

July 31, 2015



An interview with:

COACH DYKES

COACH DYKES: I wanted to start off by saying Rich wanted me to be sure and remind everybody this is the hundredth anniversary of the Pac-12. He asked me to make sure everybody knew that in case there were any questions about it. Excited to be here on media day. This is for all intents and purposes the beginning of the college season for us as coaches and I think our players. It certainly gets us in the frame of mind. You start seeing the other coaches, the other players and you start thinking about competing against these guys and it gets you excited. It's certainly daunting.

The Pac-12 is, in my opinion, the best conference in college football right now from top to bottom. It's incredibly competitive. It's very well-coached. I think this league has as good of coaches as there is across the country. Outstanding football players.

I think the difference probably now than even five or six years ago is I think the universities have made a commitment to football, and they understand how important it is for the overall health of the athletic department. So it's a competitive league. Exciting time to be here.

I want to recognize Jared Goff and Hardy Nickerson in the back there. I'm very fortunate to have an opportunity to work with young men like these guys. They're just good people. They're guys that get it. They get what college football is all about. They both have tremendous respect for the game, as I do. They do things the right way on and off the field. They're incredibly unselfish. And to me, they're what's good about college football. Both of them are second generation Cal student-athletes. Jared's dad was a baseball and football player at Cal.

And obviously Hardy's dad was a very successful football player at Cal. These guys love the university. They get it, and couldn't be more fortunate to work with young people like this.

I think our football team is much like that. We have a team that's gone through some hard times. Certainly our start at Cal was very difficult. We made tremendous progress last year. We were a little disappointed in the way the season ended, but we certainly felt like we improved our program in a lot of different ways. We've really grown up as a program. We fixed our academic issues. I couldn't be more proud of our student-athletes and their buy-in in regards to improving our academics. We think the success on the field is going to follow.

It's important for us to keep improving. That's what this this year's all about, about improving and taking that next step and becoming a consistent program that competes for championships. That's where we want to go.

So excited to get started and anticipate having a great, competitive season, and look forward to competing against the best week-in and week-out in the Pac-12.

Q. What can you tell Bears fans about how much the defense has improved this year?

COACH DYKES: Well, we understand that our success will be determined by how much we improve on defense. We think we're going to be much better. We have a lot of returning experience. We've been able to address some of our deficiencies in terms of depth. We need some guys to come through. We still have questions we have to get answered, but we think we're going to be much improved.

Q. How's the secondary shaping up?

COACH DYKES: We'll know more here in a week or two. But we think good. We've got to get some guys back healthy, got to get Stef back healthy, Griffin Piatt back healthy. We've got some outstanding junior college players that we think are going to become good players for us. Darius White made a big step in the spring. We think Antoine Albert has the ability to help us. Brown can help us. Khari Vanderbilt can help us, and some of the other players that have been in our program have continued to develop. That's going to be big for us is getting our guys just getting

depth and developing them and getting ready to play.

Q. What is the biggest challenge that you've encountered in the south?

COACH DYKES: Well, our thing is a little different. We're a little limited on who we can recruit based on our academic standards. We get it. We appreciate it. We think it allows us to recruit a little bit different kid. Certainly getting a degree at Cal appeals to people across the country. If you're a high academic kid anywhere across the United States and Cal is recruiting you, and you really are committed to high academics, we're going to be in the mix. So we think it's a tremendous help that way.

But it does reduce maybe the number of guys that we can recruit. There are some players that we are unable to recruit now because of those increased standards, and we get it and understand it. That's been a little bit of a challenge for us in finding those players and figuring that system out. But we think we're in a good spot right now.

Q. What was the process like hiring a new cornerbacks coach? Was that kind of in the works for a while?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, it was quite a long process, really. We had an opening in April. At that time my thought was to go hire -- we had two options. At that point I could hire a running backs coach or a receivers coach. I talked to Tony a little bit about it. We liked our situation with him coaching the running backs and felt like it was important to have quarterbacks and running backs in the same meeting room together. I felt like that was really going to improve both of them. I had a desire to get back on the field and coach a position.

