

December 23, 2013



An interview with:

COACH ROD CAREY

THE MODERATOR: Coach Carey will make an opening statement and then we will open it up.

COACH CAREY: Well, is it morning or afternoon? Morning! We'll say. We got in -- first off, just excited as all get out to be here. You know, what an unbelievable city. We have been treated remarkably well. Then we get to play in a great stadium, a great game against a fine opponent. We are extremely excited about this game, and we understand that when you're on a bowl trip, part of this is a reward. So your guys want to have some fun, but the balance comes into doing your work because in the end this is a business trip for us.

We are here to compete and to play, so we're always going to put our best foot forward whenever we're called to do that. So there is that balance thing going on and you guys remember when you were 18 to 22, balance was sometimes a struggle, right? So it's our job to make sure they keep that balance where it needs to be.

It's been too long since we played a game. We lost our last game, we have a bad taste in our mouth so we're anxious to get back out on the field and try to get that bad taste out of our mouth on this whole thing.

With that I will open it up for questions.

Q. Coach, we just watched Jordan Lynch on TV but you worked with him at Thanksgiving. Can you give us insight about him besides as a player and things?

COACH CAREY: He's the same guy every day, Al. You guys were lucky, like me, to be around him. He challenges you as a coach, as a person, as an adult, to be consistent. I think that's what we strive to be as men is that same person every day, no matter what's going on, and he is.

He is remarkable at 23, and I think that bleeds over into every part of his life, least of which is football.

I'm just really proud of him and wish I had him for about 10 more years but we don't. This is the last game we get him. That's the biggest thing with him.

Q. Is there certain plays or things like that that have totally amazed you? Can you come up with something off the top of your head that amaze you?

COACH CAREY: It's probably not plays in games, it's probably plays in practice more than anything. Listen, we ask him to do a lot, and it's not because that's our system, it's because he can. Those are the things that amaze you. He makes the complicated things and the hard things skillwise look easy. That's what amazes you every day. You tell him one time one play and then it's done. It's locked in a vault. That's what is amazing to me.

Q. Coach, I was wondering, taking over as head coach last year, what did the players do to help you kind of find your way and assume the role as a head coach?

COACH CAREY: That's a good question. You're talking more about last year's senior class than this year's, when you're doing that.

Last year's senior class, I got the job, we got the bowl bid and it was full steam ahead. There wasn't much slowing down. I give that senior class a lot of credit because they took me in and they said all right we know him, he's one of us, let's go. And it was more steering the car than driving the ship is how I refer to it. And this year you're driving the ship.

My familiarity obviously with the place helped but, listen, this team, I'm still the third head coach for this senior class that they have had, so this team is -- and I think -- and I don't say this trying to take away from the job that my staff has done, as far as coaching these guys, because someone has to coach them but this team is player driven, and the reason I'm proud to say that is

because that's what good programs are, I don't care where you look, what level of football, it is player driven and senior guided.

We have that. It's our job within that context as a staff to make sure they're focusing on the right things.

Q. You have had time to review Utah State and what they have done this year. Do you see as a parallel between the two programs, talking about it being player driven?

COACH CAREY: Yeah, I'm not as versed in the transition. I know Coach Wells took over and there was a similar transition there as far as I am being the OC and me being the OC and then getting the job. But I would tell you with the transformation of Utah State and how successful they have been over a period of time is that they probably have a lot of similarities that it's player driven.

I wouldn't boast to go any further than that because I don't know enough of it but looking outside in, you would say it's probably the case.

Q. Coach, there is a lot of --

COACH CAREY: How did you get out here?

Q. I'm here!

COACH CAREY: Did you pay your own way?

Q. I got to flee the snow. I'm based in this area and there is a lot of great high school football players in Southern California. Does this give you an opportunity to cast your net wider and maybe get some kids to look at your school that they otherwise might not from this region?

