

**October 7, 2010**



An Interview With:

## **KEN O'KEEFE AND PHIL PARKER**

**Q. How is the offense looking right now? Statistically you guys are looking good, but is this where you thought the offense would be at this point?**

**KEN O'KEEFE:** Well, we felt coming into this year that for us to be successful offensively that we needed to do certain things. One was take better care of the football than we did a year ago, especially with what the quarterback did with the ball in his hands. We needed to play smart, and then we had to learn how to become physical as an offense, as well. So those are things that we focused on and have spent a lot of time on.

But as you go back and look at it, other parts that we had some concerns about coming into the season, certainly the offensive line, how fast could we get them to grow up and get them to play the physical football that we want them to play, and especially how fast could we get them to learn to communicate like they need to be able to communicate in those high-pressure situations that you have during the course of a ballgame.

And they've done a pretty darned good job there. With the inexperience we had at the very beginning of the season, Reese Morgan has done a great job of really pulling that whole thing together, and James Ferentz has really matured at the center position and has given us a lot of leadership and a lot of toughness, as well.

Nolan MacMillan stepping in and playing right away has added something there from an athletic standpoint that's really improved this, and certainly Zusevics has played pretty well to this point.

But we've got a long way to go. Our thrust right now during the course of this week is to develop -- continue to develop the fundamentals

even more so than we normally would do during a game week where you don't have as much time to spend on those things. But you kind of go back to basics and you kind of make sure that your younger guys are focused on how they're going to improve and how we can bring them along, as well.

We've made some progress. There's no doubt about it. But there's a long way to go. Big Ten just started, and we've got a bunch of tough opponents out in front of us starting with Michigan right now.

**Q. The perception, of course, of the fans is dissecting the quarterback. Mostly they say -- they point to what he can't do, this mistake or that. What is good about Ricky Stanzi?**

**KEN O'KEEFE:** What's good about Stanzi? There's a lot that's good about him. The number one thing right now, he's making a lot of good decisions for us. Certainly he prepares probably better than any guy we've had, spends an enormous amount of time on that, and he provides great leadership in really all areas of our program, but especially when he's out there on the field.

But he makes the decisions that get us into the right place in the run game especially, that means that you're not going to run dead plays sometimes, where they have people down, we run a play over there, there's no one there to block that guy, so the running back is tackled for a loss or whatever it may be. But that's -- he's able to make those decisions very effectively for us in the run game, and that really helps us immensely because you don't want to waste any downs out there ever, and with Rick's knowledge of the game and the fronts and the coverages, we hardly ever do that.

He's at the point right now that sometimes at practice if one of the scout team guys lines up incorrectly, he's there trying to -- he'll tell the guy how far he's supposed to be shading on the nose man or whatever and move him over while we're

getting everybody else lined up. He has that kind of knowledge and experience right now where he can move people to the places where they need to be on the scout team. He's pretty advanced in that particular regard.

And in the pass game obviously he's -- he's doing a much better job of making decisions, seeing things, keeping that clock in his head to the point where he knows when it's time to either dump the ball down or use his feet to get himself out of trouble and not force things to happen, kind of let it come to him. And I think that probably is the biggest difference right now. He's not trying to do too much, he's trying to do what he's supposed to do, and that's working.

**Q. How do you plan to use Marcus Coker to give Adam Robinson a break?**

KEN O'KEEFE: It all depends on what the game plan is going to be like. I think to a certain degree where -- and where Adam is from a rep standpoint. So there's variables that are involved there. But whether it's Marcus or Brad Rogers or Adam, it'll all depend on really how Adam is doing because he's the guy with the experience, he's the guy that kind of is going to carry the load for us at this stage.

**Q. Is there a set number in mind, around 20 carries?**

KEN O'KEEFE: In this situation there's no set -- there might be if you had a couple of healthy guys like we had in the beginning, but right now there are no set numbers that we're looking at, and we just want to move forward, move the chains, get in the end zone.