So through discussions we started thinking, you know what, I'd like to hire a defensive guy. Then at that point it was okay, who is available? So through conversations with different people, John's name kept coming up. Obviously, he and Art had worked together, and it was a long process getting minimum op board. But the great thing about hiring John is there is no learning curve. He understands Art's defense, and he'll come in from day one and have a great understanding and great knowledge of what art wants and the way he wants to get things done. It also gives us an ability to have two coaches in a position that we need to improve dramatically at.

I have a lot of respect for Greg Burns and his ability to coach. I think Greg working just with the safeties will help bring those guys along.

We're going to have to get some new players to play for us at that position, and so I think it's going to allow Greg to focus on improving those guys and getting them ready.

Q. You guys were the 125th in passing defense. Bringing new guys in for that position, are we going to see that change?

COACH DYKES: We think dramatically, we hope. The interesting thing, when you look at the number of passes attempted against us, I think we had almost 70 more than any other in college football. Defended 70 more passes. So numbers are numbers. Sometimes they don't tell a complete story. But certainly we have to get better on the back end. We understand it. We've got to improve our pass rush. The better your pass rush, the better your coverage is. And these things don't change. If you're covering your guys tighter, you're going to have a tendency to get more sacks.

So those two positions play off each other. We've got to get more production from our linebackers than we think we will. I expect our defense to make a big jump. I'm excited about it. We're bigger, stronger, more talented. Excited to get James Looney and see what he brings to our defense. Excited to get moose healthier than he's ever been. We look forward to the additions in the back end and what that's going to mean to us from a depth standpoint. I think Kyle Kragen is going to have a big year. He had to sit out last year when he had mono. So there are all these different pieces, and excited to see what DeVante Wilson can do at that defensive end spot. So we think we have a good opportunity to have a good defense.

Q. What changes, how much do you start to put the responsibility (No microphone) at the line of scrimmage?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, he's had so many snaps. The number of snaps a quarterback has and their performance often go hand in hand. Jared has played a lot of football for us, and the more snaps he plays, the more comfortable he gets, the more the game slows down, the more he anticipates throws, the more he gets on the same page with the wide receivers and all of those things are a process. Luckily he's been there and going through that process for a long time and those receivers have been there with him for a long time. The more those guys are together, the more they get on the same page. The more they get on the same page, the higher degree they execute. So we expect our offense to improve dramatically as well.

To me, Jared took a big step between year one and year two. I thought Jared took an even bigger step between year two in spring football.

At the end of the spring, I thought he was a completely different player than he was last fall. That is the kind of improvement that we want him to take. If he can get his completion percentage up to the high 60's, I think that's going to be big for our program.

Q. Does he have some responsibilities at the line of scrimmage this year?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, he does. The more he plays the more decisions they're going to make. We can let him make those decisions and he's comfortable making them. In the past we put so much on his plate, we didn't want to put too much. Because the worst thing he can do is overload your quarterback. So we've tried to adjust the decisions we allow him to make based on what he's comfortable making. If he's comfortable making those decisions now, so as a result, he'll have an opportunity to get us in and out of more plays. We'll give him more freedom on where he's going to go with the ball than we have in the past, and I think that's going to help our offense.

Q. How's your offensive line shaping up, and what specifically happened to Cochran?

COACH DYKES: Well, we think our offensive line's going to be good. If you look at us, Rigsbee's played a lot of football for us for a long time. Chris has played a lot of football for us for a long time. Steven Moore's played a lot of football for us for a long time. Coming into the year it was important to get the right tackle position solidified, so that was going to be good for us going into spring football.

Farley is a guy we kept wanting him to take over that position. He's got good size. He's a really good athlete. He took a big step in the spring. I'm not so sure during spring football he wasn't one of our best one or two offensive linemen, so that was a big question that got answered for us.

We hated to lose Matt, but that's one of those things that happens. Not going to go into it too much. That's kind of a personal matter, and he's just not going to be with us. So next man's got to step up.

