

**December 23, 2013**



An interview with:

## COACH MATT WELLS

THE MODERATOR: Now we will bring up head coach Matt Wells for Utah State. He will start with an opening statement, then questions from the floor.

COACH WELLS: How is everybody doin' today? Good to see you. Well, we just came off the practice field this that was a really spirited practice. When you take 105 guys out of 30 degrees and snow, that's what you get. They got off the plane last night, and I thought it was a good, crisp practice. They're excited to be here. On behalf of Utah State, our Athletic Department, our football program we say thanks to Mark and Bruce and the whole crew. So far it's been first class. These red coats, this isn't their first rodeo; you can tell that, and they know how to do it and do it right.

So we appreciate you guys having us, and our kids are excited to be here, our staff is excited to be here; you can see it on their face, see it in the way the practiced today. There is a sense of urgency, so I like where we're at right now from a mind-set and from where we're at as a team.

With that I will open it up for questions. All right, that's good, first bowl press conference! (Laughter.)

**Q. For these bowl games you get more practice time, sometimes -- I don't know if you can have too much. Do you have to fight that urge as a coach to try to fit too much in?**

COACH WELLS: Good question. I think it's a fine line. We probably didn't get as much as some other teams, although we're in the same boat as Rod and those guys from playing a championship game.

Then we were right into finals week. So you gotta structure a little bit, how much did you want for your young, developmental kids and how

much did you want for your veterans that have played over -- we have some kids that have played over 600 and some snaps this year. So there is a fine line between that. Early on we got 7 or 8 practices where there were veterans for a very short amount of time, and then we ran or lifted them, and then we got some really good live work in with the young kids or the developmental kids. I think that was beneficial for us.

**Q. Coach, can you detail your struggles getting out of town yesterday?**

COACH WELLS: We had a few. You know what? It is what it is. A little bit of weather, a little bit of flight, a few things called 9/11 and FAA regulations and the government, and you're not going to win those fights. Just a bunch of scenarios. I'm going to tell you, you know who handled it the best was our kids, the players. They handled it better than some adults.

I was really proud -- you know what's funny, in the airport I think Doug and I were standing there talking to our athletic director, Scott Barnes, and we had to go back through screening again after it took us right at two hours, and so we told 'em, obviously they weren't very happy but they got back in line and then I started hearing the defenders, the defensive players saying, "sudden change" just like when they say it when there is an interception or turnover, so I thought they had a good sense of humor, but we got in really late.

I thought they woke up, they were ready, they know we're going to grind in the morning. We're going to work in the morning, and we're going to go play in the afternoon and then have free time at night. It's been our routine; they know what's up. We're an early morning team, so they got up and had a good day today.

**Q. Coach, a lot of times we're asking coaches how is inclement weather going to impact their performance. This week it's how will good weather impact you and how do you see it playing out?**

COACH WELLS: In regards to the

weather? Should be a pretty even game. Those guys, they got an indoor facility, we got an indoor facility, they're coming from cold weather, we are coming from cold weather. I think it was colder in Fresno than the Dome, but you can't draw a favorite on that deal. It's pretty even. Who knows? We'll see.

I don't have a feeling because I think it will probably be -- I think the weather is a nonfactor, nonissue.

**Q. In your mind, what are the concerns about Northern Illinois, generally?**

COACH WELLS: Let's go. First of all I'm going to start on the defensive side because I'm an offensive guy, look at it from that standpoint. First of all, this is a defense built to me pretty much like a general manager or manager would build a baseball team, strong up the middle, both inside, three techniques and the middle line backer, 45, and then both safeties, 1 and 15, they are really strong up the middle. They're very well coached. You watch 'em in different formations and different things that you want to get a schematic advantage, and I think that defensive staff has them aligned the right way.

Then I think they have a bunch of guys that know their role and understand their role and they play very well together. They're opportunistic in the back end. In the back end I think they get great push in the middle when they pass rush and they got a couple of guys, they can get the edge on you and get around the edge in a hurry. Don't pressure a lot, I think they're fundamentally sound; they run to the football.

Offensively, the biggest things -- and we all talk about Jordan, and he deserves every bit of credit that he gets, and I don't think they get enough credit for their skill on the perimeter, the wide-outs, the running back, I think they do a nice job. Jordan Lynch is fun to watch -- it's not fun to watch because you understand you're going to have to defend him, but from a quarterback perspective, I got a lot of respect for him, and I think I said this last week, but I catch myself saying it over and over. The guy is an 1800-yard running back, and by the way he's over 60% completion and 3-to-1 touchdown/interception ratio. It's amazing, and that's back-to-back years. As you study him and the things that he's done since he's become a starter, he's a flat out winner.

I said to Rod last Wednesday when we were talking, you know, it's almost like it's a

once-in-a-lifetime young man to coach because I know he's the face of that program and everything that he's meant to that staff and that program and that city, that university, a lot of respect for him.

The other thing that I think that bears saying and talking about is the job that Rod has done and his staff has done since Dave left. Just to see that program, six straight bowl games, BCS bowl last year, one game away from a BCS bowl this year, and to do it with three different coaches, and the programmatic approach that they've got from a -- very solid, sound, fundamentally, they know their recruiting plan. To see them, I think that's something that we would want our program to look like in three more years. I guess we're halfway there. If we can get to a BCS bowl and knock on the door in another year, I would consider this program at Utah State to gettin' over the hump and to the top of the mountain, which is what we want to do in our program. So I got a lot of respect for their program from an outside perspective looking in.

**Q. Coach, how is your freshman quarterback doing since he got knocked out?**

COACH WELLS: He's great, doing really good, back to practice the last week and a half or so and thought he had a really good day today, so Darryl is doing fine.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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