



VRBO Citrus Bowl

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Player/Coordinator press conference

Kentucky offensive coordinator Eddie Gran and running back Benny Snell, Jr.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to start with running back Benny Snell Jr., and Kentucky offensive coordinator Eddie Gran. Coach, we'll get started with an opening statement from you and we'll open it up for questions.

EDDIE GRAN: First of all, we're really excited to be here at this great bowl site. I was here a couple times when it was Capital One, a long time ago. And my kids were here and they've said, 'This hotel has changed but Disney hasn't.' And they have been — everybody's having a great time and we're so excited to be here. The hospitality has been incredible and what a great venue for college football and to be able to play an opponent like Penn State has been a great week of preparation and we're really excited about it.

Q. This question is for both of you. Could you talk about your relationship over the years because, Eddie, it seems like you've coached Benny hard, but you've also allowed him to be himself and his personality? And, Benny, your thoughts on your offensive coordinator and position coach?

BENNY SNELL: Man, I consider me and Coach Gran — we've come a real long way from when I first stepped on this Kentucky's campus. I can just tell, generally, as a coach, he cared who I was on and off the field and he made me better every single day. It's like, you're not around your dad a lot, you know, so he's kind of like a second father — me learning little things, little tips, as well as him disciplining me on the field to make me the player I am today. So I mean, it's funny to talk about him because he's right here, but I love Coach Gran. I love everything he does for me. There's been times that he — we go over for dinner, to the times that he yells at me on the field. I enjoy every moment because he's had greats in the past and I want to be a great player, so everything he says, even if it comes off the wrong way, you know, I've got to take it as a sponge and I learn from him.

EDDIE GRAN: It's been an awesome experience. We've come a long way. I'm a little bit old school in the way I coach. And, you know, you have to coach everybody a little bit different. And I've had to learn that with Benny, in certain ways, it's really, really helped our relationship and (taught me) how to motivate him and how to get him ready.

I always tell our players, 'Make me play you.' They come in, these freshman and these young kids, and they want to play, and they complain about not getting playing time. And I always talk about, 'Make me play you. Let's turn on this film.'

And that's what Benny did. When Benny stepped onto the team, he made us play him, from day one practice until he — he's finished now. He practices that way. And it was a no brainer to get him in there and get him started as a true freshman because of his passion for this game, and it's just been awesome to coach him and he's going to have a great career because how he loves the game. He respects the game and that's a good thing.

Q. Eddie, when you say you've had — you're an old school coach but you had to coach him a little differently, can you elaborate on that a little bit?

EDDIE GRAN: Yeah. I think there's some young men that you can hoot and holler at all the time and get after him. You know, I'm not a big guy on swearing or anything like that, so I'm not going to cuss my kids and that's not who I am, but I think there's some times where I've learned that it's just better to pull Benny aside and he and I — one on ones (are) really, really good scenarios there and guys respond that way.



And there's probably eight to 10 guys that I coach that way, that, you know, they just respond in different ways. Some guys, I can get on and get on their tail for an hour and a half and they love it, you know, but some guys don't respond that way. And as a football coach, I think you have to figure out each person, how they'll respond. And as he's matured, as I figured out and tried not to get so, you know — that's one thing that I've done. I think I've grown a little bit that way. Coach Stoops really helps me with that. Sometimes I get locked in now and he's just kind of helped me open up a little bit and make sure I'm listening.

And, you know, he'll come into my office now. The one thing about our relationship is when something was bothering him, he'd walk in and a lot of times I'd know when something was bothering him. He'd walk into my office and it was pretty clear cut when that door got shut, which was a good thing. He might not have wanted to hear what I had to say but it was truth and he knew when we walked out, it was right.

Q. There are oftentimes when Benny goes third person. When Eddie Gran comes up with a scheme, does Eddie Gran think of Benny Snell first?

EDDIE GRAN: Everything we do we think of Benny Snell when we're getting ready for a game plan.

Q. Good morning, guys. I'm just curious when you look at Penn State on tape what jumps out at you both as obviously a coordinator and then when you look at their run defense?

EDDIE GRAN: Well, first of all, their front is how they operate. They're the real deal. You know, they're No. 2 in the country in sacks. They're No. 4 in the country in tackles for loss. And their front makes them go. Those front forward guys are really good and they've got some backups that come in and are really productive.

You know, I think Amani, No.21 — I'm not even going to try to pronounce the last name and butcher it. But Amani, I think, is a heck of a player, does a great job. They've got a couple linebackers, one that doesn't even start, you know, Micah Parsons — he's productive as heck and he plays a lot but, you know, and he's a guy that just shows up. And Coach Pry does a great job. I think their whole staff does. They're fundamentally sound but we're going to have to deal with the front. They're real.

