

July 26, 2011



An interview with:

COACH RILEY LANCE MITCHELL

COACH RILEY: All right, we're excited to be here. Obviously, when the dawning of the Pac-12 Conference, I'm proud to bring Lance Mitchell, our senior safety and co-captain of our team with me. We are looking forward to the beginning of our training camp, fall camp. August 7th, starting practice August 8th, just a general summary about our team.

And I've talked to our team about this for a long time, we're going to really, really have to grow a lot through fall camp and through our season. We had five guys that had off-season surgeries and missed spring practice. So as we get back into this thing, we'll have to grow a lot and be ready to compete all the way down the stretch, get better every day. The old-fashioned cliché that we use, and that's what we're going to have to be.

Q. Coach, with Oregon being the projected favorite in the Pac-12 North, what is it going to take for you guys to actually win the division yourselves?

COACH RILEY: Well, I think that one of the great things for all of you and for all the fans is that this is going to be a truly unique year with the divisions in our league. We're not going to play every team anymore, but we're going to compete within our division to get to that championship game.

The other part of it is probably the same as always, is you're going to have to play well every week. I've been in the conference a long time now, 11 years, and I've seen the competition rise to where every week is like the Super Bowl. So I think it's going to be really, really competitive.

We've added two great schools and programs to our conference, so it's going to get even more so that way. It should be just a really,

really interesting year. We're heading into a little bit of uncharted waters, so it's going to be something that we're going to have to compete and get better all the time and take it one game at a time.

Q. You coached in the NFL where anything goes on touchdowns, now there is change in the celebration rule where they're taking touchdowns away if something like that happens, any deemed excessive celebration within that. What is your view on that? How controversial and problematic can it be?

COACH RILEY: I think since they passed the new rule about the celebrations -- whenever you see something like this new come up, it's going to be an emphasis for the officials early. So it's going to have to be something that is continuing to be a part of the education of playing our game and what the rules are. Whether or not you agree with the rules, this is what it is.

I think it's going to be to a point where you're going to have to be really careful. When they came up a few years ago with the added emphasis on sportsmanship and celebration, there were a ton of calls for a while.

So I think that part of our world now has to pay a lot of attention to this new rule that's been added.

Q. You mentioned the injuries. Can you go through the list starting with James Rodgers?

COACH RILEY: Well, James, the one thing that you can never do with James is count him out. He had two major knee surgeries. He is running. He has always been deemed ahead of schedule.

But I'm going to really play this conservatively. I'm going to see where he is. He's got a major doctor's appointment, kind of a last check-up before camp coming up. We'll see what they say when he comes home from that. Then we'll go into fall camp and see where he is.

You can't count him out, but I'm not going to force him in at this time. We'll see where he is.

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**Coach Riley and L. Mitchell -
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Obviously a major, major impact for us. So it's going to be a big question mark going in. But I don't think we're going to have that answer until we get into camp.

Q. How has the investigation involving Oregon impacted how you guys view recruiting and recruiting services?

COACH RILEY: Well, any time anything goes on in our world as we find out about it, hear about it, it just becomes another source of education for us. There is always new you stuff, a ton of stuff out there that can hit directly at home as far as learning about our world and how we have to handle our world.

I think the main thing that's happened different places in the country, it just becomes for us more education on how to handle our business.

Q. Oregon's always had the heads-up on funds. But how would this new Pac-12 TV deal give you guys more funds and maybe be more competitive in the near future?

COACH RILEY: I think that since Larry has taken over, we've seen a number of changes from not only the exposure and how this world has grown right here. You know, there have been changes in our football world. I think they've done a nice job in continuing to grow in our officiating area. Then, of course, financially there is another big impact on the way there.

We've always been, I think very comfortable with our world. We have a tremendous base of fans, donors, boosters and we're proud of what we've accomplished.

We're trying not to compare apples and oranges all the time. We've managed to be competitive through the year.

So I think that this is a good thing. It's a good thing not only for the football programs at schools, but for a school like ours and the impact it will make throughout our athletic department, I think, will be a major factor.

It's the result of a lot of good work that's gone on in our conference in the last few years.

