



VRBO Citrus Bowl

December 29, 2018

Player/Coordinator press conference

Penn State offensive coordinator Ricky Rahne and quarterback Trace McSorley

THE MODERATOR: We're going to get started with our Penn State section and begin with offensive coordinator Ricky Rahne and quarterback Trace McSorley. Coach, as you get settled, we'll start with an opening statement from you and then open it up for questions.

RICKY RAHNE: We're just really excited to play in this game. Had a great preparation. The guys approached it the right way. Been proud of them the way they've approached the preparation and also, you know, taking time with each other and spending the last few days as a team together. So excited to play. And looking forward to getting it going against a great football team.

Q. Trace, this is your 40th consecutive start. When you were coming off the bench in the Gator Bowl, did you ever think that your career at Penn State would be as accomplished as it is with 40 starts in a row?

TRACE MCSORLEY: I mean, it's hard for me to say that I would have thought that. Obviously, I imagined having success, and that was a goal, but for it to have been planned out and played out like this, I probably wouldn't say that. I would have thought it would have been, I guess, at this magnitude, but, for me, it was always my goal to come in and be one of the best quarterbacks in Penn State history. That's something that I had set a goal personally when I got to school.

And, you know, we were talking for everything, my first real game was actually in Florida, (and it's) come full circle. My last one is going to be in the state of Florida. It's just been a great ride. And I'm extremely grateful and extremely thankful for the opportunity the coaches gave me to even come to a school like Penn State and an opportunity to play on the field and for putting me in good situations to be able to be successful. And same thing, you know, my teammates have been incredible all the way through. So I'm just extremely thankful for the opportunity that I had here and I'm looking forward to finishing out strong.

Q. Trace, last week at practice, I know it's a little different with the palm trees and the different weather, but how difficult is it to keep that laser focus that you've gone through game week after game week here for your final game week of preparation? Been a little bit different? Have you taken time to savor things with your teammates? Just curious how that process has been going here these last few days.

TRACE MCSORLEY: Yeah, I think our coach has done a really good job of talking about — when you're on a trip like this, about just being in the moment and being where your feet are. If you're out at Universal or any other events that we've done, like the Best Buy deal that we had, be there and enjoy that, and enjoy having the free time with your teammates and brothers that you're going to be around for the last time. But when you're getting into meetings and getting into practice and you're on the way to practice, that's when you kind of flip that switch and lock in and be able to make that transition and be ready to get into the mode of this is a business trip and we're here, at the end of the day, to play and win a football game. For me that's been really good and that's helped me to stay in that good mentality and be able to be focused when it comes time to practice and it when it comes time to be working for the game.

Q. Ricky, when you have prepared for this game, on film, what jumps out at you about Josh Allen? What is unique about his talent?

RICKY RAHNE: Well, I would say that obviously, he's an extremely effective pass rusher, which the stats will tell you that. But really it's because of his first step. He has great acceleration off the ball. But he also uses his hands really



well and that's what sets him apart from most other, quote-unquote, speed rushers. He uses his hands extremely well and that's the thing that's going to make him a great player at the next level. And all those people who, you know, are projecting him as a high first round draft pick, I would echo that.

I mean, I've coached against Von Miller and some of those guys and he's right up there with what those guys, and he's got great length. Probably better strength than people give him credit for and his coaches also put him in a great position to be successful too, which is also part of it.

Q. For coach and for Trace — obviously, it starts with Josh Allen but, in general, their defense has been lights out all season, giving up to 16 points per game in the SEC. What makes them click and what makes them such an effective unit together?

RICKY RAHNE: I'd say they're extremely well coached. Most great defenses are, you know. Obviously, we go against one in practice every day that is a great defense as well. I know how great our coaches are. So they're extremely well coached. They mix things up just enough.

But, in general, they do what they do and they let their kids play fast and play aggressive. And you can also see on tape that their kids play with a lot of passion and that's something that is going to set people apart is when you can play with that type of passion and excitement and find joy in the little mundane tasks of football. That's usually when you're going to be really successful.

Q. This question is for Trace. You mentioned the Best Buy trip, you mentioned the trip to Universal. I was kind of wondering are you an amusement park guy? How was that trip to Universal? And I heard guys buying things like Crock Pots and CDs over at Best Buy the other night. What did you get with that \$400?

TRACE MCSORLEY: Yeah, I like amusement parks. I'm still a little kid. That's my personality, so being at the amusement park was fun, just being able to ride rides and stuff like that.

And then Best Buy, yeah, a couple guys were, like, buying Crock Pots. I think J.P., Johnny Petrishen, was walking out with one of those robot vacuums that just goes around on its own. I got an Apple Watch and I got a gaming headset for my Xbox.

Q. For Trace, when you face a defensive player like a Josh Allen, obviously you probably face a lot of those kind of guys in the Big Ten. Do you want to know where that guy is at all times or do you just treat him like one of the other 11?