COACH CAREY: Yes and no. I always relate recruiting to dating. You have a girlfriend, she is a nice lookin' lady, respectful, been in a long-term relationship with her, and if you start looking at the pretty blonde who moved down the street, probably not going to have that girlfriend very long. Why I say that is because what we have been doing has been pretty successful. So you don't want to reach out too far, but at the same time, yeah, you put some feelers out there and see.

We have not traditionally recruited California or Southern California. Does that mean

we won't? No. We keep comin' out here, Poinsettia Bowl, probably will.

Q. Coach, couple questions. How do you guys stay focused all the while celebrating Christmas?

COACH CAREY: Yeah, well, that's the real trick, isn't it? You know, listen, I think there are a lot of good things when you're my age. I think being busy keeps you focused. I think when you're 18 to 22 I think busy can make you unfocused. That's how I was. I'm not saying that's how our guys are but keeping them on task and on schedule, I think you have to keep them, all right, you're supposed to be here, there, here, there but key to it is you gotta let them have their time.

When you are 18 to 22 years old, like to have structured stuff but not too much. They like to have their own time to sit back on the couch or in their room. I think that's probably what the real trick is, to keep them on schedule.

Q. I couldn't help but overhear you asking what the game temperature was going to be at the time of kick-off. How do you control the temperature here in San Diego?

COACH CAREY: How do I control it?

Q. How are you guys going to compete in this weather?

COACH CAREY: Good question. Kinda forthright, but I like it. It would have been a real good question a year ago; we didn't have an indoor. This year we have an indoor, so we had them turn up the heat, so we practiced inside. We got a week of practice out here to get used to it. Already I'm stiff gettin' out of bed because it's warm. 18 years old, they don't have that problem.

You guys are easy today!

Q. You haven't heard this one, yet, so hang on!

COACH CAREY: Oh, okay!

Q. Speak to the seriousness about the game. You don't let us peek in on practices, let us know what you're doing. Can you pull the curtain back a little bit? You got some special packages going on or secrets you want to share?

COACH CAREY: If I let you know, they won't be secrets anymore. I tell you what, the

closed practice thing is more from a focused standpoint for us, morning you guys. It's gettin' our minds right and trying to close out everything because we're at a bowl game. You want to be able to flip the switch from work to fun and go back and forth. We take this game extremely seriously for a number of reasons. One, it's an opportunity for these seniors to come out and play a last game and there has not been any class that has won any more games than this class of seniors. We have a chance to add another win to that total and the other reason is this opponent is unbelievable. Utah State I got nothing but complete respect for them, I've watched probably every snap they have had in all three phases and I don't see much of a weakness, I really don't.

The fact that they got beat four or five times, all those games were real close, they were right there, they could easily be sitting at their teen-0 and have an undefeated season. So they have our full attention to say the least.

Probably the last thing about the seriousness of this game is that we got a bad taste in our mouth. We got beat. Give Bowling Green all the credit in the world, we didn't play good, you give them the credit so we got a chance to rectify that. Those three things, that's all we need.

Q. Coach, we see some schools come out here and they were that close to a BCS birth, and when they get out here they're kind of a let down but you guys seem excited to be here. Was there any of that immediately after your game and how do you try and get past that if there was?

COACH CAREY: It's funny. I think back when I played I think we could have played the company line as coaches and said you're here, do this, focus on this, but in today's day and age with social media, it was all over there! We didn't view it that way, because I'm pretty sure they only give BCS births to the final poll, right? In the final poll we were 23, you don't get a birth for that. So we never had it, we never lost it. But it's out there the way media is today and social media in particular, you're four quarters away from this, so was there a little bit of that afterwards? I would be lying to you if I said there wasn't.

But if you don't flip the switch and understand you never had anything to lose, you only had something to gain, and here you are in San Diego, which our guys have, and people my age, it takes longer for us to get over it than our

young kids. My seven year old acts up, I discipline him for it, he forgets it, moves on.

Where I think older people have a tough time gettin' over it. Our guys moved on, they heard San Diego, they were up cheering in the room when I told them they were coming to the Poinsettia Bowl, so couldn't be happier. The thing about our team, they're football kinda guys. They like playin' this game so they wanted to get back on the field, quick.

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