I went over to the ROTC building and met with him. My wife Shelley is from Chillicothe. We were at a recruiting dinner at the Scarlet and Gray Golf Course.

We were sitting there. Coach Hayes was in a wheelchair, wasn't doing very good. She asked me, she said: Let's go meet Coach Hayes. About 30 people in line. Near the end of recruiting. I said: I'll bring you over to his office some time. I still regret that to this day. So does she, that she never had a chance to meet Coach Hayes.

But to say -- a fan is not a strong enough word. To think I admired him, yes, and there's always been a portrait in my house of Coach Hayes. And obviously my mentor, Coach Bruce, is here as well.

So it goes back real thick, real strong and real thick, the admiration I have for Coach Hayes and Coach Bruce.

Q. Do you remember your first time in Ohio Stadium and if you can reflect on that for me?

COACH MEYER: You know, I don't. I believe it was Tom Cousineau had some ridiculous amount of tackles, like a 30-tackle game. Might have been a Michigan game. That was so long ago. But I remember the stadium very well.

I came back this year. And I was with my teammate Chris Spielman, who is here today and a great friend. And the band came out. And I used to sneak out when I was a GA here at Ohio State. And we had the old locker room.

And I knew exactly, it was, what, 12:15 or there's a game clock in the locker room. And I would always know, it was like 16:36 when the band would come out. Coach Bruce would doing his stuff. I would look at the clock, shoot down the stairs and just watch the band come out, play across the field, march across the field.

And so I haven't been back since 1988 in that stadium against Akron. I'm up there with Chris and Dave Pass, getting ready to broadcast that game, and that band came out of that tunnel, I was wiping tears out of my eyes and all the memories came back.

Q. Do you think that you can lead Ohio State with its current personnel to a national championship within the next few years? And also you've won a couple of national championships and one being against Ohio State. What would it mean for you to bring a national championship back to Columbus?

COACH MEYER: Wow. I'm just trying to get to tomorrow, man. I'm trying to go make some recruit calls tonight and I'll get to know these guys.

So with all due respect, wow, I don't know. I'm going to try to really put together a good coaching staff and do the best we can.

Q. Earl Bruce, I believe, called his own plays. Are you going to call plays? Are you going to have an offensive coordinator? Your thoughts on that and running the spread. People are pretty excited about that.

COACH MEYER: We're going to hire an offensive coordinator. One of the issues that I'm dealing with right now is my guys are all gone. Everybody has their little coaching tree. And mine -- the Bowling Green Utah crew, they're all, one's at Michigan, Greg Madison, great football coach, and a bunch of head coaches all around the country. So I'm going to go and have to find a guy.

We're going to run the spread. The spread is also going to have some I formation pro style in it which we've always done, we'll try to adapt it the best we can. The good thing is we have a tight end here, with Jake. And some big backs. You try to adapt to what you've got.

So it's going to be some spread elements. But there's also going to be other stuff involved. I will hire a play caller offensive coordinator. I will call plays myself and be very involved in that like I've done in the past. But I need to hire a really good offensive coordinator, and I've been blessed to have some great ones.

Q. Obviously all of Ohio very important, but can you talk about how important it is to recruit in the Cleveland area?

COACH MEYER: I'm from Ashtabula. I know Cleveland very well. I've recruited Ohio. In my opening comments, I mentioned my respect I have. I started my career as a high school coach in Cincinnati Saint X. I loved these coaches here. It's a state where you have a high school coaches association, several thousand coaches show up to it.

Football is really, really important in the state of Ohio. Cleveland, Ohio, Columbus, Cincinnati, this is as good of football as there is in

America. It's certainly well coached as any in America.

So to say that I'm excited to go recruit Cleveland is not a strong enough statement. I'll be on the phone tonight with a couple of guys. I can't wait to get back involved in that.

Q. The SEC has dominated college football. You were a part of that. We hear the Big Ten's too slow, they're not fast enough. Just your thoughts having coached against them, and now coaching Ohio State out of the Big Ten, having to take down the SEC, how true are those statements, and where does it have to get better here?