BENNY SNELL: Coach G pretty much covered it. I know that early in the downs, they like to blitz. They're good at controlling the run, stopping the run, as well as their front, No. 99, No. 48, those guys go. Just got to make sure (in) protection I get a chip on those guys. I know the whole defense swarms so they're going to come after it.

Q. For coach, your quarterback — what does he do well? How do you feel he manages your offense?

EDDIE GRAN: Well, I think, you know, as you look at this season, it's been a little bit up and down and you look at Terry for a first year guy and we're sitting here at 9 3 in one of the greatest bowls in the country, so it speaks a lot for him and obviously the people that surrounded him. But I think Terry, if you look at his last two games, you can start seeing that he started feeling more comfortable.

That's kind of the same thing that happened with Steven Johnson in this offense too. He's a first year guy. So he has progressed and I think, as we keep moving forward — you know, he's got two years left in this offense. We haven't had a quarterback in this offense for more than two years and so it's really exciting.

And, you know, I think as he manages the game, he understands that we can't turn it over. We can't take the tackle for losses, the sacks in a game like this. (If) you do this against Penn State and you get behind the chains, you're in bad shape. That's exactly where they want you to be. I think Terry knows that and he understands and has watched a lot of film on these guys and I think that's where he's gotten better, though, especially in these last



couple weeks, is just managing the game and making better throws. His on target throws these last couple games has been up close to 70 percent.

Q. Benny, obviously, you're preparing for a game, but, obviously, this is also your last game in a Kentucky uniform. Have you found yourself, this week, even while preparing, just kind of trying to soak everything in just because this is the last time?

BENNY SNELL: Yeah. Yes, sir. I really kind of don't like thinking about it, you know. I am living for the moment, you know what I'm saying? But, yeah, I've been enjoying every moment I can with my teammates, with my coaches. I'm excited for the game as well. And we're in Orlando. I'm having fun. I love the weather, but, you know, my time's come. I've enjoyed every moment I have. Like I always say, I'm living my dream still. I'm still living it, you know, so I'm enjoying it.

Q. Benny, quick question about football and your family. I know that's been a big part of your life, your family, playing football as well. How has that impacted your love for the game and could you expand on that a little bit more?

BENNY SNELL: Yes, sir. Man, ever since I was young, you know, it's just — you come downstairs and the family's just watching football, and it was either on Sundays or we're watching Ohio State. We were watching Ohio State when I was little. Going on from that, you know, my dad played — had a few years with the Ravens. He played in the European league, so, you know, I used to have a little football. I used to run around, throw, catch with him. As I started to get a little bit older, you know, that's when I started to catch onto my great uncle, Matt Snell, I got to see a little bit of film on him. Never got to talk to him, you know, because he's older, but, it's just crazy to see, when I watch my dad's college highlights, you cut that on, and then you cut on to Matt Snell, and you see the comparison on how they run. My dad was No. 33 and Matt was No. 41, so he was just running through people. So it's like power runners. And then when I watch myself, because I like to evaluate myself, it's just crazy, like, the running style, you know how we hit the outside, if we've got to break a tackle, how we look, it's just wild.

But, you know, my love for football is out of this world. Like, you can never — you can never not get better at football, I feel like, you know. Whenever I'm, like, eating breakfast, eating dinner, you know, you could always turn on some Ezekiel Elliot highlights, Adrian Peterson highlights. You can always get better and just watch what those guys do because, you know, they're greats and I want to be like them one day. I want to be my own man. Yeah.

Q. Good morning. I just wanted to ask about Lynn Bowden, what he's been able to accomplish in his second college year and leading your team in receptions by quite a large margin. Is your offense at its best when he's heavily involved and how have you been able to incorporate him at such a higher volume than his freshman year?

EDDIE GRAN: Number 1, his IQ level is off the charts. I mean, it could be on a Wednesday and I can change something, whether it be formationally or different personnel and get him somewhere. And, you know, what people have seen this year is that he's playing the single receiver now. He's in the slot — we've got him all over the place. So that's been the biggest thing for us, his football IQ is really good.

When this guy goes right here — if you look at our history over the last three years since I've been here, I would say the statistically, when he touches the ball a certain amount of times and we rush the ball a certain amount of times, I think we're pretty good. And, you know, that's where it all starts.

But to just finish the question for you, is that, yes, when you know, Lynn and those guys, when we're in rhythm and he's getting the ball, that's when we're at our best.