

**July 15, 2016**



An Interview With:

## **COACH CHRIS PETERSEN**

COACH PETERSEN: I'd like to first start by acknowledging and introducing a couple of our players that we have here, Kevin King, far corner, and senior defensive back, true senior has done a tremendous job of developing his talent, his leadership abilities, and really excited to see what he's going to do this fall.

Other corners are senior tight end, another true senior, Darrell Daniels. Again, another guy that's continually gotten better, certainly since the time I've been there. And I think both these guys -- I'm always interested to see what the seniors are going to do. Everybody wants to talk about young guys coming in and who they are. I always think that it starts with your seniors, and are those guys going to take the next step, and I think it's really hard as a senior to be able to take that next step. It takes twice as much work as these young guys that are going to develop quickly, and then you start to plateau a little bit. And when those two guys take the next step, it will really make our team better without question.

So we're excited. We're excited to get out there and go back to work. We're amused, and that's probably the best word, that we continually get better every single week with doing nothing. We have as much hype as the new Pokemon game that no one knows anything about but thinks it's really cool, that's us.

We want to get out there, and we want to get better, and we want to get a chance to go prove that we're getting better, and I think that's where we are.

That being said, I'd answer anybody's questions.

**Q. Is that the best way to defuse preseason hype is poke fun at it, have some fun, make a Pokemon reference?**

COACH PETERSEN: I think the preseason hype, I've been like that as long as I've

been a coach. Last year the preseason hype was we wouldn't win four games, and they were dead wrong. So I'm really scared that you guys are dead wrong again because you usually are.

So that's why I put no stock in it, you know. We're in the rankings. We're in the postseason rankings, you know. I'm a voter on the top 25 football teams, and it's a complete waste of time and crapsheet for the first five weeks. I don't know, and I study this stuff all the time. I don't know who's any good. The teams change so dramatically.

And so, you know, let us play games. And I get it's important for college football and it's fun for the fans, but in terms of like really what's going on and being said, I mean, it would be nice if we could actually do something before somebody said something really good or really bad about us.

**Q. Is this in any way similar to the kind of expectation level you would manage at Boise after that name became established?**

COACH PETERSEN: Well, what's different is we won at Boise. We haven't won like we need to win. I get Stanford being ranked. They've won a lot. I get UCLA being up there. They've won a lot and all that. We feel good about our guys. We love coaching them, and they're a very focused group and all those things, but we just have a lot to prove, and who knows how it's going to go, and I think our guys understand that, as well.

So for everybody to -- it's just such a fickle world that we live in, and since December I've been so pleased how great we've gotten every week with playing no football, and we come in, another good week, guys, more people are on. It just is what it is.

**Q. Would it help the sport if we didn't start ranking until October?**

COACH PETERSEN: You'd be given a lot better information. I think we all know that. And for you guys, I think it's fun and keeps people interested and all that. If you want really good information, certainly from the coaches, I feel

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awkward voting at that time because here I am a coach putting out information that I really don't have any clue about.

**Q. Is there any sense of vindication that finally your program is established, though, and starting to do what you want it to do?**

COACH PETERSEN: There's no vindication. Vindication would be at the end of the year if we get better, if we improve, all the things, all the areas that we know we're hoping to improve upon. And I think it's always about is this team playing as close to the potential as we feel it has, and are we improving every week.

So if you can say yes to those two questions, which I think are really big and hard questions, you can feel pretty good about yourself. The results will take care of themselves.

**Q. Can you talk about bringing Jeff Bedford on, what's his role, what can he do, what can't he do, and what prompted that?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, he can't coach any of the players. He can be in all of our meetings. He can look at tape. We can talk to him. He can be in as many conversations in terms of all that type of stuff. What prompted it is he didn't want to coach -- he wanted to get back into college football, and there wasn't an opportunity out there for him this year that he -- making him a head coach or some other position like that, and he knows a lot of guys on our staff, and really that's what this thing is all about is being around people you want to be around.

So I think both sides wanted to be around each other, and he's obviously a really good coach with a lot of knowledge and has done a lot of things, and so we feel real fortunate to get a guy like that to be able to be with us.