COACH MEYER: I think football -- that's a great question. That's the obvious that SEC right now is dominant. It's a faster league than the Big Ten. Does it mean it's a better league? When they win, I think it's five straight national titles. The top three were all in one division west. Yeah, it's the best conference in college football. Does it mean the Big Ten's far behind? I don't think it's that far.

I think you'll see the game change again. It changes all the time. There was a time where the Big 12 was pushing the SEC for who had the best team. So I see what the coach is doing at Michigan. I see other teams making -- Wisconsin making progress.

There's a lot of good stuff going into this conference. How far off we are? I think Ohio State, the team that I saw getting ready to play the Sugar Bowl year, last year, that was -- I don't want to use that term but it was SEC speed, that was a great football team. I was blown away because I didn't really get to watch them. So I don't think the Big Ten's that far off. I think you're going to see that gap closed I hope quickly.

Q. A lot of Buckeye fans right now watching this press conference will be watching it for the next couple of days. What would you like to say to them?

COACH MEYER: It's great to be home. And the same thing I told the players a little bit ago, is that I realize those players didn't choose me. I chose them. So I chose to pack up and move the most precious things in my life, and that's my family, to back home.

And it's a decision I'm very proud of, a decision that was not thought of overnight; a decision that had a lot of prayer, a lot of research. At the end of the day, to tell you we're excited to be back, once again, is not a strong enough

statement. We're grateful to be welcomed back home.

Q. You referenced a couple of times your admiration for Coach Hayes, Coach Bruce. Can you explain how your offensive philosophy evolved in stark contrast to theirs?

COACH MEYER: Ask the man himself. He's sitting right back there. Jon Gruden, who became a good friend, and I had long discussions about this.

There's different elements of spread offenses. You can say Texas Tech and all these different spread offenses. The one thing that our offense that we always tried to take great pride in is Big Ten I formation power football. We just do it from a unique formation, sometimes do it with a 240-pound quarterback.

But the same -- if you look at our plays, it's the same plays that I was brought up on, split zone and off-tackle power. That's a staple here at Ohio State.

Sometimes motion and fake a jet sweep, but we're still running hard, aggressive downhill football at you. We've added elements to it.

But if you really cut it down and watch film and study, it's still I formation football. Just from a unique set of formations. It's just trying to be creative and outnumber people. That's all it is.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Meyer, thank you very much. (Applause).

Questions for Gene Smith.

Q. Will there be any academic requirement changes, has anything changed in terms of academic standards for recruits?

GENE SMITH: No. The only changes that are in place obviously are the NCAA rules that were recently voted in. But nothing from The Ohio State University.

Q. Can you shed any light on NCAA rulings? Were you given any indication? Will it be by the end of the year? Will it be within a week? Can you narrow it down just a little bit?

GENE SMITH: We're hopeful somewhere in mid-December we'll have a response.

Q. And when you were in negotiations, talking to Urban, were you able -- does the NCAA give you any insight into what they're thinking or anything you can tell him?

GENE SMITH: No. Obviously we can't speculate on what they will do. All we can do is look at precedence, look at cases. Some of you know we looked at cases from January 1, 2007

that were similar to us and looked at rulings relative to those, that's actually what drove us to imposing some of the sanctions that we ultimately came up with.

So I'm not certain what they'll do. So we'll just have to wait and see.

Q. I just wondered are you still (inaudible)?

GENE SMITH: When you look at all previous cases, there's no precedences. There were a couple of those more egregious than ours. And I'm hopeful we won't have that.

Q. Were you able to get on the teleconference with the NCAA this week? Are you still going to go to the Committee on Infractions in December?

GENE SMITH: We're not required to be at the Infractions Committee in December.

Q. How confident are you that Coach Meyer's going to be able to fulfill this contract given some of the health issues in the past?

GENE SMITH: Urban and I and his wife and family, we had great conversations about his health issues. You guys heard him explain what he went through. We had a great deal of research done on him. And I feel confident that we'll work very hard to make sure we meet the requirement of his daughter's contract.

