

**Media Day 8/8/2011**  
**Quoting Coach Graham**

**Opening Statement:**

“It’s finally here and it was an exciting day for us. We needed every second of every minute to prepare for this day. I’m really excited and I feel great about the commitment from our team not only from our existing players but also from the incoming freshmen. This is the best opportunity I have ever had in my life and this is the best group of people I have ever been around. I think our guys have really bought into what we are doing. We had a great summer program and were able to get a lot accomplished. The conditioning we were doing in our last year at Tulsa we were able to get done here in one year so that already tells you a lot about our team. We have our veteran practice this afternoon and our newcomer practice was held this morning, which includes new players as well as the incoming freshmen. We are adding speed and explosiveness to each practice and working toward winning a championship. The key is to getting better every single week and our focus is to first beat Buffalo. We will then continue to work on improving after each game. This team has grown so much over this past summer as both people and players. I am very blessed to work here and be supported by the people I have on my staff.”

**On Bryan Murphy:**

“Bryan Murphy will redshirt because he is academically ineligible. I am disappointed for him and our team, but he will redshirt and continue to help out with the team during the season. We would like to have Murphy but we’re moving forward and I feel confident in the guys that we have now.”

**On Brandon Lindsey:**

“Brandon Lindsey will play the “Panther” position and that was really our plan all along. We have Greg Williams and Todd Thomas on the other side playing what we call our spur position. We will move Brandon around because we’re very multiple in what can do and we will adapt to what our guys can do for the upcoming season. We’re excited for what Brandon is capable of and how he will be able to impact the quarterback. We have a good-looking bunch of kids and we are excited about what we’re going to be able to accomplish defensively.

“We will move players around a lot. We basically want to get guys in different positions and have them be able to play about three techniques. The main focus is speed no matter what position. Brandon will be the main guy who impacts the quarterback. We’ll move him around and make sure he adapts comfortably to what he’s doing. He’s pretty excited about standing up and he is a really good athlete. K’Waun Williams will also be special in that position.”

**On positions:**

“Just a couple of things to make note of are that Kevin Adams moved to playing offense to our three-back position. Dan Mason and Derrick Burns are not participating in practice but are making improvements to work hard and get back every day. Incoming freshman, Steve Williams had surgery so he will be redshirting and is out for the season. Also, Brendon Felder did not get his waiver so he will be unable to participate this year.”

**On the potential of this program:**

“I’m here along with my staff to win a championship. The expectations are high because we knew coming here that Pittsburgh is known as the City of Champions and that our main goal would be to win a championship. We have yet to win a game but we expected all along to come here and get a championship. My expectations of course are to win every single game. This is the best place I have ever worked because of the great staff and people that surround me. Every day I come to work, there is not one person who is not excited about this new program and who does not have a good attitude. There are going to be a lot of close football games but we are working toward a championship and I am excited about that.”

**On a position battled between Greg Williams and Todd Thomas:**

“There will be a position battle at every position. We think we have a lot of guys competing and if Greg Williams is one of them then we already know that he had a tremendous summer. We watch closely at films to look at each player’s skills and make sure we are adapting to those skills in order to ensure they are in the correct positions. We are especially excited about the outside positions and both Greg Williams and Todd Thomas will be competing for the “Spur” position. Both of them are big, powerful guys. We also have Brandon Lindsey in the “Panther” position so we are very excited about where we’re at right now.”

**On this morning’s practice:**

“I was very impressed with our receivers and their speed this morning. They started off working very hard and then the pace got to them a little bit. I was pleased with both the running back and receiver position and the speed they maintained throughout practice. Trey Anderson, a walk-on quarterback showed some really good things in his first day. We also feel good about the guys up front and how they developed over the summer. In my opinion, there is not one kid in our program who has not improved over the summer.”

**On this upcoming season:**

“I made a commitment to our seniors earlier in the spring that we are going to do whatever it takes to win a football game. We have a plan and that plan is to get better every single day and on every single rep. I am not the guy who is going to redshirt a player but if a young man is able to help us win football games then we are going to do

what is best for the team first. For freshmen, I think the mental maturity is the most difficult part and there are a lot of adjustments for them to make so it will have to take a really mature kid to step up, but I think we have players who can compete to do that for our team. I feel good about the nucleus of this team and for a kid to come in and start as a freshman, he will have to be really special to do so. I don't want to point out too many guys on the first day because they don't know what they are exactly doing yet. Overall, the group of freshmen did a great job and I was very impressed with our whole team."

### **On Zach Brown:**

"The best thing that Zach Brown brings us is the type of person that he is. He brings great leadership and character. He is a very special guy and the young man has a strong faith. From day one he was already breaking down our kids at the end of practice. He is a down hill power back and we are excited to have that in our system."