We have a lot of options with we can move Rigsbee around. Rigsbee has played center for us in the past. This is something that we've been planning for. It's something that happened in April,

and so we've had a lot of time to prepare. So we feel we're in a good position.

Q. So Cochran's departure was his decision?

COACH DYKES: I'm not really going to say, yeah. It wasn't, but I'm not going to say.

Q. It wasn't his decision?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I don't want to get into it.

Q. Could somebody slide into that position?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, we'll see. Not at center. I think tough for a true freshman to jump into that center position. You know, (Indiscernible) has been somebody we really liked. He was our back-up center all year last year. We didn't have to play him. He was able to red-shirt. He's certainly going to be in the mix competing.

So, yeah, we've got a lot of options. We've got some guys that we think can play those guard positions if we had to move Rigsbee, and Rigsbee's been a very good center for us when he's had to play. So our goal is always to find the best five guys and get them on the field. If that means Rigsbee bumps to center, that's what we'll do. All of those are questions that we'll get answered quickly in fall camp.

Q. Are McClure and Piatt not ready just yet?

COACH DYKES: They're both going to be brought along slowly. I think McClure is probably ahead of schedule. We thought he would be somebody that we had to really manage the early part of fall camp, and he's come along a little bit further. We think Griffin is right on schedule.

The thing you don't want to do is throw those guys in from day one and reinjure them. So we'll monitor both their reps and bring them along as we see fit.

Q. So they'll be ready to go by season?

COACH DYKES: We anticipate it, yes.

Q. (No microphone) is the pace of the offense so fast-paced and the tempo of the game, you're not like Navy. You're not going to slow it down?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, look, we have to get better. I'm not going to try to make excuses for us, but yeah. The numbers are a little bit skewed, without a doubt. As I said earlier, our pass

defense was the worst in the country. But, again, people attempted I think 74 more passes against us than anybody else. So they're probably going to complete at least a couple of those passes and it's probably going to have a statistical -- create a statistical anomaly a little bit. We've got to get better. We know it. We're going to address it. We're going to improve there and it's going to help our team.

Q. As you ramp into non-conference, then you've got a Rocky Long defense and Charlie Strong defense. Are you going to work on them a little sooner?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, we have. Rocky's one of the best defensive coaches in college football, without a doubt. His guys play hard, they know what they're doing. They're going to lineup correctly. They're going to put a lot of pressure on you by moving their front and stunting people. The most important thing, they're going to play hard. Those guys play hard. We know how big of a game that is as a coaching staff. Our job is going to be to make sure our players understand how big of a game that is. That's going to be a very, very big football game for us and a very challenging game. We'll take them one at a time.

As you said, Charlie Strong's teams are always going to play good defense. Texas is going to be a little bit different the way they do things than San Diego State's going to be. As I said, we spent a lot of time in February and March looking at both of them and preparing some plans and scripts for our players to work on this summer in preparation for playing those opponents.

Q. Would that be a plus for Jared to see those sorts of defenses early?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I think so. Look, I'd rather play against bad defenses. Because you look at it two ways. What we have to do as a program, we've got to build some confidence. The way you do that is by beating good people. If we can beat a good San Diego State team, it will give us some confidence. To go compete against a good Texas team as well. That's the next step for us is winning those tough games against good competition, and a lot of that has to do with your confidence and your belief and ability to get it done.

Q. Have you been briefed on the back story between Cal and Texas?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I have, actually. Mack's a friend. We've talked about it. It's interesting because it seems like a lot of people

are upset at Mack. All he was trying to do is help his team and his program. But I get it. I totally get it. We played that Cal team, Texas Tech in the Holiday Bowl that year. The Holiday Bowl, that was as talented a college football team as I've ever seen. When Marshawn Lynch is your third team tailback, that's a pretty good football team. And they had great players across the board.

But, yeah, I think it's a big game for Cal fans, I really do, because that does exist. There is that argument that Cal -- you could make that argument easily that Cal should have been in the Rose Bowl that year. I know it's been five or six years since they've been to the Rose Bowl. Yeah, I think 1959 to be exact.

