

December 18, 2013



An interview with:

MATT WELLS

COACH WELLS: How is everybody doin'? First of all, we're extremely excited to be here. Representing Utah State University our Aggie football program in Logan, Utah. Bruce and Mark have done an outstanding job organizing things for and you say our program and our kids are excited to get down here and represent not only our university but the Mountain West Conference, too. It's an exciting time for us, best bowl game in school history and school record back-to-back-to-back bowl games for us.

A lot of respect for Coach Carey, and from an outsider perspective looking in, when you go to six straight bowl games and you're in the BCS and knocking on that door the very next year, I think that's something we all at a non-BCS school look at and respect from a coaching standpoint, because you know how hard it is. You don't just show up in Division I football and win games. You don't just show up on Saturdays and do that.

The work and the things that he and his staff have done and played off two great coaches before that, I think, speak volumes, because I for one can attest trying to follow a guy and continue something that's good that's goin' on. So congrats to them and that program.

We're excited to be here and I'll open it up for questions.

Q. Coach, how is your team reacting to the loss to Fresno State and how are they getting over it?

COACH WELLS: I said this a couple of days ago in Logan, they were extremely shocked. We expected to walk in there and win. Which is part of the transformation at Utah State, we don't "think" we're going to win they "expect" they're going to win and that was a shock to them.

It's hard to lose. It's not fun. When you put your emotions and everything you got out there on the line for everybody to see, on that kind of stage, our first year in the league to do that, that's hard! But redemption and things that you can look at and see on tape to improve, I think, are motivating factors for our kids and our program, and we know who we have in front of us and the great challenge that will be on both sides of the ball. That gets you going real quick when you flip the tape on and see what a quality opponent you have on the stage of the Poinsettia Bowl and a chance to continue to market your product and brand your image and do the things that we want to do at Utah State.

Q. Coach you lost the offensive players earlier in the year and your offense really stood up. Can you talk about your former walk-ones, that led that charge, Zach Vigil and Jake Doughty your shut-down corner back?

COACH WELLS: Well, he was not a walk-on in Logan, Utah. Those two guys that you mentioned are the -- to me they're the heart and soul not only of that defense but they're the face of that defense. Zach Vigil and Jake Doughty, both of them, they're former walk-ones, they're in-state players, they're blue collar, they play with an edge to them and a toughness. They're extremely smart in school and they're football junkies, in football. In fact, I gave 'em the day off today and they both looked at me after practice yesterday and they said "we'll see ya" and I said "no, you ain't comin' in the building today."

Kind of guys you want to coach when you're a ball coach. I love those two guys.

You talk about walk-on's, the other one up front is B.J. Larson, No. 99, another walk-on from in-state. I think our program that's one of the found additions of that bedrock that we have tried to build that program on an in-state walk-on program and those are three prime examples of that.

Q. Could you sort of step out and maybe give us an assessment of your

opponent and what you're expecting to face during the Poinsettia Bowl?

COACH WELLS: I don't have to step out, I just kinda did a while ago. I talked about them from a programmatic standpoint, the things that I see on both sides of the ball.

First of all, I see a team that when I hear assistant coaches come out after the first 48 hours after watching tape and they say they look like us and I'm like, how? Because they run to the football and they play hard. All those kind of things that as coaches you say at clinics and you say when you're in an interview and I think to me it's the ultimate complement from a coach is to tell that to another guy. Those run the football and the 2-3 techniques, they are massive, they are strong, they get to the quarterback, they have edge pressure, I think the safeties may be the best two tandem safeties we have seen all year in the back end. They're ball hawks, they've got length.

Offensively they've got skill. I don't know if they get enough credit for the skill and the running back that they have had and what they have done up front because of the QB and I think Jordan deserves every bit of praise that he gets.

I was just telling Rod about Heisman Trophy candidate, that's a once in a lifetime deal, that's pretty cool. And as I watch him and study him, you know, as a quarterback guy, the guy's a tremendous talent. I bet it's fun to coach him. I would assume he's a junky, you see the stuff that he does from a subtle quarterback standpoint and it's impressive to watch.

Then you realize he's an 1800-yard rusher and if he was a running back you would say, well, we're about to play one of the best running backs in the country. And then you realize he's not a thrower, he's a passer.

I got a lot of respect for him, and it's really two straight games for us that we have faced an elite quarterback.