Q. Coach, with this new taunting rule and the fact that it's non-reviewable, you don't know how to describe it but you know when you see it.

LANCE MITCHELL: Coach Riley doesn't really tolerate a whole lot of extra after a play. He wants us to go out there and talk with our players. So I don't think it will be a problem on our team. I

mean, it is what it is. It's a rule and you've got to follow it.

Q. Coach, do you foresee in the future officiating crews changing some of the subjective plays to where they are reviewable?

COACH RILEY: I don't know where review is going to go in the future. But I think that the more that you can look at that and gain some insight as to how it could help our game -- because I think if you go back to whether you were a fan of replay or not, I think that the one thing that the common denominator has been does it change the game and can we make it right? So if there is something new that comes up like that -- I don't know if I ever see it carrying over into some of those subjective things because they can't always -- I don't think they can catch the audio on a lot of what's going on.

But it will be interesting to see where replay does continue to hit.

Q. Lance, what do you expect the defense to be like? How would you characterize them and how good are you going to be defensively?

LANCE MITCHELL: In past years we've had a really solid defense. I think last year we kind of fell off. We definitely want to get back to that status of shutting out teams. We've got a lot of young guys that are coming in that played last year. People like Jordan Poyer, Michael Doctor that played a lot, and that's going to make a big difference with the experience of that big game last year.

So I think this upcoming season is going to be a good one for our defense.

Q. How much of an opportunity is there for Storm Woods and Malcolm Agnew to maybe get some significant playing time early?

COACH RILEY: Well, we've kind of said from the beginning after we signed Malcolm Agnew and Storm Woods that they would enter into the competition for the running back position. It's kind of the same way we looked at it when Jacquizz entered the ranks a couple of years ago. We don't have right now a No. 1 back that's going to replace Jacquizz right now today.

We have a number of guys, I thought, that had very good spring practices. I think if we're going to look at that group, it might be a little bit

like running back by committee. And I don't mean that in a negative sense. I think we have some guys that might be more suited to being a third down back, like a Jovan Stevenson, Malcolm Marable, then we have some first and ten type backs like Ryan McCants, Jordan Jenkins, or we might have a guy emerge through fall camp.

But I think it's important for us to let these guys play as we get going, and then we'll determine that as it goes, and as we add Malcolm and Storm to the mix and see where they might fit in and be able to help us right away.

Q. What is Joe Halahuni's situation right now?

COACH RILEY: Joe had surgery in April, and they anticipate him being ready probably into our fall camp some time. Joe's feeling good. He's doing well with his rehab. I think that at a best case scenario, he'll be practicing the last couple of weeks of fall camp, then we'll see about game ready after that.

That is at the one thing people talk about rehab and when a guy's ready. There is a difference in being deemed healthy and going to practice, then actually being ready to play in a game and getting all that stuff behind you so that you feel comfortable doing that a.

I think that's where we'll be with Joe. I think we were like that with James. I think we're like that with Jordan Bishop and Jordan Jenkins a little bit.

Q. How many things do you hear from offensive players and suggestions that they make that you would call taunting?

LANCE MITCHELL: Oh, man, you hear a lot. It's a part of the game. It's reactions and people make plays and you can get excited about it sometimes.

I really don't have a problem with the talking. It's what goes on. You've got to deal with it, and you can give it back a little bit. But you've got to do it in the lines of the game, I think. When it affects the team, it's just bad all around, so you've got to keep it under control.

Q. Looking back on Jacquizz Rodgers' decision to turn pro, he wasn't drafted until the fifth round. Do you think he made a smart move in going pro when he did?

COACH RILEY: I think that he did. And the reason I say that is he went through the process, I thought, in the right way. He talked to

people. He had guys with knowledge within his family that helped him with this. I think he struggled with it for a long time. I don't think he really made up his mind until right before the deadline.

Then you don't really know. That's one thing about the NFL Draft. You can get information, but you don't know until it happens until you get drafted. The one thing about Jacquizz is I think he was drafted by a team that knew why they were drafting him. The Falcons were an established team. They knew what they needed. Jacquizz will have a great opportunity, and I think he'll do well in the NFL.

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