Q. What have you noticed out of Jared Goff people labeled him as a Heisman candidate?

COACH DYKES: It hasn't changed at all. That is the great thing about Jared. He doesn't care. He loves Cal, he loves his teammates. He's much more concerned with helping our program than he is putting up numbers or helping to improve his draft stock or any of that stuff. So we had some conversations about it. We tried to get ahead of it and say, look, when these things come out you're going to be highly rated and you're going to get besieged by people that want to grab on to you and all that stuff. And him and his parents said, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we get it. And then it happened and it was like whoa. And Mel Kiper came out and said he was going to be the first quarterback or whatever.

It hasn't changed him a bit. If anything, it's made him more focused on improving our team and our program. He's very unselfish. He gets it. I have complete confidence and trust in him that he's going to focus on what's important.

Q. How do you handle Luke?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, he's going to play safety for us right now. We're going to rep him some at quarterback, and then we're going to see where he is on the depth chart after about two weeks of fall camp. If he's going to contribute significantly on our defense, going to play 30, 40 snaps a game, he's going to stay on defense. If he's not, then we're going to move him back on offense and let him compete for the back-up quarterback job with Chase Forrest. So that's our plan.

Chase had a great spring. We were probably pleasantly surprised on how well he executed during the spring and his ability to do

what we want him to do was a little ahead of schedule. So we feel like we're in pretty good hands at that back-up position.

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, same thing. This deal is a marathon, not a sprint. So we want to be able to protect Daniel. Running backs have a tendency to get beat up if they're carrying the ball 20, 30 times a game. We want to keep him healthy and spread out some carries. Get thing is we feel like we've got four or five really good running backs that can help us. And Khalfani has really been productive this summer. Our guys, the reports on him are really good. He's looked good. Going out and doing things this summer with our players in summer workouts. He brings a different dimension. So when you look at Lasco, Vic, Khalfani, Tre Watson, we feel like we've got four pretty solid running backs.

Q. In the coaching rotation, you're going to handle the wide receivers?

COACH DYKES: I'm going to handle the outside receivers. Jacob Peeler will handle the inside. He's full-time now, so he'll handle the inside, and I'll handle the outside as a graduate assistant.

Q. Last year you had guys that were about to enroll in classes in junior college right out of high school (No microphone). How is he coming along?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, A.J.'s gotten a lot better this spring. He's one of those kids that we wish we could have red-shirted last year, but we couldn't. We needed him to play on special teams and be on our coverage units and give us some depth at a position we really had no depth at. So he was thrown into the fire a little bit probably more quickly than we wanted to. But he responded well, and he had a good spring. He's certainly somebody that's going to be competing for playing time. Both he and Derron Brown. Derron was kind of a junior college player that we signed that went through spring football. Both those guys are improving. They're both good athletes. Both have good size. Both can run, and we think they can help us win.

Q. Jared talked about the added confidence he has right now. How does that translate into his performance on the field?

COACH DYKES: Well, it just feels better. It feels better for me to be here just knowing that we have an opportunity to have a good football

team and that it's not -- it feels better for me. I know it feels better for him. It just helps your decision making. It makes things, you're able to make faster decisions, you're able to see more. It also helps you not try to force things. I think he understands now that he can check the ball down, and we have good players that can make plays with the ball. We don't necessarily have to throw it 40 yards to have a 40-yard play. And I think that's the maturation the quarterbacks go through.

When that completion percentage goes up and we start completing more balls to guys we start making more plays. Our offense works. When you can throw three 30-yard passes that turn into 60-yard touchdowns, that's when this thing gets going really good.

Q. When you made the decision to go with him as a freshman, what did you see in him to make that decision?

COACH DYKES: I think we saw the potential. He graduated early and went through spring football, and at the beginning of spring we thought this guy's pretty good. He can make all the throws. Then the more he played, the more comfortable he got. We felt like he was the best guy. We knew there were going to be growing pains as a program. We knew that across the board. We knew it was going to be a struggle, a tough year. We thought we'll invest these reps and this young player that we think is going to pay off on the back end, so that's what we decided to do.

