

July 30, 2013



An Interview With:

RUTGERS COACH KYLE FLOOD

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Rutgers University. Joined by student-athletes quarterback Gary Nova, wide receiver Brandon Coleman, linebacker Kevin Snyder, defensive tackle Isaac Holmes, and we also welcome Head Coach Kyle Flood.

Coach, an opening statement.

COACH FLOOD: Good morning. Seems like a quick year for somebody who hasn't been doing this job very long. I remember being in this room last summer and the unknowns and the anxiety of doing something for the first time.

But it's great to be back in Rhode Island. We appreciate everybody being here this morning. And we're really excited about our 2013 season. 2012 was a great year for our program, gave us an opportunity to do something that we had never done in the history of our program, and win a share of a conference title. But there were some things left on the table that we're anxious to compete for again.

I still believe as I did last year that the time is right for Rutgers to win championships. Just this year it will happen with different faces on offense. We're fortunate to bring back a quarterback who started all 13 games in Gary Nova. The first time in our program that that has happened since 2008.

And I think anytime your quarterback starts an entire season and has an opportunity not to just go through the winter program or spring practice, or your summer program, but all of those things in a calendar year, on the back end of that he has a chance to come out of it a significantly higher level player.

I think Gary has taken advantage of all those things. He's as anxious as we are to see

him out on the field and see him perform (indiscernible) coaches are allowed to coach him.

We've got some great weapons on offense. A guy like Brandon Coleman who some of you got an opportunity to meet today. As a wide receiver, somebody who I think will be one of the premier players but not just in our conference but in the nation.

And on defense, we've played high-level defense at Rutgers for a long time. And we've done it with a lot of different people. And this year we bring back a lot of players up front. Isaac Holmes will be one of the cornerstones of that group, and he is here with us today.

And at linebacker, we lost two great players. Khaseem Greene two-time conference Player of the Year. Steve Beauharnais now playing with the Patriots at middle linebacker who started a lot of games for us, but we're fortunate to have a young man like Kevin Snyder who is also here, who will help bridge that gap. And some younger players that are vying for that middle linebacker spot.

And in the secondary, anytime you lose four of your top five players in the secondary to the NFL, there's going to be opportunity. Some of that opportunity will be taken up by a guy like Jeremy Deering -- some of you are familiar with him in our program -- and some other players.

But there's going to be opportunity for younger players as well. Guys like Nadir Barnwell and guys like Delon Stephenson who are freshmen, but really are going to get an opportunity to play and compete within our system.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention this. I think we have a team that has built a culture over time of understanding the importance of special teams, and we expect special teams to continue to help us be the difference in games.

I only have one final announcement here before I take questions: On September 14th, in our game versus Eastern Michigan, I am proud, I am excited to be able to announce that for the first

time in the history of our program, we're going to retire a number.

And we're going to retire Eric LeGrand's number 52. And we will have a ceremony that day to commemorate that. I've been trying to hold off Eric now for 48 hours on Twitter, which is not an easy thing to do, from announcing that. But now, Jay, you can turn him loose. I can only imagine what will happen from this point forward.

But I was fortunate to be around with Eric in the recruiting process. And through his career and now beyond it, where he's still a huge and a daily part of our program while he still continues to work towards graduation, he is somebody who is special to us at Rutgers and special to me as a coach and a friend.

So we're excited to be able to do that for him and his family. And I think it will be a great day, not just for Rutgers football, but for the LeGrand family and everybody that's associated with us.

With that, I'd open it for questions.

Q. You open with Fresno State. What do you know about them? What kind of problems and challenges will they face -- will you face on opening day?

COACH FLOOD: I think there will be a lot of challenges. One of the things that was important to me, as soon as I realized that we would lose four of the top five players in our secondary, I told Jason: Go out there find us the best quarterback in the country that we can play against in the first day. And that was Derek Carr. And Derek is a tremendous, tremendous quarterback, and we've got some tremendous quarterbacks in our own conference here.

But to go on the road on a Thursday night at an extremely hostile environment, I have not ever coached in that stadium, but I've heard a number of things about it, against one of the premier players, quarterback -- and they've got a very talented wide receiver group.

It's going to be a great challenge for us as a football program to prepare in three and a half to four weeks for that game. And I think that game will give us a very good benchmark of where we're at and where we need to go for the rest of the season.

It's only one game, but they're all important. And when you have the opportunity to go on the road first game of the year against a nationally ranked opponent, I think you find out a lot about your team.

Q. Announcing retiring Eric's number, just what does that mean to him? What was it like to tell him? There are guys like Ray Rice that you could retire their numbers, but you chose to retire Eric's number first.

COACH FLOOD: His reaction was very typical Eric. Eric said: Coach, I was wondering when you were going to do that. That was awesome.

But he was very flattered by the honor, and I believe he deserves it. And the only -- the one caveat that I put on it with him, and I said this to him because I've been around Eric enough to know that he makes this statement quite often, that he's gonna go back to the stadium, to where it happened, and he's gonna get up from that spot and he's gonna walk off the field.

And I told him, I know you're gonna do that, too. And when you do it, I'm gonna unretire your jersey. And then that number will become a significant number in our program again to be worn only on special occasions and by certain people. And there's no doubt in my mind that that day will come.

Q. How long did discussions about retiring Eric's number take place and kind of who was involved in that decision?

COACH FLOOD: It was something that Jason Baum, Will Gilkison, and myself, we started talking about it a couple months ago, trying to decide if it was the right time, if it is the right time, what would be the right point in the schedule to do it, and then to make sure that if we do it, we can do it like the classy college football, the way we do everything else.

And once we'd made a decision that we felt we could do all those things, then we needed to get Eric's blessing because it's his number. And that number has only been worn by Khaseem Greene since that day.

And I was very pleased to see how excited Eric was to have that done.

Q. You've said in the past that the team has too much to concern itself with to really delve itself into administrative issues. But with the team really being a bright spot for the athletic department and its reputation, how much of an impact do you feel it can have in bringing the athletic department out of kind of

a dark hour?

COACH FLOOD: I think for us, as a football program, you can only control what you control. And certainly, over the last six to eight months, there have been things going on around us that we weren't happy about, but we can't control those. And we tried to just keep our head down, and once we got done with the season, have a great winter program.

Once we got done with that, have a great academic semester in the spring, which we did, and we were fortunate to finish with the highest GPA in the spring that we've ever had. To have a great spring practice, which I thought we did. And now we're trying to have a great summer program.

I think, to speak to what you're asking, there's no doubt in my mind that once we start playing football games, that is openly what will put some of these other conversations behind us.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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