

Pitt Head Football Coach Todd Graham
Spring Football, Day 1
March 15, 2011

Opening Statement

"It was a very exciting first day. I could feel the player's anxiety as we kicked it off in the indoor practice field. The practice was high octane, high energy and very fast paced. I told the guys about half way through the practice that we had played around half a quarter. We had more snaps than the guys were used to and I was very impressed with how they handled that."

"The quarterback position really impressed me today with the management of the football and how they threw the ball today. As you can tell we have a veteran group up front so very little mistakes were made."

"Hubie Graham was one of the players that stood out to me as a guy who can really run at the three back position. Also, Mike Shanahan was another guy who stood out to me as a receiver. I was most impressed with the fact that our guys were able to throw the ball 50 yards down the field and make the passes. We were hitting the deep ball so I was excited about that. Naturally the players were not wearing helmets yet so instead we were telling them to take it easy. I was very impressed with the first day."

"Our number one goal in the spring is to develop a tempo that is very fast and efficient. I was very impressed offensively with the first day. For special teams, we have two kickers: Kevin Harper and Mike Yoklic as punters and kickers who have tremendous legs. As a coaching staff we were concerned without having the kicker from last year, but today showed great potential for our special teams."

"Also, the defensive line has a chance to become something really special. They really adapted to the attack mode and were extremely active today. The cornerback position will be very important when building up pressure. The two safeties, Jason Hendricks and Jarred Holley, you can tell they have had a lot of playing time, which as a coaching staff we're all impressed with today. Holley as a quarterback today helped with getting everyone lined up and was very efficient."

"Max Gruder and Tristan Roberts are two players you can tell really had some time inside. A couple other guys that stood out to me that are in kind of a new position that you may not be as used to are Eric Williams and Kevin Adams who were in helmets and both very impressive today. Overall, it was not a good first day it was actually a great first day."

On whether there was anxiety on the first day:

"I'm pretty comfortable and what gives me great peace and confidence is personnel and I have a great coaching staff. My job is to dictate the vision, the attitude, and the energy at practice so I tend to be very involved as you can see and even get on both sides of the football. Overall, I have a lot of confidence in myself, the great teachers out there, and we have some great young players on this team."

"I told the players after practice that about 90 percent of the guys have bought into what we're trying to teach them even though it is different. We had some fun and even a few laughs because the practice was fast paced and a few things would get out of order. We really focused on building relationships and trust with the players, which they all responded to very well. This is a tough sport and we need to focus on developing tough players. In the end, I want the smartest, toughest and most disciplined team out there. I know they have the potential to be all three so I am anxious to get going and start practicing with pads this coming Saturday."

On the quarterback position:

"We had the most information on Tino Sunseri compared to the other players. You can tell he is an experienced player with how he listens and takes on the role of a leader. The standard for quarterback is

different than any other position out there so we expect the most from him. Tino has to be our leader and I was very impressed with how he responded to his role at practice today. He was very efficient with throwing the football. He caught on in a hurry and is a very seasoned player. Most importantly, he is very eager to learn and exceeded my expectations for today's practice."

"(Mark) Myers and (Anthony) Gonzales both threw great passes today that would get any of you excited. They both put great spin on the ball and are very athletic players. Kolby (Gray) also shows a lot of potential too even though it has been awhile since he has been in the quarterback position."

On the mental aspect of the game:

"I believe the most important part of the game is the mental part of it. I don't think we are anywhere close to the physical part of it, but we have made great progress mentally. I made sure to point out to the players halfway through the practice how tired the defense and all the players looked already.

"Our whole strategy for these practices is to mentally and physically wear out our players so we can dominate the second half of the game. We spend a lot of time coaching detail, and I try to focus less on what the players say and more on their body language. I am trying to teach them it is how you do the little things that matter especially when things are not going well. We spent about 90 percent of today's practice on the mental aspect of the game."

On the players:

"Carl Fleming stood out to me today with his standing up (at the "Panther" position), which allows him to be a more explosive pass rusher. It gives us the chance to move him around and allows him to be more multiple. We play with a three technique so it gives us the chance to move players like him around. We want guys like him who are explosive. We train Fleming to stand up and impact the quarterback in order to accentuate his skills."

"Brandon Sacco had some snaps today which showed us his potential for the upcoming practices and season. He needs to mature mentally and physically with the rest of our players but he shows great promise. Also, Greg Gaskins had a few snaps today so we might take a little look into him more."

"The four seniors are mature players who have really embraced our coaching philosophy and how we do things."

On Mike Cruz:

"Yesterday, we suspended Mike Cruz for violating team rules and he decided to leave the program so he will no longer be apart of it."