

Will Muschamp, Marcus Lattimore and Ray Tanner Press Conference – 1/12/18

Opening Statement...

WILL MUSCHAMP (WM): “First of all, I’d like to announce as our tenth coach Kyle Krantz. He will be a special teams assistant and coach our (SAM linebackers) and nickels. Kyle has been with me for five years. He started out on the offensive side of the ball, has worked on all forms of special teams and been on the defensive side of the ball the last three years. As for as work ethic is concerned, (he has) a coordinator’s mentality. He’s a grinder, a worker. He thinks like we think, is probably the best thing I would say. I’m glad that he and Brittany are going to continue moving forward being Gamecocks. I’m really excited about him.

“I really felt like we needed more help on special teams, and obviously he understands our schemes and systems. I’m excited about him some weeks working strictly with the SAM linebacker and it’s got a different skillset and fundamentals and techniques, and he’s going to be able to spend time with that. A player in a nickel situation, where a lot of time (Travaris Robinson) or myself spend half the time with the safeties or half the time with the corners and then try to work with the nickels, because it is a different skillset, fundamentals and techniques, so it’s good to have Kyle continue on board with us. We’re excited about him. He’s a really good evaluator. He’s going to work extremely hard for us.

“I’m also going to welcome back Marcus Lattimore, one of the greatest Gamecocks of all time, to be Director of Player Development, working in life skills and our Beyond Football program. This is a home run for us. Marcus is a guy, as far as mentoring players and dealing tremendous success and triumph, but also dealing with tremendous tragedy and adversity, he has done both of those here at the University of South Carolina. This is a win for our athletic department. This is a win for our university. This is a win for Columbia. It’s a win for the state of South Carolina. Being around (Marcus), he’s got an infectious personality. He positively affects everyone around him. We’re excited about having his wonderful wife Miranda back being a Gamecock. She never left. We’re excited to have both of them back in our program.

“I tell our staff all the time – if it weren’t for the players, we wouldn’t have a job, so it’s our job to service the players, and I believe it outlets for our players. Marcus is going to be a tremendous asset for our student-athletes and the different things that they face in their college career here at the University of South Carolina. (This is) a guy who could have gone anywhere that he wanted to go. He wanted to stay at home here at the University of South Carolina and be a Gamecock. In the two years I’ve gotten to know him, the things that really strike me – he loves the University of South Carolina, he loves this state, he loves being a Gamecock, and he understands how special this place is. It’s great to have him and be able to share his message with our student-athletes.

“Finally, I’ll end with this: I want to thank President Pastides, the Board of Trustees and Coach Tanner for continuing to support our program and invest in us, moving

this program forward. We're excited about where we are, but we're extremely excited about our future. I certainly want to personally thank all of them for their support."

MARCUS LATTIMORE (ML): "I'm so excited to be back. I want to thank (Coach Muschamp), and I'm so grateful for this opportunity. (Thanks to) Coach Tanner and President Pastides as well. I'm really looking forward to this position. I really am, because I empathize with every single player in that locker room. I know what they go through. I know what it's like to go through a 6 a.m. workout and be able to go to class, then go to practice, then go to the training table. It's a tough grind that these guys go through. To be able to be in player development and director of Beyond Football, it's going to be amazing. I'm looking to set these guys up for life after football. I'll be assisting in that aspect of their life. When a recruit comes to visit South Carolina, I will him down, sit his family down and let all of them know that I'm not looking at what they're doing on the field. We take care of that, because we have amazing coaches, but I'm looking at the next 40 years of their lives and what I can do to help them and prepare them for that."

On what changed to allow him to take this position...

ML: "I believe in timing, and God has put me in the perfect position. I'm so blessed to be here now. There were so many things that had to happen, but we've been able to work it out. I'll be able to keep my foundation, which I'm excited about. I'll keep that running; that's something I want to do for generations to come. It's something I can hopefully pass down to my future son or future daughter whenever that happens. Whatever we do with that foundation, it will be fully compliant with the NCAA. It really worked out this time. There were numerous things."

