

November 24, 2009



An Interview With:

COACH CHARLIE WEIS

COACH WEIS: First, I have a news flash. We have a football game this Saturday evening, against Stanford, so let's see if we can't talk about that. Stanford is 7 and 4, they've had some very, very big wins this year, tough football team. Coach Harbaugh, it's his third year there, and he's done a nice job building this program, and the players have played to his toughness that he played with when he was a player.

His offensive coordinator is Dave Shaw, who also coaches the wide receivers. He played wide receiver there at Stanford, and they're scoring a whole bunch of points, averaging over 35 points a game and just about 220 yards rushing a game, which is just under five and a half yards a carry, 436 yards a game total. They've only given up for the season six sacks, so six sacks for the entire year, and a lot of that is based on the fact that they've been so productive in the run game that people need to be concerned with stopping the run. When they've got in the red zone, they've scored touchdowns 68 percent of the time.

The red-shirt freshman quarterback Andrew Luck has had a heck of a year. He's started every game, he's athletic, got a strong arm, not afraid to tuck it and run, especially when he feels pressure, and he's got an ability to move in and out of the pocket, and he can make all the throws even on the move.

Their whole offense really starts with Gerhart. He's their work horse and he continues to be. As he goes, so goes their offense. He's averaging 139 rushing a game. He's a physical, strong, hard runner.

Their fullback is not a bust, Marecic. He's a true junior who started every game as a

freshman and a sophomore. As a matter of fact, against Oregon he not only started at fullback but he started at inside linebacker, so he started both ways against Oregon.

They play multiple guys at tight end. Jim Dray is their returning starter. But they also play Fleener, who is their second tight end, and they move him around and flex him out a lot more. He's more of their true receiving tight end when they go in that direction.

Ryan Whalen, he leads the team in receiving. He's a tough, dependable wide receiver, and he's capable of making the big play for them.

Griff Whalen is their third receiver.

And Chris Owusu, high school teammate of Jimmy, who really -- he can play. He's got very good speed. He's a deep threat. When I get to returners later on, I'll mention him again as a kickoff returner because he's a dynamic kickoff returner.

They did lose Doug Baldwin, who was a top receiver for them. He's out since the Arizona game with an injury.

Now, in the offensive line they have a physical offensive line, which has paved the way for one of the best rushing attacks in the country. Martin starts at left tackle. He's a red-shirt freshman who's come on, and he seems to have played better as the year has gone on.

Phillips is their left guard. He's a third-year lineman who's played a bunch over the last couple years.

Beeler is their center. He's a transfer from Oklahoma. This is his second year of eligibility with Stanford.

DeCastro is their right guard, and Marinelli is their fourth-year lineman at right tackle who's got 37 starts.

Ron Lynn coordinates their defense, but he's a co-coordinator now because Coach Buh, who is their linebacker coach, is now a coordinator along with him.

They're giving up 25 points a game.

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Coach Weis - 11 24 09

Keiser serves as the left end and he has eight sacks. The right end is Thomas, who's a red-shirt freshman who's taken over. Lorig was their starter, but he got hurt, so he's been out.

They play Udofia and Fua inside, who are both 300-plus-pound inside presence.

Okay, at linebacker, Powers will be the Sam, Macaluso will be the Mike, and Amajoyi will be the Will. No, as a matter of fact, Skov will be the Will, and Amajoyi they'll bring in when they go to nickel situations.

Defensive secondary, Sherman was a receiver for them and they moved him to DB in the spring, and he's been -- he was their top receiver the past two seasons, now he's starting for them at corner. And you could see why they did that, because he's got very, very good athleticism.

Bademosi has taken over as the starter recently over on the other side, and Michael Thomas is the third corner who comes in, but really we see Michael Thomas come down and he'll play their nickelback.

McNally is their veteran safety who plays hard and fills in the alley. He's a good tackle.

Let's see, Howell is their strong safety. They just moved him to safety in the spring from running back, but he's the tied for the team lead in tackles.