**Q. Would you consider him for a full-time position in the future?**

COACH PETERSEN: We're not even there. I mean, the great thing about him, I mean, he is not here at Washington to come here to get a job from us. He'd be the first to tell you that. He's just here to -- he gets it, and he gets how a guy like that could come and upset the apple cart in terms of what his role is and all that. I wouldn't -- there's a lot of coaches maybe with his stature out there that maybe you could get to come aboard if they didn't have something going, and I wouldn't do that with a lot of people, but I know what Jeff is all

about and I know what his heart is, and he's truly in it for being around us and helping us and not trying to -- he's not thinking about a job here at Washington right now, he's just thinking about being part of our deal and his role.

**Q. Was the decision based on your contract extension?**

COACH PETERSEN: It has nothing to do with that. We are very lucky that this happened, it just happened.

**Q. What's the biggest difference about Husky football from the team you took over to today?**

COACH PETERSEN: I'd say the biggest difference, and this is like a really vague thing to say, but for me in terms of our program, it just feels better, for our coaches, and I think it feels better for our players. It just takes a long time to get everybody on the same page and believing the same things. I think our team is more unified, like our team to get to know each other. We do a lot of those types of activities in terms of team building, for lack of a better word, but I think those kids really like each other and feel for each other. I think they get the coaches. I think there's good connections with the coaches, and then just really how we operate.

So all those things, there's always work in progress, but they take a long time. You know, it's like you come there and you're trying to do all these different things with how you run a program and what your culture is about and you have a meeting and you can't just say, okay, this is what we are and we've got it. It's like putting in a play one time and saying, we are good, okay, this is going to work. So that's where we are. We're just working through that stuff, and it just feels -- I think we've got a lot of good kids that are really focused and are good teammates and really want to compete hard, and I think all that feels good.

**Q. You talked about the oddity of getting better while not playing. Is it hard not to get caught up in the hype?**

COACH PETERSEN: I haven't felt that at all with our players. You just pay attention to how they work and how they lift and how they run and all those things, and we've been really, really impressed, so I don't think they are. You know, I hope they use that, because it's obvious everybody

hears it, and if there's any effect and influence on them, I hope they use that as motivation to prove people right. But I think they're also smart enough and been around long enough to know how difficult this league is and what people say about us really doesn't matter, as last year. It doesn't really matter. So this year it's the exact opposite. It doesn't really matter. We have to go prove it and earn things.

**Q. What's the next step in Jake Browning's progression?**

COACH PETERSEN: I'd say the next step in his progression is everybody around him. Everybody wants to talk about Jake Browning. Everybody wants to talk about Myles Gaskin. Everybody wants to talk about John Ross on offense. I think we need to talk about all the other unsung heroes that need to be unhung heroes. And if those guys elevate their game, if that O-line elevates their game, if our tight ends take the next step, if our wide receivers can start making some really spectacular plays, I think everything is going to change on our offense in terms of momentum.

So are there things Jake can do better? For sure, a bunch of more subtle, more accurate, more anticipation, more pocket presence, all the things that are fundamentals of the quarterback game, which he will, and you could see some things where he started to look better. But our whole mission is to make that quarterback successful, and how do we do that? How do we make him one of the most successful quarterbacks in the country? All those other guys playing at the next level, taking the next step, and it'll all come back to Jake. But he understands. He's only as good as those guys around him.

**Q. Given what you just said about Jake and Myles and John and Adam, the defense only gave up 18 points per game. Can you maybe understand why people are excited about your team this year?**

COACH PETERSEN: Well, we're excited about our team, but I will tell you this: We are right there in every single game but one. We were not in the Stanford game towards the end. And we just -- it wasn't because they were not trying hard enough. We just weren't good enough. Their skill level was just not good enough. We just weren't there. Everything was hard for us. So that really has to change. We have to be able to have improved our skill level and built skill, and that's been the whole mission.



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We're excited, too, but we have to go prove that we're there, that we can finish close games and make plays.

You know, I think it might be more work and harder to get over that hump than to get right there. We've been right there, but I think it's going to be harder to get over it, and I don't think that's what a lot of people understand. I hope our players really understand that, but I don't think a lot of people do understand like how difficult that part is.

**Q. The opening game versus Rutgers, new coach, he's never been a head coach, but he's been at Ohio State and been at Arkansas, but there's nothing really to go on in terms of head coach. It's only an opening game, but how do you prepare for a team with a totally new coaching staff?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, that's hard. I wish we played them the second game or third game, but it is what it is. That will be a big advantage for Rutgers without question.