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, all somebody's doing is really throwing a name out there. It's not like these general managers are saying that. It's somebody who really doesn't have a vested interest in any of it. So I'm not trying to diminish that at all. I think Jared's one of the elite quarterbacks in college football, and he's going to have a great pro career. But just because some guy threw his name out there doesn't mean anything right now. Best thing is he gets out, he understands it, and it's all about performance for him. He gets that. He's excited about that.

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, go back and look at some of the names that guys have thrown out there. Instead of this guy's going to be the first guy taken in the draft. Go back and look at some of the past quarterbacks that people have said that about and they don't always work out. Like I said, I'm not trying to diminish Jared in any way, shape

or form. I'm saying those things don't really mean much.

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I agree. That is the conversation we had with the parents and they get it. They told us that more than we told them that. So we get it, and he gets it, and his ability to handle it is impressive for a young guy.

Q. Do you feel you're stretched too thin adding the whiteouts?

COACH DYKES: No, not at all. The good thing is those guys have a lot of experience. It's going to be good for me. It's going to get me a little bit more involved, which I'm comfortable doing. Look, I'm not going to call plays. Tony's going to call plays. I'm not going to get involved in that. But I really enjoy coaching. I miss the relationship that you can develop with your players every day in that meeting room with them. I just miss that. So I look forward to getting in and working with those guys.

It helps when you have Kenny Lawlor, and Maurice Harris, and all the guys that we've got playing outside, Trevor Davis. Those guys have played a lot of football. So surely I can't screw that up.

Q. You have four full-time offensive offensive coaches on staff.

COACH DYKES: Yeah.

Q. Is Hamilton a hired gun?

COACH DYKES: I think it's getting done. Yeah, that's what it looks like it's going to be.

Q. How are the defensive backs looking?

COACH DYKES: That's a good question. I wish I knew the answer to that. We all have ideas on that. I think Malik Psalms has proven that he physically has an opportunity to maybe come in and play. He's got good size. He's 6'2", he's 185, 190 pounds. He bench pressed over 300 pounds. Which is pretty impressive for a kids that a high school corner coming out. He ran in the low 4.5s when we tested him. I think he verticalled over 40 inches.

So on paper you say, okay, this guy may be ready. Well, that doesn't really matter. It's how quickly can he pick things up? What is his threshold for staying healthy? How hard is he going to compete? How much is he going to be able to handle adversity when it happens? I mean, maturity is the most important thing to be able to --

being able to play early. It's much more important than athletic ability. We think Antoine Albert, Khari Vanderbilt, we think all those guys have an opportunity to play. Derron Brown. We'll see. It's going to be the same transition with those guys. It's just going to be who can pick things up the quickest. Who can adjust the quickest, because it's going to be different than what they've done in the past at the JC. And who can stay healthy?

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: Darius Powe?

Q. (No microphone)?

COACH DYKES: No, Lonny's going to be a running back.

Q. Hardy Nickerson mentioned this is the first year where he gets a defensive coordinator back. How important is it?

COACH DYKES: I think continuity in a coaching staff is important. I've always believed that. I think that's how you improve is you hear the same voice over and over and over again. That's what's been good about our offense in the last 18 years. Me going back to Kentucky is we were all taught to coach a certain way, and we all emphasize the same things. It was a consistent voice all along.

So we've been fortunate to be able to hire coaches that have followed our philosophy, that get the way we want to teach and understand it. So when we do lose a coach, which we're going to do, inevitably, they've grown up in the system. So when a defensive standpoint, Art's very much that way. He's got a methodology for teaching; and we were able to add John Lovett who has worked with art a bunch of different places. They're on the same page.

So, as Hardy said, having Art back as defensive coordinator, having Garret Chachere back as linebacker coach, having Fred Tate back as a defensive line coach, and having Greg Burns back as the safeties coach and now adding John Lovett who has worked with Art many times through the years, I think it's just going to improve our defense.