On leaving Heathwood Hall, where he coached the last two seasons...

ML: "Again, Heathwood, I'm so grateful for the opportunity I had there. To work with those kids and the great staff there, Chris Hinchey and Jeff Whalen. It was a tough day, because I connected with the fifth grade all the way up to my seniors. We all had a connection and they all made an impact on my life. I told them that. They really changed me, and I grew as a human being, and I think I became a better person. We had a lot of adversity, and we had some success. I shared with those guys to keep this thing going. Keep it rolling. Don't look at this as a setback, look at this as an opportunity."

On how his experiences will help the Carolina organization...

ML: "I believe that, with the organization and some things you don't think about as a head coach, which I was last year, those things I've been able to sharpen up. Sharpen up my tool kit, as I would say. With my foundation, some of the logistics and planning of things to help athletes, I've been doing it for a while. With the Beyond Football program, there's going to be three components: trying to make sure every guy that leaves this program has self-awareness. They know who they are as a human being, and they find their identity. They will know the importance of service, the importance of giving back. I think that's something. This state of South Carolina,

they love football, they love sports. Sports mean a lot to the people in this state. So, serving those people and giving back to those people, that provides opportunity. I want them to know that. Obviously, the biggest component will be their professional development and helping them find meaningful employment after they graduate. Being able to help them and guide them and navigate them through all of that.”

On why this position is important to South Carolina...

WM: “I think it goes a lot further than Saturday afternoon for me. That’s the most important thing to understand. It’s about educating a young man for the rest of his life. It’s not about three, four or five years here at the University of South Carolina, but educating him for the rest of his life. This part of it is part of what Beyond Football says. It’s beyond Saturday afternoon; it’s beyond the workouts; it’s beyond the practices. It’s about real-life things that we’ve got to deal with. I told Marcus to take it and run with it. There are some programs we’ve got in place that are good. I want him to continue to improve these programs. Him being a Gamecock and facing adversity and success and all the things that he’s gone through, there isn’t a better example, in my opinion, to talk to and mentor our players moving forward.”

On returning to the University of South Carolina...

ML: “I love this university. I love this football team. I love the people here. I always wanted to be connected to this university no matter what. When there was an opportunity and a possibility that I may be able to come back, I was so excited. That stuck in the back of mind for a long time for sure.”

On the potential for Marcus Lattimore to eventually serve as an on-field coach...

WM: “Sure, Marcus and I talked about the possibilities. When you get on the University scale, from a coaching standpoint, from an administrative standpoint, from a fundraising standpoint, I think this opens a lot of doors for him. He’s 26 years old. He’s young and he’s got a lot of living to do. A lot of times when you’re 26, you’re still searching for what avenue you want to head down. I think opportunity is going to provide that for him.”

ML: “I don’t think it’s any secret that I love the game of football. I’ve been playing it since I was seven years old. But right now, this is what God wants me to do. I’m going to take it. Everything I do in my life I do at 100 percent. I want these guys to leave this university knowing who they are as a human being. Personal and professional development is my assignment right now, and that’s all I’ve got to say.”

On the possibility of one day serving as an NFL general manager...

ML: “That’s definitely something that’s been in the back of my mind. When I was younger, I had the opportunity to talk to an NFL general manager. At the time (former Indianapolis Colts running back) Joseph Addai was a player that I admired greatly. (Former Colts general manager) Bill Polian was the guy I had a conversation with, and he just made a huge impression on me. We had a long conversation about the inside logistics of being a general manager and what it takes to get to that point. But right now, this is my assignment.”

On the extensions granted to his coaching staff...

WM: "I think any time they show support and appreciate the job that our staff has done, I'm excited, again, like I said, about where we are about more importantly how we're moving forward. You've got to invest in order to get the return you want and to continue to build this program where we're going."