**Q. What do you need to see out of the two younger guys, Brad Rogers and Marcus Coker, to trust them to put them in the Penn State game or the Michigan game?**

KEN O'KEEFE: We trust them. They're liable to be in there at any point in time. And Brad ended up in there on Saturday night at the goal line. The experience factor obviously is something that had very little experience other than Ball State to a large degree. But they have to know what's going on, and really they've gotten a lot of reps this week, as well, especially in the blitz pickup and the protection game, which is critical to what we do.

But Coach Erb is back working his magic again with a couple of freshmen, and he's done a good job with those guys, and they'll be ready if we need them.

**Q. Derrell Johnson-Koulianos is closing in on record breaking numbers. Talk about the numbers he's been able to put up and what it's been like having the opportunity to coach a guy like that.**

KEN O'KEEFE: It's kind of funny, as a coach you're not focused on numbers at all, so that stuff kind of quietly has snuck up on us anyway over the years. But Derrell has a knack for -- he's in the game, the ball is going to come his way, make some plays and go from there. You know, I think he's been able to do that over the course of his time on the field with us.

I think Eric Campbell, our receiver coach, feels like our wide receiver group hasn't even come close to reaching their full potential at this particular stage and that there's a lot more that we can do. And on the other hand, probably this group of guys right now, their biggest area of improvement has been how they've blocked downfield. One of the reasons why we've had a bunch of those big runs that Adam Robinson has been able to break off, because he's gotten some help on the outside from both Derrell and Marvin McNutt and Keenan Davis at times and Colin Sandeman that have made a big difference in those extra yards. That's where those extra yards come from.

**Q. In the Jewel Hampton situation, and with what you've gone through with Albert Young, can you use that as an example to kind of encourage, say hey, we've had someone who was in that spot, they got through multiple knee injuries and look where they're at now?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Yeah, definitely, we have to. Any resource you have to try to help Jewel through what he's been through is important. And Albert Young has already reached out and helped him I think a little bit. So it's good. He's been through that. He understands it, and look where he is right now. So it's all out there still in front of you. But it's tough when you're going through that kind of stuff to see if anything is out there in front of you at times. It just looks like one big wall.

**Q. How has C.J. Fiedorowicz come along?**

KEN O'KEEFE: You know, not bad, not bad. It's very rare that a guy can jump in as a true freshman and really have a real impact. We're

fortunate that we don't have to ask C.J. to do that because you've got Allen Reisner and Brad Herman. Herman has come along really well, also. But C.J. is one of those guys, he's getting a lot of reps this week trying to get brought up to speed. He spent a lot of time standing up as a wide receiver in high school, and now it's a little different when you're down in a three-point stance and the guy on your outside shoulder weighs 285 pounds. That transition has been steadily improving, and Coach Eric Johnson has been doing a great job with him.

So he's coming along. But we're going to get him his reps whenever we can in the ballgame, and I'm sure he'll probably continue to emerge even on special teams and other areas. But he's coming along pretty well, I think.

**Q. How do you find a fullback like Brett Morse? He came in as a linebacker, but it's so rare in college football to have a lot of two-back sets. But you guys, it's important to you -- what are you looking for when a guy like Brett shows up on campus and you say, okay, that's my guy for fullback?**

KEN O'KEEFE: When he shows up on campus, you're not sure probably. I forget how long he actually was a linebacker. But he was a quarterback in high school, okay, and again -- and an option quarterback, as well. So he can move his feet a little bit. He kind of grew into the position, and he's tough. You're very fortunate when you can come across a guy that has that kind of toughness, because there's not much -- we always talk about how there isn't much glory with the five guys up front and they don't get into the limelight very much, and I'm not sure it's not even worse for the fullbacks sometimes because nobody knows who that guy is half the time, and all he does is spend his whole life running into linebackers. Both their lives are like lined up, approximately eight yards apart from each other, running full speed into each other every time you're out there on the field.

Every now and then Brett gets rewarded and Stanzi throws him a pass, but that's kind of how they are. And Brett had a big catch the other night. I mean, it was a big catch in a critical situation. We were backed up in our own end zone. We had a 16-yard gain and a 1st down and allowed us to come out of there, and Ryan Donahue -- I think there might have been another big play after that even, but we were able to get out of that poor field position and help ourselves

out, and he was a big part of that. He actually had two big catches, one for the first 1st down in the ballgame which he had to reach back at, and the second one he had to reach back and get it and then he was able to turn up and get the 1st down. He's still using some of that old quarterback athletic ability to help us out.