You know, I think on defense, I think one of the things that a good defense has to be built is to be able to defend a bunch of different type schemes because you see it all in college football. It's different than pro football. I mean, everybody kind of runs the same stuff in pro football. But whether it's going to be a spread offense or more of a power offense or a power spread or they run the quarterback, we see it all, and so everything has to be built around being very adjustable and have answers to all these things.

And I think the defense, our hats off to those kids and our coaches. You know, they created a system that is like -- it's good, and they can defend a lot of things.

Now, you know, we're going to have to play fundamental, solid rule football because who knows what they're going to throw at us, and adjust on the fly. I mean, that's what that game is going to be all about. It's going to be a hard, tough first game.

**Q. Coach Brady moved Jeff Lindquist over to tight end. Coming into fall camp can we anticipate any other position changes, any additions or subtractions from the roster?**

COACH PETERSEN: The only other guy, and we did the same thing in spring, is Will Dissly playing more tight end. We moved him there in the spring, just kind of seeing how that goes, and I

think we're going to leave him there at this point. Will is always a guy we could kick back over there if we had some depth issues on defense, but I think at this point we're going to leave Will at the tight end position, who played D-line all last year.

**Q. People have been asking about Austin Joyner. He was such a great running back.**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, well, Austin has played about three weeks of defensive football for us before he got hurt, and so he's still making recoveries there. So there's no talk of moving him at all. He's still in the secondary, and we will see how it goes.

**Q. You worked with Marcel Yates for a long time at Boise State. What's he going to bring to Arizona?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, Marcel is a really good guy, and he's a really good coach. I think he brings toughness and good fundamentals. He's one of my favorite coaches that I've been with. He was always a guy I really enjoyed on our staff a lot. I really hated to lose him when he left to go to Texas A&M, but it was the next step in his progression, and so he was there a little bit and running the defense at Arizona, which is great, and I think he'll do a really good job.

**Q. Coach Rod said that he was looking more for a personality than a scheme when he hired Marcel. What is that personality that he brings?**

COACH PETERSEN: I think he relates to the players really well, and I think that he brings toughness to defense. But you know, he's kind of a no-nonsense guy but a good guy. He's a unique combination. He's not -- like he's a real personal believe guy and everybody likes Marcel, but he also knows how to coach defensive football and get his guys how to play at a high level.

**Q. (Inaudible.) What does that mean to you, and when you walk in to your office, what is that going to mean to you? What does that symbolize for the program?**

COACH PETERSEN: Well, like I've said before, when I was growing up and watching Husky football at its finest, Coach James was leading that, and that's what I think about husky football is those times.

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**Q. Can you talk a little bit about your offensive line? Last year you were young. This year you're still young, still inexperienced.**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, so Coleman has played every position I think on that offensive line in terms of tackle, guard, center. He's just an athletic, kind of tough, really good competitor, so he gives us flexibility there. We kind of always think it's so much of the calls and the integrity of the line starts from the inside out, and so I think it'll be a good challenge for him.

I'm excited to see the two -- our tackles. I think our tackles -- I'm excited to see the whole O-line. We need to get better there. They did a good job last year for being as young and as inexperienced, but I should say they did a solid job. We need a really good, excellent job there, and I think we can be there. I think the talent is there, and I think the experience that they got last year will really help them. But we've got to take the next step in terms of playing better. They go against a really good defensive line every day, and so I think that's painful for them, but I think in the long run will help them.

**Q. Isaiah Renfro has opened up quite a bit about his struggle with depression and anxiety and why he walked away from football. Are those kinds of things something that you've become more aware of as a coach than maybe when you started, and are there mechanisms in place that you have to help players who struggle with that?**

COACH PETERSEN: I'm more aware of everything as a coach in terms of all that stuff. I mean, it's just different than it was 20 or 10 years ago. I mean, everything is different. And so we try to pay attention to everything. I think there are more mechanisms in place and support, all those things, and whether we're talking about tackling and concussions and how we practice and new equipment to supporting our guys off the field and all those type of things, I mean, I think everybody is trying to make really good and as fast progress as we can to help kids.

