

Pitt Head Football Coach Todd Graham Spring Football Day 5

“Thursday practice, for the first time today, it really started to resemble what we’re trying to do offensively. The offense really had the upper hand today, it was dominating today. There was 100% ball security with the first team offense – they did not turn the ball over for the first time today. I think the best day we had before now, was about four or six turnovers with each unit. I’m very impressed with that effort today.

“**Tino Sunseri** had an outstanding day, he’s really starting to grasp everything and pick it up. I like how all three quarterbacks are students of the game. They’re studying and working hard. **Kolby Gray** moving over – what an unbelievable team guy. In just two days he has really showed up, is going to compete for play at the free safety spot. In two days he’s over there making plays, running all over the field. He’s a guy that stuck out to me. The two young guys up front in K.K. (**Khaynin Mosley-Smith**) and **Aaron Donald** – I call them prodigy one and prodigy two. I think that they are both unbelievably talented.

“What I’m most excited about with these kids is that I really believe that they are buying into what we’re doing. I like this bunch of guys. We’re excited; it was a good day today. For the first time Saturday we’re going to put the headsets on, tape those wrists and ankles up and scrimmage a little bit, see what game day is going to be like. It’s going to be exciting Saturday. We’re really pleased. I’m excited and it’s going back and forth. That’s where it needs to go. The offense is completely different. We’re different on both sides, but it’s completely different on offense. Guys are adapting. You look out there and you see guys that are limited, who aren’t even out there. Guys like **Brandon Lindsey, Greg Williams, Todd Thomas** – we have a lot of guys that are limited. Guys who are not able to go through contact drills and things like that. I’m very impressed with where we’re at right now.”

On the linebackers:

“You can’t have too many ‘Panther’ linebackers. The way we look at things is different. We have three interior people with our three-technique: our nose guard, our inside linebackers, our Sam and our Will. Then we have our Bandit, Free, Panther and Spur. Guys that line-up at Panther can play Spur and vice-versa. Naturally we have our stack defense as well. Once we move into playing with our three-four we’ll be able to play our stack defense, and be playing with five linebackers. I think right now, if there is any place on our football defense that has depth is the defensive line and maybe the Panther position. We would like more depth at inside linebacker and we would definitely like a lot more depth at the secondary. I feel really good about it.

“Right now I can’t tell you how pleased I am with **Bryan Murphy**. You draw up what we wanted, toughness, and he epitomizes it. He’s tough, physical and disciplined. He’s a guy that you trust sending in there across the white line. He’s very impressive. He brings it every single play. He’s violent, physical, he has a motor, he does not stay blocked, he’s diligent about learning whether it is in period three or 24, he only has one mode. It doesn’t change.”

On the quarterbacks:

“Like I’ve said from the beginning, Tino (Sunseri) has someone that he has to beat out. That hasn’t changed there. I’m very impressed with **Mark Myers** and **Anthony Gonzalez**. I think over the past two days Gonzalez has gotten a whole lot better whether it’s executing the times, throws and things that he needs to do.

“What has really improved drastically in the past two days is the quarterback play and managing the game. There’s a lot they have to do. They have to set the protection, call the play, get the play from the sideline, check the play. They have an awful lot to do and a lot to comprehend. They spend a lot of the first few days trying to grasp it all. It will be a long time before they’re really comfortable. When you’re thinking, it’s tough to go fast. We’re encouraging them to go fast.”

On Tino Sunseri:

“The last few days have been really good for him. Again though, all three of those guys are competing for the quarterback spot.”

On injuries:

“I don’t think there was anything major today. **Matt Rotheram**, he’ll be all right, it looked like it may have been his hamstring. **Joe Trebitz** may have gotten tinged up a little bit. **Cameron Saddler** has a little sprained ankle – he’ll be all right. Hopefully he’ll be out there on Saturday. They haven’t told me anything yet, but I assume he’ll be out there. We’ll let you know.”

On Saturday’s practice:

“I’m looking forward to it more than anything else. You guys get to come out and watch a little bit of team play at the beginning. I don’t stand around. I try to demonstrate to them how I expect them to play the game – from the head coach down to the manager, trainer, whatever – we don’t want anybody standing around. Everybody is giving a great effort.

“I’m looking for guys that bought in to what we’re selling, guys that are tough and can handle adversity. We want to put them in adverse situations. I want to see how they’re going to respond. That’s the way you put a team together. We want guys that will sell out, and I think that we have a whole bunch of guys that will do that. I think it’s getting the guys in the right spots and for the most part we have that.

“The thing that’s different for us is that we’re not used to snapping the ball in the shotgun as much — that has to be a 100% deal. We can’t have some of the things that are happening. A lot of the times we’re not mishandling the ball, but it snaps to the left. It has to be right down the middle. It’s all about pulling off the timing of things, the tempo and all of that. We’re looking for personnel, for guys that will compete and be playmakers. I’m looking for guys that when things are tough, are at their best. That’s what I’m looking for and I think that we have a whole bunch of them on this team. I’m excited and looking forward to Saturday.”

On the mentality of the coaching staff:

“We don’t really get in their face. We coach them in short verbal blasts. I can tell you that 99% of what is coming out of our mouths is positive, speaking victory and teaching them. We want to strain them, put them in those situations and then coach off their body language. Six of our guys are former high school coaches so we’re teachers. We’re teaching these boys. I feel good about the relationships here. I think the kids have really embraced our staff. I feel really good about that. The faster that can happen, the faster you can start moving forward. That has been my experience in the past. I take that as a complement if we remind Myers of his high school coaches because I’m proud of that in my background.

“I challenge that in our coaches. The first thing I say every staff meeting is to remind them that ‘You are a teacher. That is your job to teach, inspire, motivate, strain and train these kids’. We are going to strain the players. It’s a tough game, but we’re going to do it with restraint. We’re going to get excited when they do something wrong, twice as excited when they do something right – you’ll see that. You’ll hear me say ‘Tempo! Tempo! Tempo!’ – once they ignore that, then we’re there. Once they stop operating in a panic, then we’re getting there because we’re going fast. Right now we’re going slow, but it’s getting to where we need to go.”