

**October 25, 2009**



An Interview With:

## **COACH CHARLIE WEIS**

**Q. Armando (Allen) a couple years ago was kind of seen as a game breaker, but he's really evolved into a grinding slashing back you can rely on. Is he kind of the ideal back for your offense?**

COACH WEIS: He's kind of a lot of elements of (former Notre Dame running back) Darius (Walker). He's a little faster than Darius, but Darius, he had one skill that was underrated; he was very good at pre-snap reads of fronts, therefore he knew where to run with the football. I think that Armando is a little bit different in that he's a stronger runner for his size, but there are a lot of elements there.

**Q. With that strength you note, and not that Robert (Hughes) wouldn't be obviously a good short yardage player, did you ever think of sticking with him in short yardage?**

COACH WEIS: We've practiced him on the goal line and in short yardage in practice, it's just that Robert has been running hard, and with 35 pounds difference, usually if you have an opportunity to use the 35 pounds to your advantage, you'd like to try to do that. I might be being generous on that 35 pounds; it might be a little bit more than that.

**Q. The punting situation, is there any chance that will get opened up this week?**

COACH WEIS: I had that discussion with (special teams coordinator) Brian (Polian) this morning, and I think after what we saw in the game, yes, I think we have to at least let Eric (Maust) have a shot in practice and see how it goes.

**Q. Can you tell us about the John Goodman/Roby Toma package that you used in the first quarter and a little bit about that?**

COACH WEIS: Well, we had to practice especially just in case with (Robby) Parris coming back, and like I said, there are some things that we have our slot receiver do that Roby, as in Toma, is probably as good as we have at doing. There's obviously some things you can't do as well, but he's very nifty in his route running. Goody has now kind of played himself into the top three or four guys with Michael (Floyd) being out and Robby being banged up for sure. He's in that top three. But that top three or four guys, as I said yesterday, because a couple people were asking about like Shaq (Evans) and Deion (Walker), Shaq and Deion are outside players, where Robby is more of an inside player.

**Q. With Robert (Hughes), did he pick up a concussion at the goal line?**

COACH WEIS: Yeah, I think he got knocked -- I don't know if it was knocked out or knocked silly right before he got to the goal line by No. 8. He came out, as a matter of fact (Paul) Duncan kind of helped him off the field. I didn't know it until he was coming off the field when I saw him coming off woozy. Sometimes when you're coming off woozy, you think it's because they're dejected that they didn't get in. But that wasn't the case with him.

**Q. With the run defense, they were pointing up; pass defense, they were pointing down. How much are those two things interrelated in that sense to where when you commit to stop the run, you leave yourself vulnerable in the pass?**

COACH WEIS: Well, it's a little bit of both. I think the comment you're making is very true on both ends. When you stop the run, you leave yourself vulnerable in the pass. But you have to find a happy medium because what we can't do, as

much as our run defense has improved for the last four and a half games let's say, where it's just gotten better in good production, we have to get some things fixed in coverage because they're not just getting yards, they're getting too many easy yards.

**Q. In talking to Sergio (Brown) after the game, he used the term "lazy" when it comes to defending the seven route. What is your perception?**

COACH WEIS: You're using the seven route now?

**Q. That was from Sergio.**

COACH WEIS: The seven route is a corner route. It's when the inside receiver, not the outside receiver, stems up and then breaks out, and what he means by that is as a safety, and some of the problems in the chunks yesterday -- I never talk about any specific player, as you know, when something goes wrong. But as a safety when you're playing two deep with some of those situations were when they hit these corner routes, a part of the responsibility is for the corner to sink and get a little deeper, but the biggest part of the responsibility is for the safety to get off the numbers and go make a play on the ball.

So when he says lazy, what he's trying to tell you is that the safety has to drive on that deep ball and be over there to make the play. That's one of the reasons why he didn't two deep.

**Q. I know Harrison (Smith) is a guy that was very productive for you last year at the same position and got off to a pretty good start this year at safety. When you look at him, would you just talk about his confidence right now and kind of where you try to go with that?**

COACH WEIS: Well, his confidence has improved this week from where it was last week. Last week he was playing deeper most of the game, and he gave up some plays and was down in the dumps. We tweaked some things and we put him down (closer to the line of scrimmage), we put Sergio (Brown) back. I think Harrison's confidence took a big upgrade yesterday.

**Q. Not to belabor Shaq (Evans), but is there a disciplinary issue?**

COACH WEIS: No, some people have mentioned that. There's not a disciplinary issue. There was a sickness issue where he came back

and had spent some time in the infirmary and stuff, and then Thursday before the USC game was the first time he had been back to practice. So he really wasn't ready to play in the game plan for that game.

In this game plan he was ready to play in the game plan as an outside receiver, but it was for Duval (Kamara), and Duval actually had one of his better games, so I wasn't looking to get Duval off the field the way Duval had a lot of production for us in that game yesterday for us.

**Q. You talked about Sergio and Harrison. After evaluating the film, is that situation going to probably stay that way going forward?**

COACH WEIS: I'd say they'll stay in those roles, but what we have to do is we have to do a better job of stabilizing everyone's roles. We've been spinning around trying to find an answer, just like when we had talked about a month ago the linebacker situation, how finally when we settled in and made Manti (Te'o) the Will and put Brian (Smith) in at Mike, that has stabilized the linebacker position. We're going to have to do more of the same now in the secondary and get it stabilized where we're not rolling so many people through trying to find an answer.

I think now we have a much better idea of where we want to go as far as that goes. I think that the improvement will come with some more stabilized positions in the secondary.