Q. You had a succession of games last year that I've never seen before. The year before you had injuries. Can you get emotionally exhausted?

COACH DYKES: Sure you can. I think you look at a little bit of what happened to us last year against Washington where we were coming

off of a tough loss and felt like our guys are ready to play. They were really geared up for that game, and we drive down and get down to the 1-yard line, and we fumble in the end zone and they run it 99 yards back for a touchdown. You can feel it on the sidelines. We just weren't there yet in terms of able to deal with that type of adversity.

As you said, I think we got a little bit mentally worn down. I think that happens to young football teams, particularly teams that have lost some tough ballgames and have played a lot of tough ballgames. It takes an emotional toll on you as a player, and is certainly does as a coach.

The good thing is it does that when you're young. The older you get, the more battles you've fought and the more able you are to deal with those type of things.

Q. Did you like playing the Oregon game in 49ers Stadium?

COACH DYKES: I'd rather play them all at home.

Q. Have you ever seen a stretch of a schedule like you have this year with four out of five games on the road?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, yeah, we had a run like that when I was at Louisiana Tech. It was different, but we played at -- we were sitting there and kind of had a rough start. We go to -- we went to Ole Miss, we went to Utah State who was good, we went to Nevada who was good. We went to Fresno, who was good, we went to Idaho. Now you think about that. And then we had two home games out of 7. So we had five road games, two home games out of a seven-game stretch. We were just trying to get the program turned. We won, believe it or not, all seven of those ballgames.

We sat back and looked at that part of the schedule and thought there is no way we're going to survive this. Credit our players for playing hard and hung in there and figured out ways to win games. Won some road games and got it done. Won all seven of them to close out that year and win a conference championship.

So the funny thing about teams is the step that gets you over the hump is when your players believe. You're going to win a game at some point maybe you shouldn't win against a good football team. All of a sudden guys start believing that they can win these games. They're going to find a way to do it. They start creating positive plays in critical situations, and that's how you get over the hump. That's how you can start winning competitive games against good people.

There's not many teams in this league that are just going to lineup and win because they're more talented than everybody else. Everybody's talented. So you have to be good in situational football and which worked really hard this spring to become a good situational team. We'll work really hard this fall to become a good situational team, and hopefully that will pay off on Saturday.

Q. Speaking of your schedule Todd Graham said he doesn't remember getting to coach against you. He talked about how strange it is that it's going to be the last game?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, it is strange. Some of the scheduling stuff, I don't really understand. I know there is a reason for it, but I don't really get it. I think we'd all be more comfortable playing our rivals the last game of the season. Last year we played BYU after we played Stanford which didn't make a lot of sense. This year we're playing Arizona State.

Now, again, scheduling -- the schedule is the schedule. We're going to play it regardless of who it says and when we play it. But I think everybody's more comfortable with that. There is a reason why, I just don't know what it is.

Yeah, we haven't had a chance to coach against him. He's done a great job at Arizona State. I have a lot of respect for Todd as a high school coach. I used to recruit against him when he went to West Virginia. We both recruited the Dallas area. He was a very good recruiter. Worked very hard at it, and he's done a great job at Arizona State. I think there will be a big challenge for us. They've got a good football team. They've been consistent. He's really done some good things with their program.

Q. Another head coach, Gary Andersen, you were just mentioning Louisiana Tech, you had a couple good games. That last one went down to the wire?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, that was a he crazy ballgame. We had a couple of crazy games with them. We beat them the year before in Logan. They came and beat us the next year in Ruston. Two really ballgames that could have gone either way. We could have lost the year in Logan and won the year in Ruston. But Gary's a good football coach. He's won everywhere he's been. It's funny, you look at a third of the coaches in the Pac-12 were in the WAC at the same time.

You look at Chris was at Boise. Mike was at San Jose. Obviously, Gary was at Utah State, and I was at Louisiana Tech. We've all coached

against each other and we're all pretty familiar with what the other guy does. It's kind of been fun coming up through the ranks with those guys.