**Q. You guys don't really -- your fullbacks, they just kind of happen it seems like?**

KEN O'KEEFE: We really haven't recruited a fullback in a long time, so yeah, they've either come from other places, either linebackers or somewhere along those lines, overgrown tailbacks. They can come from anywhere. But the prerequisite is you've got to love contact and you've got to be tough.

**Q. Going back to Ricky Stanzi, the touchdown pass the other night, it looked like Derrell Johnson-Koulianos was the third or fourth guy he looked at. Would he have had the patience last year to stand in there like that, make that throw -- or two years ago?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Actually it's interesting, he's probably processing faster this year than he was a year ago. But I think he might be seeing things a little bit different. You know, it's really what he studies on tape, what he sees before the ball is snapped and then as the ball is snapped and how everybody moves to get him to where he's going to go.

That was a situation where they kind of rolled to a little different coverage then. We thought they might. They thought they were going to pressure us, and they didn't, and Rick was smart enough to be patient and just sit back there and wait until Derrell cleared and put the ball right where it had to be. And Derrell did a great job of just staying inside the end line there and getting his feet down as he caught the ball.

But it's something that we do teach on that play. We weren't expecting that coverage necessarily, the way it ended up, but Rick was patient enough to sit on his back foot and let it clear and give him the ball.

**Q. You've touched on Ricky Stanzi's preparation. You said it's one of the best you've had here. What does that mean exactly? What does that mean for hours?**

**What does that mean for film? What does that mean for studying and just having that command to be able to tell the guys on the team you've got to move over a little bit?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Well, I mean, he just studies the looks. He studies the tape. He's got himself a little notebook that he's got everything jammed into, and he's pretty meticulous about those kinds of things. He's always got a plan, even for, hey, how am I going to improve this week. I've got these three things I'm going to work on. I've got to get straightened out.

But he knows how to study the tape, where he usually starts with that secondary, and then depending on what we're looking for, he'll go from there. He even has come into me on -- I'm trying to remember if it was Sunday's -- no, it was a Monday around noon, and we usually don't have our offensive staff meeting until around 3:00 where we begin to start to -- we watch all the tape, then we get together as a staff and start to input the 1st down game plan in the run and pass. But Rick would come in and say, hey, can you tell me what formations we're using this week? And I would say to him, well, that's why we're going into this meeting right now, because we're not quite sure. Here's an idea of what we might be using, basically because -- and then he goes on to say, because I don't want to waste any time looking at these formations we're not going to use, because each personnel group has two to three, sometimes four formations to it, and it helps if you can narrow it down and just study those looks.

But he can tell by the shades of defensive linemen or where linebackers are exactly pretty easy what's going to happen and get us into better play. We have a starting point in each area, whether it's run or pass, that he works from and kind of goes from there. But he knows those guys pretty well. He knows them pretty well.

**Q. How soon will you have the Michigan-Michigan State game films in your hands?**

KEN O'KEEFE: I'm not sure. Usually that stuff comes in -- because everything comes over the internet now, I think. It could be here Saturday night after it's done. Because we don't play, they may wait a little bit. It's not -- I'm not exactly sure. I haven't actually asked the question. But it'll be here no later, I'm sure, than early Sunday morning.

**Q. When do you start looking at it?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Right away. Right away we'll -- we're going to practice on Sunday, but we usually get it broken down and then watch it right after that.

**Q. Do you have game films of all their other games this year?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Oh, yeah. That all gets exchanged usually, you know, as you get it now so that if you really wanted to, you could get way ahead if you wanted to. We normally don't do a whole lot with that stuff. It gets broken down during the course of the week, the normal Wednesday- Thursday game weeks, we're breaking down the next week's opponent and getting that ready, it's inputted into the computers and it ends up being cut up, and then we just use the last game, break that down on either -- Sunday mornings usually and then put it into the computer so it's ready to go Sunday night.