DJ Durkin is their special teams coach, also coaches the defensive ends. There's a couple of very prevalent stats like their kickoff return. Their kickoff return unit is dynamic with Owusu averaging just about 30 yards a kick return. Green handles their punting. Nate Whitaker, who was here, handles their place kicking and kickoff. Zach Nolan handles their long snapping, and their punt returner will normally be Terrell, but Sherman has popped back there occasionally, so he's been back there, as well.

Q. Can you just clarify what happened with Jimmy Clausen?

COACH WEIS: We're talking about Stanford.

Q. Only about Stanford today?

COACH WEIS: Yeah. You want to ask me a question about Stanford, I'm all ears.

Q. Is there an explanation for why Jimmy is off the radar?

COACH WEIS: It's Stanford week. We're talking about Stanford. This is the Stanford press

conference. I talked on Sunday about all the state of the union and all the other stuff. Today we're talking about Stanford. Let's talk about Stanford.

Q. Is Jimmy going to be available for the Stanford game?

COACH WEIS: Jimmy will practice today and he'll start against Stanford.

Q. You didn't want to talk about the Bowl stuff on Sunday. How do you envision that potentially working out? I mean, do you think the guys want to play in a Bowl game?

COACH WEIS: We're talking about Stanford. Ask me a question about Stanford, please. Anything about Stanford.

Q. I've got a Stanford question.

COACH WEIS: Thank you.

Q. Their running game, what do you need to do to slow that down? What do they do that makes them so successful?

COACH WEIS: Well, I could talk about their offensive line, I could talk about their tight ends and I could talk about their scheme and their mentality, but that No. 7 (Toby Gerhart), the guy with the ball in his hands, he's special. He's a hard north-south runner. Not that he can't bounce it outside, but you have to gang-tackle him, and we've had a few problems with tackling now, and I think that if you don't gang-tackle him, he gets a lot of hidden yardage because you don't get 139 yards a game by just being running in open field all the time and just by scheme. I mean, this kid is a heck of a runner. I have a lot of respect for him.

Q. Not to unveil your game plan or anything, but what are some things you guys can do to slow him down other than just tackling better?

COACH WEIS: The one thing we're going to do is we're going to run their main plays against ourselves today with our first offense running against our first defense. Period 4, which will be just right after you guys leave today from practice, that will be dedicated to just running their main plays with our starting offensive line, our starting guys, and just try to most closely simulate the speed of the game so they can -- it isn't just a show team that you're going against, because you've got to be ready to play smashmouth

because that's what they're going to do. They're going to try to run it down our throat.

Q. Just a Notre Dame history question on where Jimmy (Clausen) would fit in with the great quarterbacks at Notre Dame over the years. Where in terms of body of work, in terms of what he's accomplished, who he is. Where does that fit in?

COACH WEIS: I've really only coached two quarterbacks here. I've coached Brady (Quinn) and Jimmy. I know that they're both really good quarterbacks. But I think that those type of questions will be answered after their careers are done. I think that his career is not done. He's going to get ready to play Stanford this week, and we'll see where it goes from there.

Q. In terms of a quarterback, what should the criteria be in any quarterback in evaluating any quarterback?

COACH WEIS: Well, there's two major factors. The biggest most important factor is the "it" factor. It's the most important factor with any successful quarterback. You either have it or you don't have it, and he has it.

Now, I can't describe what "it" is, but the good ones have it, and he has it. So I think that he'll have a long and prosperous career.

That being said, the No. 1 physical attribute for a quarterback is accuracy, and he has that, too. So he's an accurate quarterback who has it, which bodes well. There's a whole bunch of criteria, but there's a physical attribute and a non-physical attribute. Those two, I think he has a chance to be very special.

Q. What's Armando Allen's status for this week?

COACH WEIS: Armando cracked a bone in his right hand, and he's going to get it fixed today, which will leave him probably out for this game. Probably out.