Q. How's Steven Moore?

COACH DYKES: Great. He's strong. He had both shoulders worked on. He's had issues with those. Our thing was let's get them fixed and get him healthy. He's stronger than he's ever been. He feels great. As I said, he's another one of those guys that's probably a month ahead of schedule.

Q. Is he cleared to start?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, he'll start full-go from day one.

Q. How's Jaylinn and Nate Broussard?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, Jaylinn's fine. He had hamstring issues that played him all of spring football. But he's been healthy. I think he's in a good spot. Nathan Broussard's another one of those guys that has, unfortunately, been hurt for us for two solid years. He's got a chance to be a good player. We've got to bring him along slowly, just like we have to do with some of these other guys. We'll monitor his reps as we go through fall camp. Just like we're going to do with a lot of guys. Just like we did with Mus in the spring, we'll do with Mus in the fall.

Q. Same thing with Quentin?

COACH DYKES: Same thing with Quentin. Yeah, I think all these guys respond differently to surgeries. I think Nate's in a really good place. I think he's probably a little ahead of schedule and feels that way. I think Quentin's probably right on schedule. So we'll be smart with him. We'll bring him along, and the big thing is keep him healthy.

Q. Piatt and McClure, I heard you talk about them before. Will they be able to start practice?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, they'll both be at camp. Same thing, we'll monitor those guys and bring them along slowly. But I think we're all pleasantly surprised with Stefan's recovery up to this point. But the worst thing we can do is set him back. So we have to be smart about how we bring him along.

Q. Who is your center?

COACH DYKES: We'll see. Don't know yet. We'll know pretty quickly. We'll probably know after four or five practices.

Q. What about Jeff Coprich, another guy coming back from injury?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I think Jeff's going to work into the running back rotation. I know that's what he wants to do. That's what we want him to do. In this day and age, you better have five or six good running backs because guys get banged up or beat up, and Jeff's going to get in the mix and compete against those guys.

Q. When you look at the career arcs of Jared and Kessler, is there no longer a traditional route for quarterbacks anymore?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, there is not a traditional route for anything. For coaching, for quarterbacks, for any of it. It's all about the end game, getting to a particular place, and it really doesn't matter how you get there.

Q. How prepared are freshmen these days coming in to play quarterback?

COACH DYKES: Well, I think guys can come in now much more prepared than they probably could before. I think the spread offense and the spread of the spread offense to the high school ranks, and really honestly in a lot of ways from the high school ranks to the college ranks. You could make the argument that it truly started in the high schools and kind of got into college, then kind of got into the pros. But a lot of people would make the argument the other way.

Q. Used to be the other way around?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, it is at times. So these guys, again, you look at Jared, and you say, well, he played a lot of snaps in high school. He was a starter a long time, got a lot of repetitions. I make the analogy all the time about at-bats. Every time a quarterback takes a snap, drops back, has to move in the pocket, go through reads, make throws, he gets an at-bat. Every at-bat he gets a little better. He can deal with more things and see more things and the game starts to slow down.

When the quarterbacks are coached as well as they are now, particularly in California, a lot of these high school quarterbacks are as well-coached coming out of high school as any kids in the country. The high school coaches do a great job. A lot of guys work with the quarterback gurus. Those guys do a good job, and those guys are further along coming out as freshmen than they have been in the past. As the game changed, the way those guys are trained has changed, and I think it's paying dividends.

Q. You have (No microphone) most of the Pac-12 schools are in metro areas and you have your established territories. The one area in the west that seems like a new frontier is Las Vegas. There are a lot of kids coming out of there.

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I think the population keeps growing out west. You can look at Phoenix and what's happened to Phoenix and the quality of high school football in Phoenix is so much better now than it was ten years ago, and certainly the same thing has happened in Vegas.

As the population increases, you're going to have more athletes. Clearly they've done good jobs with some of the programs in Vegas. Those guys are well-coached and they're going to keep producing more and more players every year.

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