On the benefits Marcus Lattimore will have in recruiting...

WM: "I think as much as anything, his story said it all. Here's a guy that probably had all the aspirations in the world to go play on Sunday afternoon. He certainly had the ability and the drive and all the intangible things you want to have. Things happen. Tragic events happened in his life, and all of a sudden, that dream is not there anymore. So now what are you going to do? At the end of the day less than four percent of everyone playing college football makes it more than four years in the National Football League. At the end of the day, the NFL dream is a pipe dream at best. For our parents to be able to listen to his story and for our players to be able to relate with him on a day-to-day basis and to understand there's more outside of Sunday afternoon, I think is really important."

On the character of Marcus Lattimore...

WM: "I've heard nothing but great things. Then you meet Marcus, and he has an infectious attitude and personality. He positively affects everyone around him. Every leadership trait you want in someone within your organization, he has. That's why I wanted him to be a part of our organization in some form or fashion. This turns out to be the best situation at this time."

On when he began brainstorming ideas for his role with the Gamecocks...

ML: "About two years ago. That's when it really started. I just really thought about what I would have wanted as a player and what those guys need, because it's hard being a collegiate football athlete. They go through so much, and they have little time. So to be able to maximize their time, be able to build their network while they're here, be able to reach out to alumni who could possibly be a mentor in the field that they want to go into one day; those things are important. Those things really show you your purpose. When you're able to serve in the community. When you know who you are as a human being. Again, when you reach out to former alumni who have been in their shoes. I've reached out to plenty of them. They're willing to assist and help these guys navigate through life."

On being reunited with assistant coach Bobby Bentley, who was his head coach at Byrnes High School...

ML: "It's awesome. It really is. Obviously, I've known Coach Bentley since I was seven years old. I've known his whole family and (Gamecock strength staff member) Chas (Dodd). We've all been great friends. The impact that he had on me, I wouldn't be sitting in this position that I am today. This whole organization, from top-to-bottom, the coaches, the strength staff, just everybody involved in this organization is first-class. I'm in the position in my life right now where I'm trying to learn as

much as possible. Better myself. The traits, humility, all of those things that come with a great organization. It's exemplified here. I'm just so happy to be a part of it."

On Monday's National Championship game...

WM: "It was a great game. Obviously, I wasn't pulling for anybody. It was a heck of a football game, and it came down to two SEC teams, so heck of a game."

On his opportunity to join the program where he played...

WM: "It's awesome. It really is. Coach Muschamp talks about it all the time. It's all about the players. What can we do for the players? Just to have that selfless mentality and to be around a guy who's like that is amazing. To be able to work for a coach like that. It really is amazing. I'm looking forward to the future."

On what Marcus Lattimore brings to the program...

WM: "You sit here and you listen to him talk and you understand the effect that he'll have. He's walked where they're walking right now. I just think that experience for a young man is real. I can talk to them all day about it, but at the end of the day, the guy that's lived it. He's lived in the hallways. He's been in the stadium. He's been in the locker room. He's been a part of this program and had great success and some tremendous adversity. I just think you can't really understand that part for a young man."

On the misconceptions college athletes have before joining a program...

ML: "You come from a town, and you look at the whole landscape of college football, particularly in the SEC. There's a lot of rural small towns, and these rural small towns love football. There's no doubt about it. Their whole life, ever since they've been 13, 14 years old, everybody has been telling them how good they are. 'You're going to make it to the NFL.' When they get to become a senior, and they have scholarship offers from 40 different schools, they feel that. They get off to that school and everybody is good. Everybody is at the same level. You've got to work a little bit harder. Those guys who make it, they're special. They work harder, and they take care of things in the classroom as well. But it doesn't happen for most of the guys on that roster. Really the biggest thing is bringing reality to every kid in the locker room. Making sure that they know you have to have something else to do, because it's not likely. I push for it, and I hope it happens for each and every kid in that locker room, but it's not. Just changing their perspective really. Making sure they see the other side of collegiate sports and how you can use sports to your advantage, because these guys have such a huge platform. The power of sports is amazing. There are 84,000 people that come see them every single Saturday. You can use that to your advantage, because you're a role model for so many kids. That leads to potential careers. You never know who's watching you. You never know what you can do with the power that you have. Tapping into that potential."