Q. Right hand?

COACH WEIS: His right hand. I'm 99 -- 90 percent sure it was his right hand. I mean, I looked at it and it was all swollen up. I'll get for sure, but I'm 90 percent sure it was his right hand -- I'm 100 percent sure it was his right hand.

Q. And (Kyle) Rudolph, is there a chance this week?

COACH WEIS: He's practicing today. The thing is he's cleared to play. It's how much pain he's going to be able to tolerate. So we'll have to -- we'll start practicing today, he'll be out there in individuals and get going right from the start, and we'll see how it goes as the week goes on. But the hope is for him to be able to go at a very non-limited capacity by Saturday.

Q. I don't know how familiar you are with the strength and conditioning numbers of your players, and I don't know if Golden Tate is pound for pound one of your strongest players. Is it that? Is that what makes it so difficult to bring him down, or is it just desire and will that keeps him on his feet sometimes?

COACH WEIS: Well, he is a rocked-up unit to start out with. I agree. I think it's a combination of both those elements. I think you hit it twice. I don't think it has to be one or the other. I think it's a combination of both those things. He's a strong, physical rocked-up unit, and he has a great center of gravity when he's playing. He's well-grounded when he gets hit a lot of times. How many times have we seen people bounce off of him?

But I think that and a strong will, it's a good combination.

Q. And that's an area where the improvement in Armando has made in that area, he used to go down so easily, and now all season, even banged up, you've seen him carrying people.

COACH WEIS: The problem with me and Armando, I don't get him out there enough. But that's probably been one of the greatest improvements in his game.

Q. Just following up, what will your running back situation then look like, (Theo) Riddick-(Robert) Hughes mix, or --

COACH WEIS: Well, what we'll do is it will be Riddick-Hughes, and we'll get Jonas some in the mix this week, too. He's kind of been that -- one guy behind right there. But now we'll get him -- we'll bump him up some and get him some reps, as well. But it'll probably be a combination to start off the game of Theo and Robert, not necessarily in that order.

Q. Just following up on the Tate

questions, obviously you had Armando and Hughes already in that class, and you had James (Aldridge) already here. Did you think at all of him as a running back? Was that any consideration at all?

COACH WEIS: No, I told him what we needed is I told him that somewhere along the line, we might gadget him at running back, which came to fruition this year, but I told him we were missing straight-line speed at the wide receiver position. I told him that's what we were really missing. And I said that I needed to convert him to wide receiver so we could get somebody who could stretch the field. I told him that in high school. So that seems to have apparently worked out.

Q. And I know that he and you both said he's learned the game a lot more, and that's helped him become a better player. But what pushed him down that road do you think? What got him -- because this guy has improved so much.

COACH WEIS: Yeah, well, first of all, he's a great competitor any time he's on the field. That's why in baseball season he doesn't want to talk about football, and in football season he doesn't want to talk about baseball, because he's such a fierce competitor. I think he's got -- he's probably improved more than any player on the team, and there's still some things that he can even get better. There's some things that when he goes over a few more of the more refined coaching points, he can even get better than where he is. Maybe not necessarily numbers-wise, okay, but he can get better from where he is now.

Q. Whether it's this year or next year, and I know that he's going to make that decision at the appropriate time, but he's going to play in the NFL, and there are some people that you talk to, it just seems like the only thing that they're worried about is the height. Can you address that, what you think --

COACH WEIS: They won't be worrying about the height. You know what's going to happen is they're going to watch the tape, because anyone who watching the tape, they're not worrying about the height. I think that more importantly, they want to let him go to the combine and see what number he runs, because when all of a sudden it's a 4-4 flat or something along those lines, that height will be thrown right out the window, because unlike a lot of other receivers, the

volume -- just think about the number of plays that you've seen him make this year.

The bottom line is he has evidence. You have visual evidence when you watch him. You don't want to bet on the come with him. He's already got a body of evidence on tape. You just go pick a game out, and you're going to have at least nine or ten plays where you say, this kid is something special.

