

Quoting Coach Graham

Spring Football

Tuesday Practice March 22, 2011

On Today's Practice:

"Today was another productive day and the offense won this time. Kevin Harper is becoming more accurate each time we practice. We really need to work this area with a new place kicker and a punter and being consistent in both positions. The guys continue to compete every single day and are gradually becoming used to the new tempo of practice. The most important thing is we want to out-physical our competition.

"Tino Sunseri had his best day so far. He has been improving gradually but he really stepped up at today's practice. Right now we are focusing on teaching tempo and we will continue to refine it as we go.

"We are also improving defensively up front with young guys like Khaynin Mosley-Smith and Aaron Donald. Both players are very impressive, very athletic and explosive on the field.

"Kolby Gray slid back over to safety. We have had a couple of guys have some minor nagging injuries so Gray will do whatever it takes for the team. He will still represent the role of quarterback but we can only have three in that position right now. He had a great first day and practice went very well.

"The guys are continuing to keep the same intensity level and that is a great measuring stick to see where we are at. We are still trying to kick some bad habits but we will continue to strain it out of them. It is harder for the guys who have been here three or four years but I feel really good about the seniors and where we are heading."

On safety position:

"Kolby Gray, Jarred Holley and Andrew Taglianetti are battling it out for the safety position. Gray and Taglianetti have all the reps at safety and right now Holley has had some minor nagging so we decided to be cautious with him at this time. Holley is not hurt but we just want to be careful because I hold a lot of confidence with him and know he has great potential as a player.

"Our free safety will go to the field and our bandit safety will be to the boundary. Our free safety is what people call a strong safety and our bandit safety is what people call a free or weak safety. The bandit safety will be more of the run forcer and the free safety will be more of a quarterback. We do not use the usual terminology because then it signifies you are slow. I want every one of my players on the field to be fast.

“At first I was worried about depth in the safety position and with our cornerback but with Kolby Gray moving over to safety I have a lot more confidence.”

On offense and defense:

“I am very impressed so far and I think we are a little more ahead defensively. I am not surprised because what we do offensively is somewhat more complicated and you need smart guys to execute those plays. It will take more time with the offense and we need to discipline those players more because it is so different from what they have done in the past. The offense versus the defense is now tied at 2-2.”

On the defensive line:

“Myles Caragein is one player I can't say enough about because I think he is a true leader on this football team. Chas Alecxih is a player I have continued to be impressed with and is very talented because he can play at three and five. We are going to be solid defensively but the key is speed and we are still working on that.

“Also, players like Bryan Murphy and Carl Fleming have a lot of character and you can't help but hold confidence in them. They are both tough, dependable, physical, play with a passion and they are there to compete.

“The young guys are also very talented and we could not have had any better recruits with players like Khaynin and Donald.

“Most importantly we want our defensive line to be explosive and impact the quarterback. The key is to have defensive linemen who offensive linemen can't block one on one.

“There is no substitute for experience, especially for players like Myles and Chas. Chas has such a natural three technique and he gets a lot of one-on-one blocking there. We are also intrigued with Khaynin and Donald who can move to the outside and we will continue to have them work at those positions.

“We talk a lot about impacting the quarterback but more importantly we need to stop the run and you are going to see us do that first. We have great depth at the defensive line. At the 'Panther' position we definitely this spring need to develop another guy.”

On Andrew Taglianetti:

“Taglianetti has an unbelievable character on and off the field. He is currently being recognized by Pitt's Blue and Gold society. Those are the type of players I want and all the players as a whole are continuing to impress me. Taglianetti is a great example of a disciplined player who is really embracing our new style and techniques as a coaching staff.

“I am not interested in just winning on the field. It is important to do well off the field and sometimes it is hard to overcompensate when you make a few mistakes. I have never been to a new job where I felt this good about the people we have here and Taglianetti is a perfect example of that. He is a guy who will do exactly what you ask him to the first time around. He is both tough and physical as a player. He also cares about his teammates, his university

and his community. I see that from a lot of players so far and Taglianetti is just one example.

“Taglianetti is a guy that I see as leader just like Myles Caragein. Both players don’t say much but what I think is important as a leader is actions instead of words. I don’t think giving a speech or being a cheerleader is what makes you a leader. It is your actions and your walk, and I would tell you that Taglianetti’s walk is strong.”

On the quarterback position:

“Mark Myers and Anthony Gonzalez are both improving every single day. Myers has a real cannon of a throw. Gonzales truly has the tools and I think he ran scouts last year. We can only have three players at this position right now including Tino Sunseri because there are not enough reps for more than that. Gonzales is a quarterback that is very athletic and right now he is working with his timing, which he has never done before. Every day there is a competition between the three of them and I think that is very important.

“Tino is a guy that likes to study the game and he is willing to do that. He is also a very smart player and he has the most experience out of the three. What we’re doing and how we have him studying the defense is new to him. Our way is much more complex and complicated, which can be frustrating for him but we like to challenge our players every day. I want Tino to experience the frustration and I want him to feel strained because in the end it will make him a better quarterback. He has a great work ethic and that is what I like the most about him.

“All three of them are now watching extra film and competing to get better. The quarterback position is a lot like the head coach position. You will either get praised or critiqued pretty hard. You are the face of the program and when it comes to character the quarterback has to be at the top. He has to be the most disciplined and the toughest one on the field. All three of those guys believe they are the guy for the position. For our system the best players in the end will be on the field.”