**Q. You mentioned James Ferentz. You said leadership. You also said toughness. What did you mean by toughness when you were talking about him?**

KEN O'KEEFE: I think James really enjoys the physical part of the game. You know, he's a tough guy that just brings -- he brings everything he has every play because of how hard he practices and the intensity level that he brings I think lifts everybody to a large degree. And that's -- you talk about where are we offensively, what are the things -- some of the things that we need to improve on. We need to be better on 1st down in preventing negative yardage plays. That's an important thing for us to do, and we've got to score more touchdowns in the red zone than we have and need to continue to take great care of the football in order for us to -- in order for us to improve.

But probably the thing we need to do the most is continue to increase the intensity level that we practice at and build that tempo to where it really recreates what's going to occur during the ballgame. That's the thing that can help you the most. And that really is -- that's a big part of what I mean by what James has done for us at that position. And that has brought -- Riley Reiff is one of those kinds of guys, but a lot of those guys now, their whole level of performance and tempo during practice has been lifted quite a bit because of that. Never mind the fact that the center and the

quarterback are the two guys making the decisions for everybody up there, and you've got to be on the same page all the time obviously for us to work right.

**Q. Can you walk us through the script what goes into putting that together and what you're looking to get out of it?**

KEN O'KEEFE: What script are you talking about exactly?

**Q. You script your first, what, 15, 20 plays?**

KEN O'KEEFE: 20, gosh. We only had 58 the other night, I think. I think what -- I don't think it's any different than most people do anyway, but when you put together, let's say, the first 12, that's about as far as we'll ever get now, what you're looking for are the formations that you need, that you want to see how they're going to line up against you basically, or the motions that they may -- that you want to use that -- see how they react to them. You're going to have, whatever it is, X number of formations or motions that you want to see how they're going to line up in them so that you can go and attack it from there. That's basically what it is.

And if you're not sure what's going to take place in some of those situations, then you need to run somewhat of a conservative, safe play that you're not going to get yourself into trouble with, or you're going to have to check. A lot of times we don't know exactly how somebody is going to line up, even on the first play of the game. So it's not unusual anymore, as much as you'd like to -- you practice that first play of the game and you're ready, Saturday night, first play of the game, Stanzi had to come out and check the play. But it worked out because I think we gained six yards on it. So now we're 2nd and 4 or whatever, and at least you're started.

So that's really all it is, just so you can see what's going on. And then guys are -- the staff communicates amongst each other obviously. We can see certain things from the field which get confirmed or not confirmed from up above in the box, and then really the ultimate confirmation comes from when the quarterback and the center come back to the sideline after a series because they're the ones that are seeing it just like it is. Even the guys up in the box -- I may have said this before, but even the guys up in the box might think they're seeing something a certain way, but I'd say 98 percent of the time after you watch the game

tape that the quarterback and the center are seeing it the right way more than anybody else, and you've got to count on what they're seeing to get where you want to go.

Great example, on Saturday night Penn State showed up in a different goal line defense, and right away James recognized it and Rick -- they both knew what it was, and so we had -- we ended up changing the play and getting where we wanted to go. But those guys have to know what's going on, and they'll give us our best chance of making decisions.

So when James comes back and tells Reese, hey, this is what we're getting, and I can ask Rick what he's seeing, then we can put all the pieces to the puzzle together pretty well in that regard.

**Q. How important has Julian been to the development of everyone on the offensive front?**

KEN O'KEEFE: Julian is kind of a steady, quiet leader that is the big brother type that he takes these young guys, puts his arm around them and kind of makes sure that they know, hey, all right, if we made a mistake you're going to live through it. We'll get better, get it corrected and kind of go from there, because he's been -- he's been through it all before. So yeah, you can't underestimate the value of what Julian's steadiness has meant from a leadership standpoint. He's done a really nice job, and he's playing some of his best football ever right now.

And for us, if you were to say one thing going into the season, it's going to apply throughout the next seven games, we need our seniors -- our older guys have to play their best football. Our older guys, especially the seniors, need to perform at a high level for us to become the team that we want to become. It's as simple as that. And those guys know that, they've been told that, and we're counting on them to do it.

**Q. As the offenses go in the Big Ten, there's a lot of points scoring. Is there almost more pressure to keep pace, Michigan, Denard Robinson, look what he can do, do you feel more of a, we really need to bring it this week?**

KEN O'KEEFE: I think the whole idea is to make sure that you have more points on the board than they do at the end of the game. So that's the goal. That's the whole -- it's a team effort. How we

get there doesn't much matter. It might mean that we do a better job of running out the clock with 7:53 left on it or -- it could mean a lot of different things.

But keeping pace or feel the pressure I guess would not be -- to score, score, score. I think to be efficient, make 1st downs on every play you design. You'd like it to score, but we need to take care of the ball, play smart first of all, and then go from there. The whole idea is to have more points at the end than they do.

I think they're trying to do what we ask them to do and they're playing tough. The front four guys, Mike Daniels is obviously playing well. We're happy with the effort that they're giving us and the leadership that those guys are giving us. The good players have to play good in good games, big games, and I think they've done that.

**Q. How would you describe what you've gotten thus far out of both Micah and Shaun in the core position?**

PHIL PARKER: I think Micah has filled a spot that -- when we lost Amari from last year. I think Prater and those guys have done a pretty good job. Could they be better? Yes, and I think they work pretty hard at it every day, and I think Prater gives you a little bit of energy. He's an energy bug out there, and he's got a chance to keep on going every day. He can run all day. We put him on some special teams and obviously he's trying to squeak over there on the offensive side, too.

**Q. You obviously have Denard Robinson coming up. No one has had an answer for him. I don't know how much you guys have looked into it yet, maybe not at all, but talk about your initial impressions. What do you want to do against a quarterback that can do so much?**

PHIL PARKER: I think obviously it looks like he's been working on throwing the ball. He does throw accurate balls. They do move the pocket for him. I think he's a guy that's very dangerous and is hard to get a hold of. If you're looking at the tape, the thing you want to do is be sound in your fundamentals and make sure you leverage the ball with this guy. There's going to be one of him and there's going to be 11 of us trying to get the guy. But you've got to have proper leverage, got to have good footwork and be ready to take the challenge on.

They do a good job of trying to move him a little bit in the pocket and roll out pass, so it's going to be a challenge for us. We saw a little bit of him last year at the end of the game, and they like to run the ball with him obviously a lot, just run plays, but he can throw the ball a lot better than he did last year.

**Q. Have you had to defend anybody like him the last couple years?**

PHIL PARKER: Randle El from Indiana but that's been a while. We're trying to figure out who was our scout team quarterback at that time. That's what we're trying to look for right now. That's something we're going to have to figure out who we're going to get back there to simulate what he does with the ball, and I don't think we -- he can just go drop a guy out of the team to do that. He's a pretty good, special player.

**Q. Would you have seen anybody like him from Randle El you're saying?**

PHIL PARKER: I think he's been probably the quarterback at that position that can run the ball a little bit and throw the ball. I remember us putting the defense in and putting Bob Sanders in and putting him on there, tracking Randall El, and I think Bob came up with about 25 tackles that game. But we don't have Bob Sanders, so we'll do with what we have.

**Q. How has it been without Norm Parker? Has that changed your --**

PHIL PARKER: Besides missing Norm and his comedy that he brings back to the staff room and missing Norm, I've been around Norm for over 27 years, so not having him in there -- actually knowing him for 27, been with him here for 12, and he has that wisdom, and obviously he still shares that wisdom with us when we have some questions that get thrown by him. But it's been working pretty well.

Darrell Wilson has been here a long time and Rick Kaczinski has done a good job up front, and we added LeVar Woods to help us out with the linebackers a little bit and help out and pitch in. But it's been good. It's been community service as far as guys working together. We're all on the same page, and we've been doing it together. So I mean, it's kind of worked out pretty good. It's the same thing if Norm was here. If Norm was up in the press box, Darrell would be making the calls,

and obviously everybody has an opportunity to suggest things that they want called.

**Q. You've got to be rooting for Michigan State Saturday.**

PHIL PARKER: Oh, no question. I think that Michigan State looks like they're having a great year. They're running the ball well and playing pretty good defense, so it's going to be a good challenge. It'll be a good game to sit down and watch. Obviously I don't think I can get there and watch it, but I'll watch it on the TV.

**Q. You've played in that game. How would you describe that rivalry?**

PHIL PARKER: It's a very intense rivalry. Obviously there's a lot of hatred there, people would think, but I really got along with a lot of those players back in the '80s that played with them. They used to come up to Michigan State a lot of times and hang out. But the intensity is very similar to maybe the Iowa State game and Iowa game here. It's a great rivalry and a state rival. It's been great to be part of that, too.

**Q. How has James Morris grown into his role?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, he's grown up quite a little bit last Saturday, I think, when you're sitting there counting on a true freshman to come in there, and I think he's very mature as a freshman, he's here all summer taking mental notes and trying to figure out exactly what our defense is all about, and I think he's done a great job, and he showed it on Saturday. The hard work that he's done in the off-season and during the summer and preparation doing two-a-days that it's finally paying off, and he had to step up to the plate, which we thought he did a pretty good job stepping up to the plate.

**Q. Do you think he'll start against Michigan then?**

PHIL PARKER: I think it's -- we've still got a week and a half to go. I think we're giving a lot of kids a lot of rest, but he definitely has a chance to be in the game.

**Q. If Michigan State is able to contain Robinson on Saturday, how much will that impact what you guys want to do as a defense considering that they run a different scheme from what you do?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, I don't think it's really going to change what we do, just hopefully Michigan State can hold them under control a little bit. I'm sure they're both playing physical defense there, so it's going to be a great challenge for us to sit there and see what they do. But I don't think it's going to change what we do. We know we have our game plan and what we want to do, and it's not going to change. We're not going to change our defense just because of what Michigan State does.

**Q. Would you say that Adrian Clayborn has had an All-American type season?**

PHIL PARKER: I think he's having a very good season. I think our whole front four guys are playing a lot, and what happens is you start trying to compensate for one guy and then another guy shows up. But with Clayborn doing what he's doing, I think he's having a pretty good year. I don't know exactly what the other guys are in the country, but for us he's a pretty good player.

**Q. Before the other night he hadn't had a sack yet. Was he playing better than that? Your defensive stats are off the chart, but Adrian didn't have a sack yet. Does that always tell the story of how well a guy is playing?**

PHIL PARKER: No. I mean, it's a misnomer as far as what guys are doing. You go back and look at other guys, Sash at this time last year, how many interceptions did he have at this time. I think he's still playing pretty good football. Like statistics, sometimes they're going to be double teaming Adrian or they're going to scheme it. They might be turning to his side a little bit more, take it back, chip off him a little bit. So it's not all about how many sacks. If they're taking two guys to block him or if he's putting a little bit more pressure on there then he's taken away and obviously Mike Daniels has kind of stepped up to the plate and Klug, so the other guys are going to benefit from that a little bit, too. When you have a dominating player like him, you've got to respect him, and sometimes you don't get the stats, but you can see how hard they're playing. They're still playing hard.

**Q. Has the talent of that front four kind of trickled down to the backups?**

PHIL PARKER: I think it's a leadership thing and what they expect, and we've got some

good players just pushing. It's all those guys back there, this is their year, their senior year, and they're pushing the other guys, and it's expected, what they're doing out there. If you're a defensive lineman that plays for Rick Kaczinski, you'd better go out there and give your best shot, and I think it's shown that Mike Daniels has done a great job, and Lebron Daniels has come out and done a good job, too.

**Q. With all the offense, a lot of talk about Denard Robinson and what he's doing statistically. Seems like the Big Ten has got the maturation of guys like Ben Chappell throughout the conference. Is this the most prolific or wide open as you've seen the conference in the last five years?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, I haven't seen Indiana yet on film as an offensive team, but it seems like everybody has a quarterback that can be a multiple guy. Ohio State they have a guy that's done a pretty good job. So the quarterback is obviously a very important part of a football team's success, I think. It doesn't matter what level, whether you're at the NFL, high school or college level, you need a quarterback. And whether he runs it or whether he throws it or whether he's a play action guy, roll-out boot guy, you need a guy there to be a leader that everybody believes in. I think there's a couple teams out there that -- I haven't seen them all, but they've done a good job.

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