Q. You had Zach Frazer last year, you've got Roland and Whitaker this week. Is that a little bit weird?

COACH WEIS: As a matter of fact, it is. I specifically didn't talk to Zach before the game because I didn't want to distract Zach. I didn't think that would be right. But he was one of the people who I made sure I looked up after the game. Him and that No. 2, by the way; I looked him up, too. But I looked up No. 10 first, and I congratulated him and asked how his family was doing, and I'll do the same thing with Konrad (Reuland) and Nate (Whitaker) after this game is over. But yes, it is a little weird.

Q. As you look at your players this week, how do you read their mood? What are they like this week? You had this emotional senior day; there's some emotions involving other situations. What's your take on it?

COACH WEIS: You know, I'll probably -- unfortunately for you guys, I'll have a better feel for that today because yesterday was players' day off. So other than there being a whole bunch of players around, we're game planning all day. So by the time I come out of game planning, it's nighttime from early in the morning. So there's guys been around all day, but not that I'm meeting with.

I usually don't get to see them -- the first player I'll have seen today won't be until 1:30 today, and then the team will meet at 2:15. So I'll have a better grasp at that time.

Q. I know that you're real focused individual. How about your own emotions? Are you letting any of that leak into this week?

COACH WEIS: No, I'm ready to go. I'm fired up. I really am. I'm fired up to go out and play Stanford. I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. You talked a little bit about Harbaugh. I don't know how many times you

went against him in the NFL. I'm sure there were several, but just some more thoughts on the kind of competitor he is and how that has translated into the way he coaches.

COACH WEIS: There aren't very many quarterbacks that are tough guys. There just aren't that many of them. They like to think they're tough guys, but there aren't that many that are, and he was one that was. I kind of have a lot of respect for those quarterbacks that are tough guys.

One of the first guys I ever really had dealings with in the NFL was Phil Simms, and he was a tough guy. He was one of those guys who hung with the offensive linemen, who lifted with the offensive linemen. He was a tough guy, so I had a lot of respect for him.

But that's what Harbaugh was, he was a tough guy. So at this position when there's so many people that want to get protected all the time and "don't hit me" and everything should be a flag, there aren't very many people who will mix it up with you, and he's certainly one, and that personality permeates down.

Q. I was going to say, was that the biggest difference in their team from before he took over to where they are now?

COACH WEIS: I mean, Walt (Harris) was a good coach, so I'm not going to say anything disrespectful about Walt. But all I'm saying is he's done a nice job, and the team, especially on offense, not that they don't do it on defense, but because he was an offensive guy, he doesn't have their offensive players thinking like offensive players. They have more of a defensive mentality where they're just going to try to mash you.

Q. When you're playing an opponent that has a couple of common opponents with you, teams that you've played, does that help or does it hurt?

COACH WEIS: I mean, it isn't just common opponents. There's other teams that you study, as well. Like I have a lot of respect for Jeff Tedford, and they just played Cal. Even though we don't play Cal, watching Cal go against them is interesting just as well as them playing USC the previous week. So even though there's the common opponent in USC, you can learn things from every game. Some games -- like from the offensive coordinator standpoint, there's some games that are not nearly as important to watch because it's not the same offense and you don't

get the same type of match-ups based off of lack of similarities as far as formations and personnel groups. So you have to make sure you're watching those games where there will be more carryover.

Q. Something you said on Sunday as far as the emotions, you said Sunday, why wouldn't we be able to fire them up for this game. In your terms, this seems like a different kind of encyclopedia this week, the fact that it was such an emotional loss last week, more so than most times.

COACH WEIS: I beg to differ. I don't think it's any different. I think that every time you lose a close game, you have the same objective as a coach; find a way to be ready to go. And sometimes it's just -- you feel good about the game plan. I feel good about the game plan.