**Q. Can you think of any one thing in particular can be improved upon from last season?**

COACH PETERSEN: No, I can't say there's any one thing improved upon, but I'm

hoping there's a lot of things improved upon, certainly starting with our offense. I hope our defense can get back and play at a level that they played at last year. You know, we're losing four guys from last year's defense that were really good players and really important to us that were underrated. Not by us but from the outside. And so people talk about our defense being better.

Heck, I hope we can play like we played last year before we talk about being better.

So I mean, that's our whole mantra around our program is continuous improvement, and so I hope everything is better. Certainly if we're going to do anything that everybody is talking about, we'd better be a lot better.

**Q. You talked about your secondary a little bit, Baker, Sidney Jones, you've got a lot of talent, Kevin King?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, we do. We have some talent and we have a little bit of depth, and it's awesome because when we came in here a few years ago we recruited seven defensive backs. I've said this before, you don't recruit seven anything in one class. That's how the situation just was. I mean, sometimes it happens like that. Guys don't pan out and all of a sudden you just don't have what you need. So we made a frantic effort to really bolster that situation, and I think you're seeing kind of the fruits of our labor right there with a really good coach in Jimmy Lake coaching them every day. So we're excited about that crew. I think there's going to be good competition. You talk about those guys, but I think they're going to be challenged by everybody we spoke about and some young guys.

**Q. You mentioned Jimmy Lake. He got a promotion. Does his responsibility change at all?**

COACH PETERSEN: You know, his responsibility doesn't change tremendously. It's probably just more -- his title is probably more appropriate now because he was so involved with defending and game planning the pass game, and those guys worked so well together. In a lot of ways he was like a co-defensive coordinator anyways in what he was doing, so now he's got the title to go with it.

**Q. I don't know if you have any senior graduate transfers this year or if you lost any from last year, but having seen this rule, do you have any opinion now?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, I don't like it at all because I don't think everybody plays by the same -- every school is different in terms of who you can get in and all those type of things. I mean, I'm fine for kids, like are we talking about kids going there to get a master's degree and he's leaving there because they don't have that master's program? Let's call it what it is. That's not what it is.

**Q. That was supposed to be the intent --**

COACH PETERSEN: Maybe it was way back when, but it's not even kinda now. Now, we haven't had a graduate transfer. We lost one in a running back, and if anybody ever deserved a transfer, this guy did. He spent a lot of time with us, and he just wants more playing time.

**Q. As a head coach you have a three-game win streak against Wazoo. What do those victories in particular mean to you and your staff?**

COACH PETERSEN: Well, you know, everybody loves to talk about the rivalry games, and I think they're important for the fans, and I think our -- the kids really like them. I think from a coaching staff, it's just another really important game. I mean, there's no way that if this team isn't considered a rival that we think of them one bit less important in terms of what we're trying to get done. I think the Apple Cup, the fact that it's the end of the year, and the fact that there's -- you're going to see a lot of those Cougar license plates around Seattle all year long, so it's just nice if you can win, you don't have to worry, think they're rubbing it in your face every time they drive by you.

**Q. Why did you want to take this opportunity in the first place, to get this program back to the upper echelon?**

COACH PETERSEN: I really thought that the University of Washington fit so many things that I'm all about. You know, I just really always admired the University, certainly the program when it was going like Coach James and the combination of those things and what could be possible there. That was one of the reasons -- that was probably the big reasons, those things right there. Like I've seen it when it looks like it's supposed to. And then the administration, and I think -- I always wanted to be at a place that I

thought the degree was powerful and meant something outside of football and those type of things, and so I think all those things fit the checklist, and I think it's a good fit.

**Q. And the new athletic director, how is that relationship?**

COACH PETERSEN: Awesome. She's great, Jen Cohen. We're all -- I think not only our football staff but the whole athletic department is really excited about her. Well-deserved, and everybody is excited to watch her go to work.

**Q. In what ways is your coaching influenced by what you learned from Jim Sochor at UC Davis?**

COACH PETERSEN: I think you talk to the Davis guys, all the Davis guys that have come out over the years that have been into coaching, and there's a lot of them, and all-stars with coach soaker, Jim Sochor and Bob Foster, both those guys. Unique place. I know I wouldn't be into coaching today without question had I not gone there.