On the salary market for coaching staffs...

WM: "Certainly there's a market out there. It's your determination as a head coach and as an administration of what is fair in that market. I take it as each individual

coach, each individual administration, each individual school to make that decision on what they feel is fair in the market."

On the role Kyle Krantz will have on the coaching staff...

WM: "It really fit his skillset, and it fit what we needed. We needed more help for Coleman Hutzler on special teams, and Kyle is certainly going to be able to provide that. Schematically, he understands who we are and what we do and how we teach things. That teaching progression is very important to me."

On the possibility of new NCAA legislation allowing freshmen to play but still maintain their redshirt and it he's in favor...

WM: "I think absolutely. I think the proposal was four games. Regardless of when those four games are. I think that's fair. I think sometimes you don't really know if a young man is (ready). None of them, most of them, are ready. But when you put them out there sometimes, you never know how they're going to respond in front of 80,000 people. I certainly think to be able to pull a young man back in a situation and be able to redshirt him after that and do give him some experience freshman year. Also, the idea that all young men are motivated by that; they want to play. If they feel like they have the opportunity to play, it will certainly keep them on task and I think will be important."

On if there have been any players that have left the team in the last week...

WM: "Nope. All good. We have a team meeting next Monday night, and I expect everybody to be there."

On Marcus Lattimore's hiring and the approval of new contracts for the coaching staff...

RAY TANNER: "We're ecstatic to have Marcus and Miranda back into the family. They never went very far away, but I go back to while Marcus was talking. I called him the day before he left the West Coast to come home. At that point, I knew that football was over for him in the NFL. We chatted a little bit, and I said the things you'd expect me to say about 'You're always a Gamecock and we have a place here for you.' When I hung up, I thought to myself 'that was very selfish.' My point was to Marcus that you have employment. There are opportunities to be employed when the time comes. I think what was said earlier was a little misleading about the NCAA. With his foundation, there were things that had to be checked off before he could become an employee of the university. There was certainly no wrongdoing. It was just the protocol with his foundation that has now been cleared to give him the opportunity to be here. We're delighted to have him back. He's a young man that touches people in such a dramatic way. I was talking earlier today over in Osborne with some of our board members. If you had me speak to your son, if you had Coach Muschamp speak to your son or you had Marcus Lattimore speak to your son, who does he listen to the most? The role he's going to assume in our football program is very, very important. You heard the numbers, but there's life after football. I'm delighted he's going to be serving in that role. He has a passion for it and he's very good about it."

“Also, I’ll segue into the coaches’ contracts that were approved by the Board of Trustees today. It’s a process that I have been working on, along with others, for the last few weeks, to get to a place where we would extend Coach Muschamp by three years and satisfy the assistants’ salary pool, take care of couple of guys we have here and bring in a couple of new coaches. We’re delighted to be where we are. Just two short years, ago, we were coming off of three wins. Now we’re coming off of nine and a win over Michigan in the bowl game. It’s a great place. I love the job that Coach Muschamp has done here, the attention to detail, the culture, (and) the players that believe in him. I had the opportunity to speak to his staff the day prior to going to Charlotte to play NC State. I asked him if I could jump into the meeting room. I’m not sure if he was excited about that question. But I shared with the coaches at that time, I said ‘I’ve been at some practices. I’ve been a part of your camp. I’ve been around. You guys and your players have done everything you could possibly do to position yourselves to be successful in my estimation, for whatever that’s worth, and I appreciate you.’ And we had a pretty good year. I’m grateful to be where we are today and certainly grateful for Coach Muschamp and his staff.”