Q. I'm not talking about your feelings --

COACH WEIS: Well, see, when I feel good about it, it usually carries over with them. You know, when I get fired up about the game plan, it's like, come on, fellas, let's go. It isn't going to be one of those, oh, fellas, come on, fellas, let's go. If you don't feel the enthusiasm, if they don't feel it, it could be like you said, like pulling teeth. True, if that's the way you present it, that's what you're going to be dealt. But that won't be the presentation; we'll be ready to go.

Q. So there's no special steps, nothing different that you'll do today than you would have done last week?

COACH WEIS: No, I'm just -- we're just going to get ready to go play Stanford on Thanksgiving week. The kids will be fired up. They've got no school tomorrow. That's something new around here. Think about it; they get to sleep in tomorrow on a Wednesday. They're going to be fired up by that alone. That's a good thing.

Q. I know it is, but there's a lot of different things going in that you have in a typical week, so there's nothing you have to do this week -- do you change the schedule tomorrow? Do they come in earlier?

COACH WEIS: Well, maybe I'll get them up early just so they can feel like it's a regular school day. No, I'm going to let them sleep and they're going to come in tomorrow morning and

they're going to get a workout in. They'll get a workout in tomorrow morning while we're doing our game planning on 3rd down and red zone.

We'll practice about 45 minutes earlier tomorrow, and the reason why we'll practice 45 minutes earlier tomorrow is more for the coaches than the players because the coaches have to do all their Thursday preparation Wednesday night where normally they would have Thursday morning to do Thursday preparation, but because I'm bringing the players in at 8:00 in the morning on Thursday so they can be done around lunchtime and have Thanksgiving dinner, really the bind goes more on the coaching staff. The only reason why we're even practicing 45 minutes earlier is so the coaches aren't here until midnight on Wednesday night.

Q. And how does Thursday go as far as -- do the kids usually do it with their family? Do you have a big thing here?

COACH WEIS: I have a big feast for them. I think last year we went through like 30 turkeys. There's no shortage of eaters around here. The way I do it is every guy who's traveling, okay, goes over, and we finish around 12:00, 12:30, and they go right over and they pig out right off the bat, and they enjoy doing it. There's some massive amounts of food that are being consumed.

For the guys that aren't making the trip, they have the option to go to meal or -- let's say if a guy lives in Chicago and he's not making the trip and wants to go ahead and go home, they're excused at that time. But they have the option to decide whether or not they want to have dinner there or go somewhere else for dinner. So I'm sure they'll do what everyone else does then, go lay around and watch football games and sleep on the couch, and then we'll get up on Friday morning and we'll come in and do what we do on Friday, we'll get on a plane and head west.

Q. You usually have a message of the week for the team. What is the message for this week?

COACH WEIS: Well, it's the last opportunity for the year in the regular season. We're going on the road versus a team that has really got it going at the end of the year. They lost a tough one against Cal, but they just stomped on USC and beat Oregon when Oregon was as hot as they were and beat Arizona State before that. We're going against a really good team, and our

team knows it's a really good team. So this is a good opportunity for them. They're going against a good team, and they know it, and it would be a good way to end the year if they go on the road and beat a good team like Stanford.

Q. Have you mentioned the fact that one more win would look better for a Bowl résumé than a loss?

COACH WEIS: I think they would know that. I think they would know that. I'm just worrying about putting all our efforts into just beating Stanford, and then they can deal with -- those circumstances will all come to a head after that.

Q. How did Armando hurt his hand? Was it on the play where he fumbled?

COACH WEIS: No, it wasn't the play he hurt his hand in. It was in the second half, and I'm not sure exactly when. I just know it was in the second half.

Q. Where does Gerhart rank in terms of the skill position players you guys have faced this year?

COACH WEIS: Well, I think that, for example, if you're going into the draft, let's take him -- with this guy, you're going into the draft, he'll be one of the first guys taken, because one of those guys who wants a guy, a dependable, every-down runner they can just hand the ball to 25, 30 times a game, there aren't very many of them that are that type of size that are that type of durable that have proven track records. He obviously has a proven track record. So he's right up there with the best of them.

