

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 26 2017

Gary Andersen Oregon State Beavers



GARY ANDERSEN: Thank you, it's great to be here. We're excited to get started. Little uniqueness for us. You've already had two practices, so we'll get back and have practice number three tomorrow. Kids have done a tremendous job. They've had a great off-season. Proud of where we sit.

This is a challenging schedule and a tremendous league that we play in, but I am very proud of the way this football team has prepared to this point. We're looking forward to camp. Two days in. We're banging away and excited about the opportunities that are in front of us.

So on that, I'll give it to you guys. We've got Ryan Nall with us today, a running back. Manase Hungalu, obviously a linebacker. Two fantastic young men. Do things right on the field, do things right off the field, and just great mentors of our program for our young kids and our old kids. So excited to have them with us. You'll see what kind of kids they are when you get to talk to them.

Q. Do you feel like this year things are where you want them in place at Oregon State, or is there always something?

GARY ANDERSEN: I think there's always something for every coach, regardless of the year and situation. But I do feel like we've made strides in a lot of ways. I would say our kids believe they have the physical ability and toughness to impact games now. That was a big step for us I think we took last year, and in not just in the games we won, some of the close games that we lost. There's always things to fix and always the juggling act of the stronger position groups and the injury bug and the factors. But we've made strides, and I'm sure everybody else in the league has too.

Q. What would you say are the biggest improvements this year?

GARY ANDERSEN: Well, we need to see the biggest improvements, and what we've talked about since January, so I hope this is where you see them and this is where we need to see them, is in the throw game as a whole. That's not just the quarterback, that's the offense, that's every player, every coach, and that's myself. We've recruited that way. I think we've trained that way and hired coaches that way. So we need to

see a big improvement in that area.

And on the defensive side of the football, we need to stop the run.

If we don't see progress in both of those places, we'll see the same results.

Q. Can you tell me about your quarterback situation?

GARY ANDERSEN: Yeah, basically we have three young men getting reps in our first couple presses. We've got to narrow that down to two very quickly as we move forward. We'll make a decision on the starting quarterback when the program will allow us to make that decision. I wish it was today. I wish I was sitting here now and telling you who I believe we'll have as the starting quarterback. But I can't say that right now.

Players make plays, players win games, and players win positions. We'll put them against each other in camp, and we'll get to the point to where it all works its way out, hopefully sooner.

Q. Is there a leader in the clubhouse?

GARY ANDERSEN: I don't think there is a leader. We have a couple kids that have played games for us at Oregon State. We have a young man in Jake that's come in and played Division I football and went to junior college and did some good things.

They've all had positives and negatives, just like we all do. So through two days of practice, I feel like we did in spring, it's a competitive race. I think we're starting to see a little bit of separation. But as I say, I don't want to jinx it.

Q. Your thoughts on going in, a month from today I think it is. Colorado State, they're opening up a brand-new stadium, a lot of excitement surrounding that. So your thoughts of going in and starting early, but also in that situation with them opening the brand-new stadium?

GARY ANDERSEN: I like the early start just for the flow of the season. Now it is 14 weeks, and that's a long season, but when we decided to change that game and play it on zero week, it was because we had four games and then Washington and SC, and so it

gives us a break at a pretty good time. So that was a positive.

Going to play Colorado State, opening up a new stadium, they're going to be a challenge. There is no doubt. They're a good football team, and they proved that last year. They did some things in the Mountain West. We've watched their tape and have a lot of respect for them. We've watched their mini game plan that everybody puts together on their first opponents.

Coach Baldwin has some real knowledge of them. He was there, so he knows a lot from the recruiting process.

So it's a game that we look at as a tremendous challenge. We've not won a road game since we've been there. You've got to get that. First you have to learn to win at home. I firmly believe that. But then you need victories on the road and play the right way on the road that gives you a chance to win. So we'll go there and prepare to win, and I'm sure they'll do the same.

Q. Gary with Seth coming back, when did it become clear with him and the doctors and you (indiscernible)?

GARY ANDERSEN: You know Seth as well as I do. Seth wakes up and wants to compete at whatever he's doing at a very high level. You know, the doctors were the main key and as they went through that, and Seth and how he felt and listening to himself. But the day that it was said he could come back and play, he was full steam ahead, and so was I. It's just such a story now that you were right in the middle of it also again, but it was crazy, ups and downs and the unknowns. And what that kid -- you see him out there yesterday at practice, making plays on the football field, puts a big smile on my face.

He's a really good player. He's extremely competitive. He can be a difference maker and game changer in this league without a question. But past all that, it's great to see him out there, being the young man again, playing the game he loves, when he had to go through so much to get there.

Q. When was he officially cleared?

GARY ANDERSEN: It was a while ago. Yeah, he's been mainstream for a while. I don't have an exact. I couldn't tell you. But it's been quite a while.