Q. Coach, what you talk about your recruiting connection to San Diego? I know you have had a number of players over the years, you got two guys in your backfield right now. Is it an on going program? What's the genesis of your local recruiting?

COACH WELLS: Good question. I think San Diego and this area, southern Cal in a little bit more general, broader area has been good to Utah State, mostly skill kids, and the one you're talking about, directly is No. 28, Joey D. Martin notice,

he's a local kid and Joey -- I got a lot of respect for Joey because he turned his career around right in the middle of the season last year. Kid sat behind three NFL running backs. We have had three NFL running backs drafted in the last two years, Robert Turbin, Michael Smith, and Kerwynn Williams he sat behind them and bid his time and got beat out in training camp to be honest with you and down goes Joe Hill with an ACL on the first of many on offense, and the kid stepped up to become a 1,000-yard rusher. To get into that club. He's a grinder, he's a tough kid and he's excited to come back here and play in front of a lot of family and friends and high school teammates and coaches that are going to come out and see him play.

Q. On paper this looks like a real match-up between a high-flyin' offense and a tough defense, do you think that's a fair assessment?

COACH WELLS: Oh, yeah, you got -- I don't know where we rank but they're top-10 in the country in total offense and I think are we're just right there, 10 or 12 or somewhere like that in the nation and it seems like déjà vu for us because it's two straight weeks of facing elite offense, high-powered offense, although this one with a different type of QB.

Jordan being a very athletic, dual threat, legit dual threat QB, so it will be a tremendous challenge that our defense faces to slow them down.

Q. About your quarterback, your freshman quarterback, tell me about how he's progressed during the season, I think he's won 5?

COACH WELLS: He's 5-1.

Q. Tell us about him and what he brings to the game.

COACH WELLS: I think he's a kid that probably at the end of training camp he was probably No. 2 and as a coach you want to try to protect his red shirt and we talked to him and his dad about trying to do that.

Unless something catastrophic happened to Chuckie Keeton and that obviously happened. The kid, we talked to him about taking that red shirt off in the middle of the year and dad being a high school coach knew exactly what the situation was and said you got my blessing and the kid hasn't

blinked, he hasn't flinched one bit. He's played really well at times, he's played okay at times. I tell you what he does, he continues to learn how to prepare because I think that's so important to learn as a young QB, as you teach them and they continue to learn how to prepare, I think they make small strides that I don't think is evidence to the media or even through stats. But Darell, he's got moxie, he's a tough kid, and son of a coach, like I said, earlier, so it's all those qualities that have been instilled in him at a young age.

Q. What does your team and yourself think about playing here in San Diego and what is something about your team that San Diego doesn't know about you guys.

COACH WELLS: Good question. First of all we're extremely excited to be here. I was telling Mark on the way over here we've been to back-to-back Potatoe Bowls up in Boise and that's been great for our program and kinda get this thing rejuvenated a little bit. But I stepped off the plane and it's a little warmer here, first of all, than in Logan, Utah, and where we've been the last two bowl destinations.

So for us the platform, the history of this bowl, the match-ups that have been in this bowl, and I think our team recognizes that, and we studied the tradition and I let 'em know about it a little bit, and we're extremely excited to be here and to face a great team that is one game from being in a BCS bowl.

We understand the stage we're on and the Bowl game, and we're excited to be here. One thing you don't know about us. Good question. I'm still thinkin'. 16 married players. Probably you don't have many teams come down here with very many married players so we're bringing some wives and some kids. We may lead the nation in coaching staff kids, so we did the math. We're up to 80 something. We got a bunch of young families running around, I don't know what you got. We're pretty close.

I'm sorry, I don't have a one-liner for your deal tonight.

Q. That was one.

COACH WELLS: Okay, good.

Q. You're speaking about the big stage that this Bowl game is and having a young quarterback. How do you think he will handle that?

COACH WELLS: He will be fine and our team will be fine. Shoot for the last four years they have gone into Norman, Oklahoma, College Station, Texas, Madison, Wisconsin and Auburn and Utah and the Coliseum a couple of months ago and you know what, we haven't won those games and I recognize that, and they do, too. But they won't flinch at the lights and the stage and all that. They know we're in for a battle and we understand it's going to be a great game but I don't think he will and I know the rest of 'em won't.

Q. Thank you, Coach Wells.

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