There's guys that we play that are faster than him, but I don't know if there's any more grounded than this guy.

Q. I know you get this kind of question a lot. Who does he remind you of? Is there anyone?

COACH WEIS: Size alone puts him in a different category than a lot of running backs. Yeah, there's a bunch of guys that come to mind, but I'd have to think about that a little bit more. I really haven't thought about the parallel.

Q. Talking to some of the players earlier in the year, they were talking about the

maturity of the team and trying to flush losses better than last year and they talked about how in many ways they almost lost the USC game against Syracuse because they had a hard time getting back up. What do you think the lessons are from that experience last week?

COACH WEIS: Say that again about the Syracuse game.

Q. They were talking about the Syracuse game was so emotional that they had a hard time getting focused for USC. How do you learn from that and how can they be better prepared for this next time?

COACH WEIS: The defense at USC could have something to do with that. They can make all the excuses they want, but that was a formidable defense that day that laid a whooping on us.

That being said, I don't see close correlation with this team the way they've acted on a week-to-week basis. Based off of the body of evidence from the year to where we are right now, there's no reason for me to believe that our team won't be ready to go. There's no reason for anyone to believe. Everyone has been waiting for a total collapse, and we've lost a lot of games, and I'm right at the forefront of that right there, but the bottom line is they're fighting to the end of every game, and there's no reason for me to believe it's going to be any different this week.

Q. We talked about Clausen and how he fits into the big picture here. What about Golden in terms of receivers?

COACH WEIS: It's interesting with Golden because the subjectivity of this issue is if Michael (Floyd) doesn't get hurt and Michael is there all year, does Golden develop and evolve the way he has? And I don't know the answer. That's a bit rhetorical when I'm saying it myself. But he has shown that he can do it all. He can play in the slot, he can play inside, he can play outside. He can run the ball if you give him the ball. He's broken a long punt return.

I mean, there are some things that -- when he goes to play on Sundays, whenever that is, whether that's six months from now or a year and a half from now, whenever that is, when he goes, there's some things that he's going to have to even get better at to be a more refined guy, but I'll tell you what, the sky is the limit for the kid.

Q. Is there anybody at the next level that you see a parallel to?

COACH WEIS: Unlike Gerhart, who I don't have, so I'd have to think about it, he reminds me of Steve Smith's clone. I know Steve Smith well. I'm a big fan of Steve Smith. A little trash-talker just like Golden. But their personalities are alike, they're fiery guys, they make big plays. They're tough. They don't back down from anyone.

I would imagine -- I don't know exactly Steve's size, but I would imagine it's probably pretty close, and he's done pretty well, last time I checked. He reminds me a lot of Steve.

Q. Following up on that, you say size is not a limitation for him. Route-running, which two years ago was really non-existent for him, is that the area where he has improved the most?

COACH WEIS: He has improved the most, and he has work to do yet. The two things, because he's capable of running even better routes, which he has improved exponentially on that subject right there. But he's capable of running even better routes, and with his strength and quickness getting off the line of scrimmage versus a jam, when he starts using even more proper technique and better technique at that right there when people come up and they want to try to take him away, it's going to be scary when he really gets that down the way -- with the same improvement that he has in route running.

Q. Assuming that he came out right now, how would the NFL judge him? Would they say, okay, he's weak on the route running but he's so physically skilled that we'll take him early and develop him?

COACH WEIS: I think it would really come down to two things, and he already has one of them in the bank already. I forget who I answered it with, but he already has the volume of evidence in the bank.

I mean, when you start studying a player in college, you're looking for him to make plays. Well, he doesn't take long to find this guy. He's a highlight reel. You've got a highlight reel. Just imagine, do you want to make his highlight real for the year? How would you like to be his age when it came to that? There would be plenty of evidence; you could put play after play on there,

and they're all from this year. You don't have to go to any other year.