Q. What's going to be the biggest thing for him? Is it continuing to get back to football shape?

GARY ANDERSEN: I think just continuing to learn how to play and be a wide receiver. He was a quarterback. Jason Phillips, he's a tremendous coach and he's the

passing game coordinator, and he'll really help him grow and develop. He'll do that. He'll put in the time and invest little tiny things that can make him an elite player. In this league, you're going to be playing against elite corners. The ball is going to have to come out quick and all that stuff. It's not like you're playing backyard football. So you can be talented and then be very average in your technique and fundamentals and a very average player in this league. So he's very talented, so the techniques and fundamentals he's working hard on, and Jason will continue to get him there.

Q. What do you envision using Thomas Tyner (indiscernible) especially with a guy with a shoulder history?

GARY ANDERSEN: Thomas's shoulder is 100 percent from what our people have told us. He went through the summer conditioning and he's been great, so I don't think -- injury is a non-factor in my mind to that point with Thomas. Everywhere we've been, and we've had successful running games, we've had three really good backs. We have the ability, I think, to have three or four really good backs this year, and two young backs that are really good.

And one of those young backs was highly impressive yesterday in Calvin Tyler. So it will be interesting to see where he fits. He's done a tremendous job of his work ethic, his toughness. He's been there before. He's been at the highest level and competed in extremely big football games. All that stuff is good for our team. And not carry himself with any type of: I've been there before, I've arrived, and I'm better than you. He comes to work every single day.

The thing for Thomas that's the best part about it, he's going to end this football thing on his terms and not anybody else's terms. That's what I liked about it.

Q. You said prior to stopping the run, do you anticipate anybody who sat last year ready to jump in and help out?

GARY ANDERSEN: Yeah, Hamilcar will be huge in that situation. Wesley is going to be big for the rotation of the inside linebackers. We had a number of those that played last year. Kee Whetzel is one. Kee needs to get after the quarterback. Shemar Smith is coming back off an injury.

So I would say the easiest way to answer that question is this. If we're going to get to our goal of 30 sacks and turnovers on defense, because that is a goal and it's not going to go away and I'm not afraid to say that, I think good defenses get 30 sacks and turnovers, not great ones, I think good ones, our outside linebackers are going to be huge in changing the game in our favor.

And if that doesn't happen, then, again, we'll probably get a lot of the same results we've had in the past, as far as the throw game.

We were very good against the throw last year. But let's call it as it is. People handed the ball off. That's what happened a lot of times. We defended the throw a lot, we were good in the red zone. But we want to have to defend more throws because we've got to get people in uncomfortable positions.

Q. Is your team actually practicing today?

GARY ANDERSEN: Today is off. Their finals are today. So, yeah, we gave them the day off. How times have changed. Practice one, practice two, take a day off and go hang out for a while. So that's where we're at.

Q. How many of your fall practices will be open to the public?

GARY ANDERSEN: I don't have an exact number on that. Just a handful. Not many of them.

Q. Do you like the progress you're seeing (indiscernible) in recruiting from the day you arrived in Corvallis to where you guys are now?

GARY ANDERSEN: What was the first part of it, what was progress?

Q. Have you seen progress in your team efforts?

GARY ANDERSEN: Yeah, I would say so. I think anytime you put your brand on it and your coaches are involved and you're recruiting the type of player that you want, it's going to be different from the way it was regardless of who was there or what the situation was.

I think we've got a new facility and that helped us. We've got a uniqueness to our academic stance now that's been very strong. Our last year APR is the best in the country, and all those things continue to help us as we move forward.

Q. Looking back and kind of building that brand, have you gotten feedback?

GARY ANDERSEN: Oh, absolutely. I think we're truly in that Northwest swing now. I don't know if we were really in that Northwest swing before we started as far as kids are going to go, and there's a really good chance he's going to stop by us, Washington State and Washington. They are going to make that little transition through there.

So we're in a good spot. They understand the type of football we're going to play. They understand where we sit from an academic standpoint, which is high level in my opinion. And they understand we're going to take care of kids and now they can walk into a brand-new facility. So it's been a good boost.

Q. Do you like the no two-a-days now?

GARY ANDERSEN: I would rather have two-a-days. I think there is something to two-a-days. One thing we'll do this year is we will have two-a-days, but we just won't hit and bang. We'll still have those taxing mental practices that are 18 days of mental reps, which is so very, very important. I think you get just as much out of that as you get out of the physicality of two-a-days.

But our two-a-days were way different. We'd practice for 16, 18 periods and we'd practice for 16, maybe 18 periods in the morning. So it's not like it was 24 and 24 and just a bludgeoning. Our kids handle the two-a-days well. They'll handle this situation well.