**Q. Fans always want to know about players. Give me some guys that had tremendous off-seasons or maybe some of the young guys you only had on campus for a couple years.**

COACH PETERSEN: You know, we'll probably talk right before we start again, and I'll maybe be able to answer that question for you better. I think in general, I don't have any -- I think the most -- the thing that I'm probably most impressed with and most excited about is I feel like these guys -- we really think there's a team in this group. Like that's how saw how and the weight room really evaluates every day. So if somebody is -- if it wasn't good -- the line didn't really bring it today or somebody is late or somebody -- it's not a good day, and they get graded on their days, and we just haven't had a lot of bad days. It's been really focused and the guys have been really driven, and I think that's probably the most exciting thing, that I think the guys are really doing what we had hoped and expect. And it can't really come from us. We can't be there. It's got to like be internal and it's got to come from that locker room, and I think that's what we felt like to this point as coaches, that it's like, okay.

**Q. Your first thought when you saw the date of the Pac-12 Media Days, knowing that**

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**you had a big football camp scheduled the same day.**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, I'm going to get back. I will tell you this: I actually do like the Media Days at this time because I'm now done with it, and now I get a week or so before we go into the grind. So usually it's like the Media Days, and then you've got to go right into it. I like this setup.

**Q. I've got a question about a player that you kind of possibly believed in when not a lot of other people ended up knowing who he was. What did you see in Daniel Bridge-Gadd that made you guys think --**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, we had our sights on him for a long time. We just thought that he was a good quarterback that was going to continue to develop, and that's the hardest position in my opinion to evaluate because these guys can come and throw and -- and that's not playing quarterback. So you've got to study game tape, and we were so excited that we were able to actually evaluate him part of his senior year and not have to make decisions. That's so rare these days, especially with quarterbacks. And for us to be able to do that and go, yeah, we're seeing what we thought, so we think his best days are still in front of him, and we think he fits what we're all about.

**Q. Can you expand on that? What is playing quarterback in your mind?**

COACH PETERSEN: I think it's being an accurate thrower, being able to see the field and anticipate where the ball should go, to be able to play in confined spaces, to be able to be probably one of the toughest guys on the field, to know you're going to get hit, and it still doesn't determine where you're going with the ball and those type of things. I mean, it's all -- it's all, that guy can make that offense start to look a lot different by a lot of little subtleties that no one really realize from the outside.

**Q. Have you or anybody on the team been to the Cotton Bowl other than for the Southern Miss game?**

COACH PETERSEN: I've been to the Cotton Bowl one other time.

**Q. How did the team react? That's**

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**historic.**

COACH PETERSEN: It's historic, yeah. I think when I was back at it, it was a little bit different. There weren't quite as many bowl games. It was a little bit more the Cotton Bowl. It was kind of one of the bigger bowl games there. It was really cool for me to go back and see that.

We tried to educate our guys on the history and the legacy and what that place is all about, so it was fun to play in it.

**Q. How has Keishawn Bierria developed for you guys?**

COACH PETERSEN: Yeah, Keishawn is doing a really nice job. He's becoming a leader of our team and works really hard, and he's an important voice in our locker room. He's another guy, just it's fun to watch his maturation and how he's taking the next step just as a person, as a leader, and as a linebacker.

**Q. As a linebacker, what are his top skills for you?**

COACH PETERSEN: That's a great question. I think of Keishawn as kind of one of those alpha -- he's an alpha dog. He's a natural leader. I think that's -- I think it's nice when he's at that linebacker position and kind of controls a lot of things, and a lot of guys are always looking to the linebacker, and I think that's the thing that I like best about him.

**Q. What did Troy Williams have to learn after he left you guys?**

COACH PETERSEN: Well, I think the thing about Troy, I think Troy is going to be a really good player for Utah. I've said that a couple times here today. He was just young and just needed experience, and I think him going and playing at JC, he did a really good job there. I think Utah has got a really good player in him.

**Q. You're going to have to play against him.**

COACH PETERSEN: There's no question we are. We're going to have to play against a lot of really good players.

**Q. How is John Ross?**

COACH PETERSEN: John Ross is doing real well, and we need him to be able to take the next step for us to do what we want to do. But he's doing good. But we've got some players there that I think can do the job if we continue to progress,

and John is one of those guys. He's played very little receiver, but he stays healthy, he'll get where we need him.

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