

Pitt Head Coach Todd Graham
Spring Football – Day 8

Opening Statement:

Today was very encouraging. I told them today after practice that, for the first time, today we were going 55 miles per hour. We actually went the speed limit today. We actually started to look like we knew what we were doing. That's encouraging. The offense won today. The last workout the defense got the better of them, and now they came back and won today. Tino really stood out to me today. He's really getting a grasp of the offense and what we are doing. Jacobson, I think he might have found a home (center). I'm hoping that he found a home there, because that is really what we have to stabilize that. Once we stabilize that, I feel really confident about our offensive line. That's going to be a strong point for us. I really feel good about the buy in. Our guys have bought into what we're doing. We've got a lot of kids with great heart. They come out and compete everyday and there's no question that we have a tremendous buy in, but it's tough to live it everyday. I tell them, how you walk down the hall speaks, you shouldn't have to say a word, you should walk down the hall like a champion. It comes from a spectacular attitude. We're making progress. How you do anything is how you do everything. Up front, on the defensive line, Tyrone Ezell is really stepping up. He's a guy who has been a backup situation guy, and I think he can really be impactful. Really a lot of strength and a lot of depth on the defensive line, I feel good about that. Street made a big play today, a big touchdown grab. We hit eight explosives today and moved the ball efficiently. I was very pleased with that. Today was a day that was very encouraging, I challenged them in the last practice to come out everyday and bring it. Get better on every single rep. We're trying to be unique, we want one-of-a-kind effort and one-of-a-kind focus on every play. So we challenged them a bit, and today they came out and responded in a big way. We had a great practice.

On finding playtime for the young guys on the defensive line:

We'll play quite a few people. I really think that is a good problem to have. It's the deepest spot on our football team. Justin Hargrove is another guy that I watch every night, and he does everything right. He's a good, solid player. To get attention on the defensive line, you've got to really step it up. I like that competition there. More than that, the key will be are we impacting the quarterback? There's no question that we have the guys who can physically hold up against the run, but when we get against some spread teams we have to have guys that can win one-on-one pass rushes and impact the ball. Aaron Donald and K.K. Smith, those young guys are very impressive. Hale's been a guy—we've been looking at him at defensive end and outside linebacker, and he's really looked good. Murphy's been very steady. You've got Chas, you've got Myles, there's a whole bunch of guys that are very good football players. I think all those guys will play. Ezell's a guy who's really stood out to me. He's a very powerful guy. Donald and K.K. can really be special. They are just part of a special group.

On what constitutes an "explosive":

An explosive play is plus 25 (yards) or more and hit his head off the goal post, touchdown. That's what people want to see, that's what I want to see, unless you're coaching defense. I want to see explosives – interceptions, scoop and score fumbles for touchdowns. Offensively, plus 25 or more run or pass.

On Ray Graham:

It's going to be fun to sit around figure out unique ways to get him the ball. He's pretty special. In this system, there are a lot of things you can do with him. You can get it to him in the run game a lot of ways, a lot of different angles.

On the Tempo:

Today the tempo was fast, for really the first time like I want it to be. Our defensive linemen were not in their stances, and we're snapping the ball. That's how you wear them down mentally and physically, and get big plays.

On Leadership:

We're spending a lot of time talking to these guys about the Pitt Way. It speaks about your body language. I'm not as concerned with what someone says—we're going to speak victory. I'm interested in their body language. I want to coach their body language. It talks about the attitude with which you approach things.

On Buddy Jackson and speed:

He kind of stuck out to me today on the kickoff returns. We need more speed. We've got big, explosive, and powerful guys, but we need more speed. Street shows me speed, Ray Graham shows me speed, K'Waun shows me speed, Buddy Jackson shows me speed, and that is what we need more of. I think Buddy has got a chance to be a special returner.