I'm all for taking care of the kids. I felt like when it was two-a-days, we did a tremendous job of taking care of the kids. Just because we changed this rule I don't think we're taking any better care of our kids, but we'll adapt to it and we'll handle it extremely well. I think whatever the situation is, our kids will know they'll be well cared for and know they'll compete hard.

Q. Darren Carrington's dismissal has drawn a lot of attention about program standards when athletes go over the line, what kind of consequences.

When you've taken over head coaching jobs, the first few months, how do you establish the red lines and the culture you talked about? How do you set those expectations?

GARY ANDERSEN: I think you have to be able to have a solid foundation and a set of core values that you have. I believe in those core values. I believe if you stay on the right-hand side of those core values, you're going to be all right. If you go on the left-hand side of the core values, you're going to have issues.

The next thing to me is honesty and integrity, is huge to me. You're going to make mistakes, somebody. Something's going to happen. We have to be able to talk it out and communicate.

The hardest thing in transition is finding a team that's going to trust you, a team that's going to trust and police itself. That's very difficult. When you get to down the line, I think it's a cleaner, simpler process. Simpler is not the right word, but cleaner as you go through time.

That team will police themselves because they know there are going to be consequences if they cross that line. There is 105 kids, 117 kids, however many we all have, and they're all not going to be perfect. They have to understand if they get to a certain point, they won't be part of it anymore because they don't deserve to be part of that university, that fan base, or that team.

Q. Transfers are pretty common now, but to go in conference and going to Utah is a little surprising. Are you surprised about that?

GARY ANDERSEN: Is that where he's going is Utah? No, we got one, we've got Thomas Tyner with us, and he was down there with the Ducks. I've never come out and said I love the ability to transfer. But we have a couple, three of them this year, and hopefully there is still one more out there we can get this year to get on our team. So I'll do it because it gives us a better chance to be a better football team if we're given the opportunity.

But the overall transfer thing, it's a little crazy, a little hectic to say the least.

Q. Coach, after a couple practices, what excites you most?

GARY ANDERSEN: Coaching football again. Seeing the kids and the strides they make. Their excitement to be out there. It's an awesome time of year to jump back into it.

I would say this, let me say this, to exactly answer your question, watching our old kids and our young kids mesh on the practice field was really fun to see yesterday. There's just not egos. There is a care factor to push each other, compete, practice the right way.

All those things are there, and those are things that you always say, but there is something about the youth and the older kids mixing together in a press and helping each other, coaching each other, and handling it the right way.

Q. For programs that have consistency and staying power, what do they have?

GARY ANDERSEN: I believe toughness. The ability to recruit at a high level is important. And this was big for me. To be at a university that's truly put the student-athlete first and give them what they need on and off the field to be successful.

There are a lot of other things that can put that upside down, as you know, with a weird shaped ball to injuries and everything else that comes with it. But the core has to be there to be a tough-minded football team.

In this league, the last thing I would say is you have to have some difference makers. You don't have to have 15 of them, but you have to have a handful of difference makers on both sides of the ball or on special teams that can change the game in your favor. Because there's going to be a week when you're probably going to have to score 50 to win, and there is

going to be a week you'll probably have to hold them to 20 to win. You'll have to make that special kick or pin them inside on a punt or whatever it may be. Those, I think, are imperative to consistency.

Q. In recruiting, where are you most likely to notice a guy? Is it game film? Is it 7-on-7?

GARY ANDERSEN: Well, it starts -- for me, I love the individual opportunity to watch them compete. I rarely get that firsthand. I do when I get to the camps and a few things, but I don't get to see as many of those kids as I'd like to. So camp is -- or, excuse me, film is my most valuable weapon. I don't like to just watch a highlight, I will watch a highlight tape, but then I like to watch a kid play a quarter or two, just so I can see his effort more than anything.

But it is important for us to put an eye on a kid and physically watch him compete or physically watch him practice. I think you can learn so much and you can see who he's really playing against. You get an idea of what's the competition like he's playing against. That would be our most valuable spots, one and two.

Q. What are your thoughts on social media?

GARY ANDERSEN: We do arrivals, everything Oregon does in social recruiting. We want to be on the cutting edge, and I'm sure they want to be on the cutting edge. We're going to do what we do, and they're going to do what they do. You would ask me that question. Look at her go. That's her job.

Q. Can you talk about difference makers? What are you looking for from one of those three guys to be the difference maker?

GARY ANDERSEN: Well, from just a mentality and team concept, he needs to have the passion. He needs to have the composure. He needs to have the leadership to be able to do one simple thing: You've got to look in the eye and say I believe this dude is going to get us down the field. I believe he gives us a chance.

From a physicality standpoint, you have to have a quick release because the ball's going to come out. You have to have a good understanding of the offense to know where the ball is to go and when it needs to get out of there. Just like a corner plays man coverage all the time, you have to have a short memory. Managing the game is important, but we've had the game managed for the first years in this conference, and I know if you have a game manager at quarterback, you're going to be an average football team. The league is too good to just have a game manager at the quarterback position. You have to have somebody that can be a great player. I'm not saying he has to be a special, special player, but he has to be a very good

player.

