



## Offensive line adjusts to new blocking schemes, increased speed

As Mark Myers walked into the interview room to speak with media after Tuesday afternoon's session of spring drills, the redshirt freshman quarterback leaned momentarily against the wall to catch his breath.

"I feel like I lost 10 pounds today," he said, smiling. "Things are moving pretty fast out there."

And for the players blocking for Myers and the rest of the Pitt playmakers?

"Oh yeah," he added. "I'm sure they're feeling it too."

With all the talk about a high-speed, no-huddle offense, the immediate thought for many fans is about the quarterback maintaining his accuracy on the move and the receivers and running backs keeping up with the pace and showing the ability to move the ball down the field with a high level of success. The players up front

making the blocks for the Panthers, though, have to be just as much on their game. That means the largest players on the field – the offensive linemen – have been adjusting to Pitt's new pace while balancing new blocking assignments and schemes

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*Chris Jacobson - Offensive Lineman - Senior*

at the same time.

"There are definitely big differences," said senior Lucas Nix, a two-year starter on the line. "But actually, for us linemen, things are a little bit more simplified with our schemes. That doesn't make it any easier, because the schemes are obviously different than we've had in the past, so we need to adjust. We're learning all of the concepts and getting used to that now."

Through four spring practices, all areas of the team are increasing their speed and consistency during each drill. And for the quarterbacks, running backs and receivers to sprint to the line and get the play call in, the linemen need to be in

place already, preparing to snap the ball and move up the field. Quarterback Tino Sunseri mentioned on Tuesday that the line is making great strides forward and seems to be "ready to go" at all times.

"You really have to be right on point," said senior guard Chris Jacobson. "It's a quick cadence and a go. You run to the ball, get set and the play happens. Then you do it again. It gets tiring, but we're going to be in

shape and getting it done. Up front, everybody is on the same page.

"It's natural to get tired and start to feel it, but the coaches have shown us you have to fight the urge and overcome the adversity. We talk about it – and do that – all the

time."

Aside from changing their playing tendencies and adapting to a new offense, Jacobson, Nix and the offensive line are also adapting to new personnel lined up on the ball. Left tackle Jason Pinkston and center Alex Karabin were both seniors last season, meaning there's new chemistry on the line. Jordan Gibbs, Greg Gaskins and Jack Lippert each have experience from last season,

but the coaching staff is constantly trying new mixtures at each position, working in some of the younger players at the same time.

Pitt coach Todd Graham mentioned on Tuesday that the last few years mean nothing when it comes to the 2011 season. He added that the best players, no matter what they did or didn't do last season, will play when Buffalo rolls into Heinz Field for Pitt's opening-day matchup Sept. 3.

"There's some good competition and it's helping everyone improve," Nix said. "Right now it might seem a little bit slow for us, but we are going through the same changes everyone else is. We're doing something completely different than we've done the last few years. Our steps and calls are different. But once we get it done for sure, you'll really see us pound the ball, go at full speed and move the football."