### **Expectations for Ray Graham and the season:**

My expectation for Ray Graham is for him to be the best player in the country. You can not be a physical football team by being cautious and worrying about someone like Ray getting hurt. We will be efficient with Ray and smart about what were doing, but if you want to be physical you need to practice physical.

"We're going to try and get the ball in the hands of our best players as much as possible. It is not about one person or the other but how the team operates together. The key is to win championships. We need our returning seniors to be the core of this team and keep the change. In fact, we have shirts that we are wearing to emphasize that exact mentality: "Keep the Change." We need our players to be willing to sacrifice, willing to commit and making sure they keep the change because we do not want to revert back to old habits. The key is to stick to the new system we've put in place. We respect and honor what has been done in the past but we want a different result and that is a championship."

### **On Tino Sunseri:**

For Tino Sunseri the key is for him to be efficient especially when he needs to make plays that are three or four times farther than what he was used to in the past. I have been very impressed with him and he continues to get better every single day. Tino really studies the game and is dedicated to our new system. As the quarterback, especially in this system in my opinion, is the most difficult position but I have great confidence in him. The offense will be able to operate at full potential as long as we don't turn the football over. Our main goal is to get 80-plus plays but every time we turn the ball over that is about five less plays. As long as we don't turn it over then we will get about 80 plays and have the opportunity to score 30 or more points. The key is to not operate outside of the system and I have the confidence that Tino will not do that."

**On the offensive line:**

“I am anxious to see Ryan Turnley at center. Jordan Gibbs and Lucas Nix also have a chance to be something really special on the outside. I think the main deal is the center position and we have a lot of confidence in Chris Jacobson to fill that position. If Turnley comes along we will move Jacobson back out to guard but if Matt Rotheram comes to guard then we will move Jacobson back to center. Those are the guys I am anxious to see as well as Arthur Doakes and Cory King who both had a tremendous summer so we have a lot of confidence in them and we are very excited about the whole group. We basically need to develop one more out front but so far we have a good core group.”

**On Coaching:**

“The preseason polls and picks don’t mean much to me until you go out and play the games. It does mean one thing though that who ever they pick first they have a lot of respect for. But right now the Big East has a lot of unknowns so we will have to wait and see about the other picks. In my opinion, leadership wins the tough games and that is where good coaching will come in to play. I am excited to go against Buffalo and then go from there. All the opportunities I have had to take on have presented new challenges but this one I have the most confidence in because of our team’s dedication to this program. I am not worried about the preseason polls but instead I want the last poll of the year for our team to be champs of the Big East Conference and for us to be heading to the Sugar Bowl.

“I am a fundamentalist and I believe you need to get 11 tough guys who will do what they’re told when you tell them to do it. You need guys who are tough and who will pull it together when it keeps getting harder and trust in what their doing which is uncommon. I think we have guys that will continue to improve and be able to do this. You practice so many practices and play so few games. You need to keep pushing your players to keep getting back up. It boils down to blocking, tackling and efficiency. You win by putting your players in the best position they can play. You put a player in the correct position and they will make the right plays. I just want to go out in September and start off our record at 1-0 and then go from there. The hard games will be good for us if we win them. As long as you can figure out how to do that, then that is the key. Our conference schedule is very challenging but I am happy with the eight home games. The key for us this season is to stay healthy. If you look at any champion it really comes down to those last three or four ball games and our main goal is to come out of this season with a championship.”

**On the new system:**

“I wouldn’t say every player has bought into our system. The players with the key roles and who are playing most have really bought into our new system. About 70-75% of them have bought into what we are doing. Some of them are still waiting to see and some are still trying to adjust as freshmen for the upcoming fall. I believe in relationships and

the only way to make these guys buy into what were doing is to inspire them. We will continue to do that by coaching them, making them work hard and look after them. I think the end result will help us win a championship.”

**On practice conditions:**

“I like being here in Pittsburgh because it is easier to practice in August then it was in Tulsa. I don’t like the heat and I will tell you that I don’t think it helps players because it only wears them out more. I like practicing at night and that is what I used to do when I was coaching down south. We need to practice physical, keep our players healthy and not wear them out. I don’t necessarily believe practicing in the heat is important. Instead what I think is important to have days off especially Sundays to go to church and recharge. Time is the biggest enemy we have right now and trying to develop that closeness as a team is most important.”

**On defense:**

“We have a bunch of interior linemen and we have adapted to get more of those players on the football field. We will play seven people at least or possibly eight. Chas Alecxi is someone we want to play every play he is able to at full potential. As a whole team I believe our greatest strength is our interior defensive linemen. With a leader like Myles Caragein, the experience and savvy of Chas Alecxi and the explosiveness from guys like K’Waun Williams and Aaron Donald is a combination of great quality players that will help lead us to a championship. It is exciting to have guys like that playing for our team.”