

Quoting Coach Graham

Spring Football

Saturday Practice March 26, 2011

On today's practice:

"I thought the first scrimmage went how I thought it would. We have made a lot of progress with the defense and placing impact on the quarterback. On Thursday the offense dominated and really focused on taking care of the ball. We didn't exactly move the ball like we usually do and we had a lot of negative yardage and assignment issues during practice, but overall I thought the guys responded well. We had a good first scrimmage and I am impressed with the guy's attitudes. I think they are buying into the way we are doing things and our different teaching techniques. We are moving at turtle's pace right now so things are still slow but we will continue to focus on increasing the tempo. I thought the boys competed well for the first scrimmage. The best thing we did on offense was run the inside zone.

"Brock DeCicco was out today with a minor hamstring injury. Chris Jacobson and Lucas Nix really stood out to me this spring and are really solid up front. Tino Sunseri operated well but he needs to be careful because he can't take a sack like he did in today's scrimmage.

"All the things we are teaching are being embraced by the players but today we had a lot of moments where things were too rushed. We are improving on both sides especially up front where we have a lot of talented players. K'Waun Williams is a very talented corner and I thought he stuck out today as well as Myles Caragein and Chas Alecxih. We started throwing out the young guys today to get them used to playing more. Myles and Chas really represented well for the older guys and went out and really competed today.

"Today's scrimmage went well with punting especially Matt Yoklic who is improving. Kevin Harper is starting to come into his groove with kicking off and getting extra points.

"We played 10 periods for half the practice and then scrimmaged for the second half. We had a bunch of plays in that period of time. We had 56 plays on offense and that is about 27 plays from where we need to be in the fall. We are getting better but there a lot more penalties than you are actually seeing. We need to be more efficient with the officials calling penalties. We had a sudden change period where the ball was turned over but it only happened one time today."

On the new system:

"Coach Magee and I have seen where these players need to be and the end result that needs to be reached. The players are way ahead of where we expected them to

be at this time. This system is hard to implement because it is so technical and difficult, which is why a lot of coaches abandon the idea of it. This system is difficult to teach and that is why it is so hard for players to execute. You need smart players that are disciplined and have great character because it is very precise. We tell the players to trust us because we are so ahead of where we intended and I think that is because a lot of the players have bought into our new style of teaching. We have done this before and it is an adjustment but you need to stick with it. We are continuing to improve each practice. We first started with 10 or 11 turnovers but today we only had one because of a fumble. We are taking care of the ball better but we are making mental errors. We are ahead of where I thought we would be but I think we have a chance to be really great defensively.”

On turnovers:

“Coach Patterson and I really want to work on forcing more turnovers. Last year we led the country in interceptions and when you look back that is because we dropped two all year long. You need to maximize the opportunity of getting your hands on the football especially early in the game.

“The offense is improving and really starting to grasp the new teaching and how to execute their plays. It is not a radical change defensively besides the tempo and the speed. We are standing a guy up and playing with a three technique. The techniques are similar with the attacking and blitzing but the tempo has dramatically changed. Today in the scrimmage we had eight explosive plays on offense. We need to focus on explosive plays, takeaways and penalties in order to become more efficient.

“The No. 1 defense in the conference usually wins the conference. We need to force turnovers as much as we can especially early on. As head coach you have to have alignment in what you believe in and you need to be passionate. We need to take care of the football most importantly, but I truly believe in what we are teaching. You need to run the football, stop runs, you have to score points and have to keep the other team from scoring so it’s a pretty simple game. This offensive is slowly improving and were not anywhere close to where we need to be in the end, but we are ahead of where I thought we would be. Hopefully at next Saturday’s scrimmage the offense will win one.”

On Devin Street:

“Devin Street has a minor sprain. He started on Thursday working back into practice and should be back full time on Tuesday.”