Q. Because of the evolving, have you seen any difference makers step up?

GARY ANDERSEN: At quarterback, our team versus the quarterback? Yeah, the two that are here right now, absolutely. Ryan and Manase, when we first got here, were young players and far from leaders, but they've done a tremendous of growing on the field and off the field.

I would say as units you could look and say the offensive line is really starting to get that mentality, and I was one of those guys. We're different, we're the tough guys. We're this, we're our own little corps. We work harder than anybody.

I think we're starting to see that with our offensive line group, which is good to see. I'd like to see that with the defensive line group. We need to see that with the defensive line. But I haven't yet. I'm hopeful in the next four days I can speak different about that. But they need to be if we're going to make the strides we need to make.

Q. You talked earlier about establishing culture and establishing certain lines. What happened with Colorado in the off-season with Joe Tumpkin and the domestic violence situation, does that make you reevaluate your protocols are when you learn the news about a player or coach and just sort of establishing what needs to happen when stuff like that comes out?

GARY ANDERSEN: Well, I'll say this on that, our university has a setup for coaches, players, and I'm sure professors, whatever it may be. It's very clean and simple. It's communication. It's getting where you need to get as soon as you can. You're going to get that to people who need the information. But they're going to do it the right way.

Does it open your eyes? Absolutely. All those things open your eyes for the way that it is for coaches these days and the way it is for players. You want everything to be right and you want everything to be perfect, but the biggest thing to me is staying out in front of it, talking and communicating about it.

I have an AD and president that I know I can walk in and talk about any of those situations, and they want to stay on the cutting edge because they want Oregon State to be represented the right way, and that's important.

Q. Steven Montez is going to have his first chance to be the guy in the spot light at quarterback for them, you saw him play last year. Just impressions

of him as a freshmen and how you see him going from here.

GARY ANDERSEN: Last year he was a very good quarterback in this league, and that's why they won a lot of games. I know they were back and forth and both played and what have you. But I thought he was exactly what I said earlier about our position. If we can get that at what he was a year ago, I'm sure they expect more out of him this year to be this great player next year, but he was a good quarterback and he had a really, really good defense, really good running backs and some outside wide receivers that made a bunch of plays for him.

So he was a really good quarterback in my opinion in the league that had great talent all over the place, which is a credit to the kids in the program and to the coaches they've recruited all over the years. Quite frankly, it's a hell of a story, and I like it. It's pretty fun to see that happen.

Q. What sort of potential do you think Carrington can have at Utah?

GARY ANDERSEN: Well, I know him from some of our players, obviously, and we all know what he's done on the football field. He's a game changer. He's been a game changer in the league. You need four or five of those young men on your team, and if you do that, you've got a better chance to win. If he gets the system and understands the system, I'm sure he'll get an opportunity. He's a good player.

Q. Last year you talked a lot about the need to become more physical, did you guys accomplish what you wanted to there and is there still great room for growth? And then their players are saying that one of the problems last year was just fine tuning the execution part of the game. Do you think you need to make a quantum leap in that part of the game?

GARY ANDERSEN: The physicality is a huge step. And you'll talk about it and flap your lips about it, but at the end of the day, we played physical with every team in this league. Throw on the tape, and we didn't get pushed around. If we got pushed around a year ago, that is very, very important. You know that. You've played that game for a long time. So your ability to be in the trenches and feel like you can hang in there is very, very important. Room for growth there, absolutely, lots. Now it's really fine tuning that.

But we're a much stronger football team than we were. We're almost 50 guys squatting 500 pounds. Is that a recipe for winning? No. But it sure helps, so we're making progress.

Second part was --

Q. The execution part --

GARY ANDERSEN: Yeah, and I did. I went in the off-season and looked through a lot of different things and talked about a lot of different situations and scenarios. That was one of the things that popped up to me. I thought he was this and that was there. So to me, it's MAs and it's administrative penalties. Those two things, quite frankly, they fit one in the same to me.

But the MAs is coaching, MAs is kids. You can't be in your third year saying he just doesn't learn it, he doesn't know. He's not smart enough, or the coach doesn't coach me the right way. If we're talking that language, we're never going strides.

The execution as a whole, hired coaches to simplify. Jason Phillips has done a tremendous job simplifying the throw game in general, bringing in some of the air raid concepts and terminologies to play at different paces. I think will really help us.

We've worked hard at it. I think these kids are understanding there is a responsibility from us as coaches to make sure it's presented correctly, a responsibility from them to make sure they're learning it and taking it out on the field. And ultimately it's my job.

So I think that naturally happens, but it needs to be automatic. We can't have (indiscernible).