And we will make sure he has balance in his life. I think if you really listen to him, at the end of the day that's something that he needs. And I am one of those athletic directors that believes in that.

I will work very hard to make sure he has balance. He'll definitely go see his daughters play volleyball. There will be no excuse. I've heard them all in my tenure about relative to why someone can't take a vacation. That's why they call it vacation. It's unacceptable. So I am pretty dogged on making sure that he has the balance that affords him the opportunity to lead our young men.

Q. One of the questions that Urban answered was the difference between the Big Ten and the SEC. And one thing the SEC's been willing to do is invest in their assistant coaches. Is Ohio State willing to go to SEC levels in terms of how much money they will invest in assistant coaching staff?

GENE SMITH: We'll put in place the resources necessary to attract the staff that Urban

feels he needs.

Q. Can you elaborate on that?

GENE SMITH: No.

Q. You said a year and a half ago that you really didn't want to get into that kind of --

GENE SMITH: What year was that? 2011? Was that 2009 I said that?

Q. What has changed?

GENE SMITH: Age and maturity and competition.

Q. Were there any other candidates that were contacted or formally interviewed?

GENE SMITH: No. I had a slate that I'd been considering for a while through the summer and did some serious soul searching throughout the season. Talked to a number of people. Never talked to another candidate.

Q. As Urban was being considered, did you feel good about the idea that he would want to come here, or how much persuading did Ohio State have to do to get him to come back into coaching and take this job?

GENE SMITH: It was interesting. That Sunday, we had a great conversation. And obviously we've had former players who had a relationship with him who had been sending me messages that, you know, you ought to talk to him. And so I felt comfortable when I did talk to him that I'd have a great entrée into the conversation.

So I want to thank those former players for sending me texts and all that type of stuff. But I feel confident when I was first made that contact that we have a good discussion.

And so once we got into it, he was pretty passionate about it. Then we had -- obviously I had a series of questions many of you asked here today, that I needed to vet.

And I spent a lot of time that Sunday night, Monday, Tuesday, and then ultimately when we met with him on Wednesday, hard, hard conversations face to face for the first time.

So I wasn't sure really until we got there Wednesday and looked him in the eye and met Shelley. Shelley was in the room and actually talked through really what he talked about today.

Okay. This guy's actually prepared to come back into it the right way. So kind of a long way to answer your question, but that's really what happened.

Q. Gene, was having the current staff handle the Bowl game really the only way to go about this? And how much impact will Coach Meyer have, game plan, things along those lines as far as the Bowl game is concerned?

GENE SMITH: All of you have seen it, I've seen it. I've handled it before, seen it in different ways. And I just felt with this staff and this team, and we're fortunate, rarely do you have a chance to have your new head coach come on this way, this fast, without a staff. So it's slightly unique compared to other experiences. So it affords you an opportunity to look at it differently. So I felt that this staff was the right staff to coach this team.

And particularly knowing that Urban really wanted to hopefully have a conversation with Luke, and he was hopeful going into that conversation that they would click, hit it off and Luke would ultimately still be here. So that gave me a little edge obviously. And so I just felt that this was the right way to do it. And in all likelihood there could be some of those staff members who ultimately pursue other opportunities and we'll have to deal with that when it occurs.

It will be a little fluid in that regard, but we can manage it.

Q. (Question off microphone)

GENE SMITH: Urban, nothing. We'll separate Urban from coaching this team. The reality is he will -- he'll go to practice on occasion. But he will focus on building his staff, building his organization and recruiting. He will not be involved in game planning.

Q. (Question off microphone)

GENE SMITH: You know, it's funny. I've heard that, I've never really thought of it that way. I really haven't. We've had issues that we should not have, and we need to operate differently to avoid those in the future. I would never ever, ever hope that things would happen to another school, at another school to make our situation minimized.

So I've never looked at it that way. I understand what you're saying, but other people can probably project that, but I would never ever say that and I never thought it that way.

It's unfortunate what's happened at those schools. And I would wish that on no school. So thank you guys for coming, appreciate your patience. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports