

**October 2, 2012**



An Interview With:

## **PHIL PARKER**

**PHIL PARKER:** I'll just kind of tell you a little bit. It's great to come off a win and have a bye week. Right now we're doing a lot of self-scouting, just trying to evaluate our personnel and our scheme a little bit, and do we have the guys in the right spot that we have. But it's also a good time. This is about the halfway mark during the season, even though we've played five games, we had three weeks of two-a-days and most of the practice is already halfway over.

So it was a good break for our kids to get them back healthy, an opportunity to work some of the younger guys on defense and see where they fit into our plans for the rest of the season. We'll do that right now, and I'll take any questions anybody has.

**Q. The eight-man rotation on the defensive line, is that pretty much what you're going to try to go with?**

**PHIL PARKER:** Yeah, we've been doing a little bit more rotation here in the last couple games, and Reese has done a great job of getting those guys prepared to go out there in situations, whether it's two or three plays at a time that they go out there. But it also gives our guys some rest a little bit and a little bit more energy when they are on the field. So that's definitely a thing that we were planning on doing at the beginning of the year and we've done it a little bit more towards the last couple games here.

**Q. Do you feel like you're getting enough pressure?**

**PHIL PARKER:** Well, you always like to have a lot more pressure at times, but I think sometimes when you bring a little bit of pressure,

you give up a chance for an explosive play for the offense, and that's something that you go back and evaluate. Like the last five games, you go through it, and every time somebody did a drive, if you give up a big play of 20 or 15, it's the advantage of the offense, so you have to evaluate that a little bit.

So you bring more pressure, maybe bring in an extra guy or even having the four guys up front giving you pressure, it's obvious that you like to do it that way, but when you do start bringing an extra guy, you're acceptable of a big play, and then if you get a big play, I think they're about 95 percent or even higher than that, if they get a big play in the series, they're going to score a field goal or a touchdown. Eliminate the big plays; that's the biggest thing.

**Q. Was there just simply more energy Saturday at the start of the game because you guys had given up touchdowns three of the first four on the first drives?**

**PHIL PARKER:** That was probably because of coaching a little bit.

**Q. Or did you guys do anything different, scheme differently?**

**PHIL PARKER:** Oh, I don't think we schemed any differently. I think the guys played with a lot of energy and they came out ready to go and played the full 60 minutes. I sat there and walked off after the game a little discouraged out of the two drives they had in the third and fourth quarter and you've just got to kind of evaluate and see what went wrong. But I did think they played hard and played full and they were ready. Their attitude was right and their energy was right, and I think that's a big part of football today is what kind of energy and attitude you have out there at the start game to the finish of the game.

**Q. What level is James Morris playing at so far this year?**

PHIL PARKER: James is outstanding. He's playing at a very high level. James is like a coach out there. He's really done a great job of getting guys in the right spots, getting us in the right defenses, and he's done a great job. He's definitely playing at a high level, and he's our leader on the defensive side.

**Q. How about Anthony Hitchens? Has that been a pleasant surprise how many tackles he's made?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, there's two ways to look at it: Obviously he's made a lot of plays and the ball has been in his area, and I think sometimes it's based on the formations the guys line up into that give him that chance. He's in the box a little bit more. Also in the passing game. Obviously it all depends what way they're setting the three -- they get three guys out strong and they've got two guys out weak, it kind of eliminates where they want to go with the ball, I think, where the quarterback wants to take the ball. So sometimes he's been in positions based on where they want to pass the ball, but obviously in the run game he's been effective, too.

I'm pleased. We knew he was a tough, strong kid, and he has made a lot of tackles for us.

**Q. With all the points being scored, conversely what do you as a defensive coach think about that when you see the scores pop up, and how do you counteract that?**

PHIL PARKER: I'm just happy I'm not at some of them schools that play those guys. And I've talked to a lot of the guys in that regard of certain conferences like to go out and spread the ball, and obviously we have a lot in our league that like to do that, and sometimes defensive guys think if you get three stops in the leagues they're playing in, the SEC or the Big 12, if you get three stops, you're playing great defense.

Our philosophy is, I think, the way we've been playing in the last 10 years if you look at it, of all the spread teams that we played, they're averaging 35, 40 points a game. I think, mostly Northwestern and all those guys that make a lot of points over there, and we've been holding them way under their average, okay, and obviously we played a lot of plays against them and they do get a lot of yards, but it's not like a lot of points.

So I think some of those teams and the way we play, we play a little bit differently, we play heavier on the interior line over there, we jam receivers in the back end a little bit better than a lot

of guys that match up with or routes, it's been able to be effective for us. I think that's the way we see it, and that's the way you eliminate them high-scoring games. I think a lot of those teams over there, they run the spread offense, you have to be one of three on offense, and if you just keep throwing the ball and you've got those athletes out there, they're going to create big plays and explosive plays, and sometimes they're 80, 90 yards, and it's only one play, and then they go on to the next play.

That's the way society is today is. They want to see a lot of points scored instead of a boring game, maybe like us keeping it nice and tight on defense and keeping guys in front of you and make them complete the balls. Because when you do throw a ball, you've got to complete it; they've got to throw it on target, they have to be able to catch the ball. Then our guys are going to go there and try to hit them and knock the ball out. It was a great opportunity for us this week. We had three interceptions and a fumble recovery, and one went for a touchdown on an interception.

Obviously the week before we gave up 30-something points. We weren't very happy with it, but obviously we gave up too many explosive plays.

But to answer your question, I think we held our own in the last 10 years, even though a lot of people don't think we have. I know that running quarterbacks obviously give every defensive coordinator an issue; how you're going to stop that quarterback if he does scramble and get out of the pocket, and everybody has a problem with a running quarterback. But I think we've been pretty good over -- compared to everybody else in the country.

**Q. You've seen hundreds of running backs getting ready to defend teams. Does Weisman remind you of anybody that you've seen over the years?**

PHIL PARKER: Boy, it's been a while, but he's very unique guy, a very humble guy, and he's a very hard-nosed guy. That's what makes him a special guy, because he doesn't say too much, he just runs the ball. He has a pretty good pad level as far as when you're going to try to tackle him. I'm glad our guys don't have to tackle him too much. I know in the spring when our offense went down and they wanted to score against us, they gave him the ball, and they just let him plug it

away. It's hard to tackle him. I just think he has a lot of drive and he's strong.

But to say who does he remind you of? I know we talked about, heck, this is going back 30 years ago, like a Keith Byars type of guy. He was a big guy to try to tackle. Obviously he's not as big as Keith Byars. I'm dating myself; I'm sorry about that. But he was hard to bring down. Obviously they're having troubles with guys. When you go back, and the one thing that we talk about is in the secondary for us, we've got to have secondary guys be able to tackle. So you can't have too small guys, and if they're not very structurally put together, because you've seen the guys at Minnesota, then guys were aggressive, they were coming, but they weren't the biggest guys you had, and they were just bouncing off of them.

The Big Ten is going to make your corners and your safeties tackle guys, and I'm glad that he's on our team.

**Q. Have you been able to play as much press coverage -- I know you talked about that in the spring, press man-to-man on the outside. Have you been able to do that as much as you've wanted to?**

PHIL PARKER: We've done some early in the games, and probably to a fault where we like to get up there too much. Sometimes quarterbacks just drop back and throw the ball up. I thought B.J. had a great play on -- it was a 2nd and 10 play, playing against Central, had a great play, knocked the ball out, and pass interference. So that's the things that the offense is taking care of. You've got press coverage, they're going to throw a fade, and usually you're going to get pass interference or the guy is going to catch the ball. That's the way I look at it. Sometimes we're going to have to mix it up and sometimes I don't always want them pressed just to give them the fade. If they're going to go up and press, press it late.

**Q. Is B.J. going to be back?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, I think B.J. is getting back. It was good that we rested him last week, and he looks like he's doing pretty well. He'll practice today a little bit to get some rust off a little bit. But it'll be nice to get him back.

**Q. Can you talk about what you're getting out of Bigach? I don't think he played much tackle until you stuck him in there this year.**

PHIL PARKER: A little bit.



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**Q. Now he's doing both, and he's starting at tackle, played some end last week?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, he's done a good job. He's a very smart, intelligent kid, and he's a great leader for us. He understands the defense, he understands what we're asking those guys to do up front, and he keeps everybody together. And communication-wise and understanding the defense, he's a very thorough guy, and that's been good for us, to show his leadership and also be able to utilize him in both positions as a tackle and an end.

**Q. On Saturday both Trinca-Pasat and Cooper talked about reading the hat, making sure you guys' stance, just being more comfortable with it. Is the game slowing down for some of the young guys?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, when you first go out there, obviously it'll be the first time you go out and try to write a story or something like that, you learn from it every time you go out. I think the guys have done a great job of preparing and getting familiar with going out there every day, going either in practice or whether you're watching film, trying to diagnose, hey, what are these guys going to do to you. If they're sitting light, can you tell; how deep are they; if they're going to pull, is it going to be the power; down and distance I think start coming in to affect a little bit and paying attention to detail and a little bit in that aspect, what you're seeing. And I think they've done a good job. It's worked, and we do some things up there with them front guys that they have to know that. It helps them, what we want to do defensively, so it has helped.

**Q. What's your comfort level with the nickel and dime? They seem to be pretty effective so far this year.**

PHIL PARKER: I'm comfortable as long as we can get them on there soon enough. I think we've got some young guys in there who are freshmen, and they're trying to find a way to class and stuff like that, and it's hard to find -- it get on the field sometimes. And when we put them out there, it's a Big Ten game, and a lot of them don't know. But they have improved, and I'm very comfortable using nickel and dime when we need to.

It all depends on the situation of the game

as it comes about, but I'm not afraid to use it.

**Q. You hit a couple times last week with the blitz. Is there a temptation to use it more, or does it work because you use it selectively?**

PHIL PARKER: It all depends on the timing of it, the situation of the game and how you feel. I'm not one of those guys -- a lot of times you kind of understand a little bit what they're doing, but sometimes you just -- it's a feel of the game and where you're at and the situation of the game. Like I know at the end of the game I probably blitzed one too many times more than I should have, and they scored out the quarterback for about a 10-yard gain or something like that.

But I think it's the more you use it, they're going to start picking it up and seeing it. I think you do it once in a while, holy cow, it's a surprise to them a little bit. But we've never been a big blitzing team. I think we're maybe about 17, 18 percent over the last couple of years, and we're trying to -- that's probably right where we're at right about now, too.

**Q. How do you feel about Micah Hyde's performance?**

PHIL PARKER: Micah Hyde has done a good job. Obviously he has a great awareness of what's going on, and he has a knack, and he studies the game a little bit. Obviously an experienced guy, knows what he's doing. They're going to try and go the other way. If I was a quarterback, I'd do the same thing, and I think he's played well. Can he play better? Of course. And I'm sure he'll improve this week.

**Q. What's the learning curve been like for you transitioning from the previous position to now defensive coordinator?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, in the last six, seven months it's been really good for me as a football coach. I've gotten to know the team a little bit better, each position, defensive line, linebackers, what are their capabilities of doing. It helps you call a game, and it's just been fun a little bit. But you also miss your group of guys that you coached. But I've been around them enough and I have an opportunity to get in front of these guys and talk to these guys and see them.

It's been a little bit different. You spend a more time, and there's only 24 hours in a day anyway. That's the most I can spend on football.

It's been a different in regards of who I communicate with on a daily basis. My opportunity is to spread around to the whole team now, which has been good.

**Q. Do you call the stunts on the defensive line?**

PHIL PARKER: Sometimes they're built in. We call stunts up front, and then in certain situations. Reese and Eric are very involved in what we're going to do on certain situations. We just give them a call and let them know that, hey, you can get after it up front on a passing down, that we want to get something going.

**Q. You're still very much about your guys not thinking about what they're doing but rather -- kind of like Norm over the years didn't want a lot of thinking, he wanted just doing.**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, it's a little bit. Yeah, a lot of things are built into our defense based on what they give us by formation and what the call is. We can call a stunt, but the stunt might not go on if they give us a certain formation, depending on that. But obviously with guys, what they like to do, and obviously in the Big Ten there must have been a discussion, I heard, that a shifting of offenses -- these guys have nothing else to do besides think of ideas of how to line up, shift to another formation, motion, or shift and motion at the same time, and then pause and then motion. So they have a lot of things they like to do.

And what I like to do is, hey, let's find out. One time you see six guys move. If you see six guys move, now your six guys have to have different alignments. There's different reads, there's different keys. Then if you sit there and say, okay, if you play some base stuff and you can call something where you just stand there and you see 10 guys move on their side and not one guy on defense have to move, I think the advantage goes to the defense because they already know where they're lined up. They have their stance, their alignments, now they have to read the play.

Sometimes you think, boy, that's simple. Yeah, that is, but it's more effective. And I think when you start getting into calling different defenses and you have to shift because they're reloading, you reload, now you have multiple things going on at one time, that's hard to do. By the time they get set and they set it and they snap

it real quick. Obviously they did that to us a couple times on Saturday, and they've done it in the past with some other games. So times you've got to look and evaluate, hey, how do you want to attack these, how are you guys going to prepare for this team, and what do you want to do. Sometimes just lining up and playing is better than saying let's have 15 defenses to call, and say, boy, let's have all these different adjustments, just like a calculus equation or physics -- my son is taking physics here at the University of Iowa, so right now I don't want to solve one of his problems; I'd just rather stick to what we do.

**Q. I don't want to date you, but were you playing for Michigan State the year the Iowa player knocked the goal post down?**

PHIL PARKER: That was '82, right? 1982, yeah, we walked out and we saw the wooden things up there, yeah. I was there. I was on the sideline, wasn't playing very much, but I was there. Who hit it?

**Q. Ron Hawley.**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, knocked it over and then I think one of our guys went up there -- I think it was it a defensive player that knocked it over. It was a defensive player down there because I think there was a wide receiver I know who went and gave him a high five after he knocked it down. I don't know if you guys noticed that. I do remember that. Darrell Turner was the wide receiver. He was a second-round draft pick to the Seattle Seahawks. He gave him a high five when he knocked it down. So I was there.

**Q. Only time you've ever seen that in football?**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, that was the only time I've ever seen that. That's a first. I do remember it, though, so I'm good with memory.

**Q. You coached the defensive backs for a long time, and safeties you've always been very selective. How would you evaluate the safety play so far? Seems like they're holding their end up.**

PHIL PARKER: Yeah, I think they've done a good job and Darrell Wilson has done a great job with these guys - the progressions they go through. Tanner Miller has played a lot and he has a lot of experience, and has done a good job tackling. That's what we need those guys to do. The thing is you don't want to bring pressure too much, but

they've got to be able to read their keys and get in the right spots to make a tackle. I think they've been doing that on a consistent basis.

**Q. So do you have to buy Greg Davis dinner or wash his car to get Maurice Fleming over on defense?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, you know, that negotiation was going on. We gave them the options in the springtime what they wanted to do, and obviously they think I recruited the kid back, but the kid just loves defense, and I think he just loves our side of the ball.

But I didn't have to buy him dinner. They want something for it. Believe me, they're going to get something from us, there's no question about it. I just don't know what they're going to get yet.

**Q. Did Maurice come to you, do you go to him?**

PHIL PARKER: About what?

**Q. About when Maurice Fleming moved to defensive back?**

PHIL PARKER: You know, that was an interesting thing. I was involved with him in recruiting a little bit, and Lester Erb recruited him. He's a great kid, and we took him as a defensive back. Obviously when the changes went through and we had to talk to him a little bit to go back and thought we'd use him a little bit more on offense at the beginning. Right now we think his best needs, for us as a defensive team, we need him back on defense.

**Q. Are you close to un-red-shirting anybody?**

PHIL PARKER: To me everything is available to me, and I know there are always some guys, we're saying, yeah, they're red shirting, but if we're going to need somebody and somebody can help us win a game, I'm going to go to Coach Ferentz. Obviously it's his decision, and it's obviously the kids that do it, but if we can talk the kid into playing to help us win a ballgame, I'll do it.

**Q. Anybody on the list right now?**

PHIL PARKER: I've got a whole bunch, but I can't share. (Laughter.)

You know, it's every day. There's guys out there that -- can they give us some help, can they help on special teams, whatever it is. I think we

always have to look at that as coaches and say, hey, reevaluate our talent, hey, can this guy help us, whether it's one or two snaps here on a kickoff team, whether it's on a punt return team, whether it's on defense. I think we've got to take advantage of that.

I mean, there's a lot of guys out there playing as freshmen, and I think if they can help us, we'll do it.

**Q. Speaking of freshmen, Faith and Jaleel came in with a lot of accolades.**

PHIL PARKER: I'm very happy with both of those guys, and Reese is, too. They're young, and since we had them in two-a-days they've made great progress. You think if they're big guys, like Carl Davis is, and I think they're going to be very good players, and sometimes you've just got to wait to see what happens.

But I do like both of those guys.

**Q. Is the key now thrown away on moving Christian Kirksey out of linebacker? It seems like he's found a home. I think the first game he played outside the Minnesota game.**

PHIL PARKER: I think Kirksey can play a lot of different positions. His ability go out there on coverage is sometimes as good as a defensive back. That is great. Do we want him involved closer to the box? Yeah, if we can ask the offenses maybe to give us certain formations to get him closer. Obviously this week against Michigan State I think that will be a factor. They're going to run the ball a little bit more and he'll probably be closer to the box a little bit there. But yeah, there's always talk about where can he fit, can he play Will, yes, can he play Mike, yes. With James playing so well and obviously Hitch is playing, there's been some discussion about, hey, let's get the right guys in the right places.

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