That being said, the uncertainty would then come to, well, really how fast is he. I think he's pretty fast. So then it comes to just the testing that they do when they do those things.

Look, I don't know if he's going to be here for another year. For Notre Dame's program's sake it would be a wonderful thing. I don't know what his mindset is. I'm going to talk about it next week, me, him and his mom.

Q. You've had so much success starting a couple of games with the no-huddle offense. Is there anything that precludes you from running that? Could you go back to it at certain parts of the game or is it a situation where you'd rather settle in?

COACH WEIS: There's teams that -- the Buffalo Bills, when they were in their heyday, never huddled. They called every play at the line of scrimmage, every single one at the line of scrimmage.

Q. Is it something that you've ever thought about doing?

COACH WEIS: I've never gone a whole game ever in no-huddle. I've gone anywhere from a drive to multiple quarters, but I've never gone a whole game.

Q. Switching gears, I saw Trevor came out again there at the end of the third quarter.

COACH WEIS: He did. His ankle gave way, and he'll be starting all over again this week. He'll be out there today, and we'll see how it goes. I'm sure he'll be playing in the game some, and somewhere in the game we'll probably lose him again because until he can really get it rest, that's where it's going to be.

Q. And just following up on that, I know Nuss was knocking on the door earlier in the year. Did he just beat Wenger? Did I miss something with Wenger?

COACH WEIS: Well, actually he had been sick and banged up himself last week, so really Nuss -- it was really because Danny really wasn't ready, not because Andrew was ahead of him. Actually he actually held up pretty well to tell you the truth.

Q. It's Thanksgiving on Thursday; what are you thankful for?

COACH WEIS: I'm looking forward to hanging out with Maura, Charlie, Hannah and a few selected friends and just being able to sit around with the Weis family on a holiday. How many times in my life have I missed holidays because of football? Too many. There's been too many times where you just missed holidays. You miss a good portion of Christmas, you miss a good portion of Thanksgiving, you miss Valentine's Day, which is almost sacrilegious. But you miss big portions of holidays.

The way our schedule is set up, it'll give me an opportunity to get home on Thursday afternoon and just be able to hang out with the family for the day, and you want to know something, that's nothing better than that. Nothing. Nothing.

Q. Just wanted to touch on Sharpley. He came back, didn't get to play a lot. Can you just talk real briefly about his contributions and coming back this year, what it meant to you?

COACH WEIS: That was probably one of the longest conversations I had after the game in the locker room because I thanked him. I thanked him -- I know this was a mutually beneficial thing for both of us because he wants to be a teacher and a coach, and he wanted to get the student teaching in. You know how it is, once you graduate, the last thing you want to do is three years later go back and go get your student teaching in.

If you're going to get the education in, you like to do it sooner rather than later. So we both benefitted by him coming back here.

But he's been great around the team. When he was down on scout team most of the year, he was easily the best player down there, not necessarily just physically but how he carried himself. He's been a perfect role model for all the older guys who have fallen out of the mix, beaten out by younger players. He's a perfect example of how you should act. And I think that a lot of players learned a lot from him this year and how he handled himself and his demeanor.

I had respect for him before, but I have even more respect for him now than I did before.

Q. And the other thing, how is Steve Smith's form as far as jumping into the band?

COACH WEIS: You know, I'll have to give John Fox a call and ask him how that goes. I mean, Golden obviously has a unique personality. But he's one of those guys that every one of us, when we're not affiliated with him here anymore, he's somebody that you could see wanting to hang out with for the night just to watch him. I think it would be humorous just to be a fly on the wall for a night and just to watch him, because he probably puts on a performance.

I know my son goes to church every Sunday here on campus, and often Golden comes to mass with his harem around him, so he says. He's quite an interesting person to watch when he's away from football. I'd like to share a couple of those moments somewhere down the line.

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