TRACE MCSORLEY: Yeah, you definitely have to have an awareness of where he's at at all times, especially in certain situations where passing downs, with a guy like him, he's able to pin his ears back and go for the quarterback. But you definitely do have to have an awareness of a guy like him, not only because of what he can do in the pass rush, but he's extremely good at getting in and getting strips back and attacking the ball. So I think that's also part of his edge.

Going through the week of preparation, you're putting a heightened level on ball security in the pocket when you're stepping up, not letting the ball get away from you and those types of things. Yeah, you definitely need to have an awareness of where a guy like him is at at all times.

Q. For Ricky, you've been involved with Trace since recruiting him in high school in Virginia and this will be the last time you see him play as his coach. Obviously, you'll see him as a fan after this. What's it been like over the years, you and Trace?



RICKY RAHNE: You know, it's been an honor to coach a kid who gives everything he's got every day, whether you're in March and you're meeting or whether it's preseason practice and it's a seven on seven drill against the defense, or whatever it is, you know, he's giving his maximum effort and his maximum attention to detail in every single thing that he does. And that's a rare thing. You know, we all strive to get there. We all strive to have those kids. But in reality, it's extremely rare. And so to have a kid like that, who not only has those sort of things but also his competitive nature, which is, you know, probably the thing that binds us together probably the most, I don't know which one of us hates to lose more. So I think that's another thing. But then the final piece is just his talent, which I think people overlook a lot of time. Everyone always talks about his intangibles and all those sort of things, which are awesome. Like I said many times, I hope my two sons grow up to be just like him. But based on the genetics that they possess, I don't know if they'll ever be able to match his talent. That's on me and mom, I think.

But his genetic ability and his ability to escape and his ability to make plays and those sort of things, along with his arm talent, are things that, you know, I'm going to be hard pressed to ever be able to coach again. So I'm excited about the legacy he's left in the quarterback room and on the offense in general and in Penn State.

Q. Hey, Ricky, I wondered about Sean Clifford and how you've seen him develop this year and what's kind of the benefit for him getting those No. 2 reps again at this point in the year?

RICKY RAHNE: Yeah, he's been getting a lot of reps throughout the year, and it hasn't been hard to see the progression he's made, really, every week. He's really done a nice job when he got in the game. I think his passer rating is pretty high. So, you know, he's done a nice job when he's gotten in the game, but, really, it's been the progression throughout the week and the questions he asks and the things he sees and things like that. (We've) been extremely pleased with just — if you look at end of spring to now, he's grown probably tenfold, so it's been great to watch what he's done. So we're really excited about that room. We've got some great guys after Trace and the way he's shown them how to prepare only makes them better.

Q. Yeah, for both of you, I know this isn't the year that Tommy Stevens envisioned not being involved with spring practice and then missing the start and here not being in Orlando for the Citrus Bowl, Trace, you're head now, you've been close with Tommy for several years now; Ricky, you as well. How do you make sure he's in the right mindset entering this off season and what do you think, Ricky, particular, he took from 2018 even though it was a bit of a wash at times with some injury issues?

TRACE McSORLEY: I mean, yeah, it's been definitely probably a lot of ups and downs, I think, for him. But he's had a great mentality throughout it all. I mean, even if you go back to the spring when this stuff kind of first started happening, he always had a really good attitude about it and he was out of practice and trying to do everything he could at practice to get the team better even when he wasn't participating and he's standing behind talking with me, Cliff, Shuster, all the other quarterbacks that were there. After every single one of our reps, writing down notes, giving us pointers, what he saw versus what we actually did, if he saw the same thing, all that kind of stuff. So he's been doing everything he can to make the team better and he's had a really good attitude about it and I think it's one of those things that people talk about adversity making you stronger. This is one of the things I think will make him better. He's had to grow as a player but not having actually been on the field as much as he would have liked. And I think it only benefited him and his future and the team and the future. So I'm really excited about just how he's going to come out of this and when he's going to become after.

RICKY RAHNE: Yeah. I would echo that. I think that the time that he missed really helped him. I think it made him kind of step back and — you're always talking to guys about getting mental reps, but a lot of time when they're not in there, they're thinking about the reps they just took instead of the reps that are happening right then and he was able to really take mental reps in all those things. So I do think that he did a really nice job of that and that really helped him grow mentally in terms of operating the offensive and things like that. So I think that he was able to see and see a lot more and get a whole big picture of the thing. So I think he did a really nice job in that.



In terms of the other stuff, you know, we've talked a lot about how life isn't going to go as planned all the time. There's going to be adversity along the way and for him, and it's going to benefit him in the long run because the games don't always go the way you want them to all the time either and you're going to have a fight through that adversity and how your quarterback reacts is critical, you know? Attitude reflects leadership and so if your leader knows how to deal with adversity, then your team is going to obviously handle that much better.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, Trace, thank you for your time.