**Q. And maybe the biggest stat of the game was plus-five on the turnover margin. Can you talk about both sides of the ball.**

COACH WEIS: Well, it shows you how tough the game was that when you're plus five and you still are fighting right until the end of the game to win the game. I thought the biggest turnover, everyone notices Brian's at the end, but I think Sergio's caused fumble down by the goal line when we're down by three, I believe, at the time, I think that that was probably as critical one as there was in the game because that prevented points.

But I think that there's two ways of looking at this. Obviously I'm not content, nor are the defensive coaches or players content with the yardage we gave up in the passing game. On the flipside of that, three interceptions, and five times they're in plus territory where they turn the ball over -- five times of the times they got in plus

territory they turn the ball over; all five of those turnovers occurred in plus territory. I think that's a critical factor when preventing points.

**Q. You've been impressed and you've talked about Roby Toma from the outset of camp, but at what point did you think that he was somebody that could help you this year?**

COACH WEIS: Actually watching show team, he was one of those guys where he was down on the show team and just making plays every single week. The standard offensive show team player of the week, that goes without saying, is Evan Sharpley, because he does such a great job for us down there. We've even stopped giving it to him because it's such a landslide.

But in the passing game, a constant every single week was this kid getting open. He'd get open and catch the ball, and he was nifty. And you're going against the good guys now, you're going against the starters, and they'd have trouble covering him. I really like the kid as a player. I've seen so many of these slot receivers that I've coached in the past, I see a lot of that in this kid. I think this kid has probably got a lot of good football ahead of him for us.

**Q. As you get healthier, though, at this position with (Robby) Parris coming back and (Michael) Floyd being closer, how do you keep Toma involved now that you --**

COACH WEIS: You keep on repping him as a slot receiver. That's what you do now. If things go the way I think they're going, it might come at the expense of some other people in the not-too-distant future.

**Q. Speaking of Floyd, we saw him making throws in pregame. Is he still on line?**

COACH WEIS: We're waiting for that CAT scan a week from Monday or Tuesday and we'll see how that goes. Look, Michael and I -- my guess is that the CAT scan is going to come back and say, okay, he's healthy enough to go.

Now, every week longer you wait he's better. Every week longer after you've been cleared to go is better. But then I think it'll come a point where the doctors say to Michael and myself, okay, it's your decision, realizing the longer you wait, the better it is. Knowing me, I'll leave it on Michael, and knowing Michael, he'll want to get out there as quick as he possibly can.

We'll just have to wait and see how it goes. We don't want to be stupid here. But we'll just have to wait and see what the CAT scan says first before we jump to any conclusions.

**Q. Did I see this correctly that after you were held on 4th and 1, were there not two Boston College defenders that made a move toward your bench and taunted or pointed? Did I see that?**

COACH WEIS: I did not notice that.

**Q. Do you know anything about the situation between Clausen and Gunnell at the end of the game?**

COACH WEIS: I just heard about it this morning to tell you the truth. I just heard Jimmy was going over to shake his hand at the end of the game, and I don't think from what I understand that he (Gunnell) wanted any part of that. I just heard about it from one of my guys. Didn't know anything about it.

**Q. Or Olsen?**

COACH WEIS: You mean right on the last play? I think we were kneeling on the ball and the guy over the right guard went full speed. There's no rule that says the guy can't go full speed on the last play, but you're kneeling on the ball to end the game right there, and I think that you never can say there's an unwritten rule to not go full speed, but I think everybody was kind of sticking up for our right guard on that one.

**Q. You spoke earlier about people kind of rolling through and finding answers in the secondary. What did Slaughter show you yesterday? Is he a possibility?**

COACH WEIS: Jamoris we know can tackle. I think for his first time out there, he was probably a little bit nervous because he was around the ball a lot. But there were some plays made in his area, and we'll see how it goes. But being in the area is only one part of it. The next part of it is making sure you make those plays, because there was a lot of action his way.

**Q. Conversely, with your defensive line, you rolled a lot of people in there. Is that more by design, that you want to keep people fresh there?**

COACH WEIS: Yeah, well, we've been

trying to get to this point where the more people that we can count on, I know (Sean) Cwynar played a bunch, I know (Steve) Filer played a bunch, and that was the intent going in. I think that maybe one of the reasons why we're getting more production out of the defensive line is because we're doing that and keeping some fresh bodies in there and not being worn out.

The more guys that you can put in that you can count on, the better it is for being fresh down the stretch.

**Q. You are coming up against some teams in the last five games that have premier runner, and also a quarterback that's much improved in terms of their passing, and you talked about trying to find a happy medium. Do you at this point as the head coach try to get involved in trying to find that happy medium?**

COACH WEIS: I do the exact same thing every week. I've already had discussions, already today. My day starts early. This is like dinnertime for most people. We've covered a lot of ground already today. It isn't just having watched the tape and done some recruiting. We're already involved in problem solving. We already have initially addressed some of these issues.

**Q. I know you got here before me --**

COACH WEIS: Barely.

**Q. -- but in terms of finding that happy medium, and this is where I'm going with this, are you confident that you have the personnel that's going to be able to express that happy medium?**

COACH WEIS: Yeah, I think that as I said yesterday, and I wasn't just doing coach-speak, I really believe our best play on defense is yet to come. I think at the beginning of the year we had a whole bunch of problems. I think that we had problems stopping the run, we had problems giving up chunks (big plays), we were giving up a lot of points. We had a whole bunch of problems.

Slowly but surely we're starting to solve some of these problems. Remember, defense gives up two touchdowns in that game. We had the safety on offense, okay, so that's two of the 16 points. So the defense gives up 14 points in that game. You'd have to say most games you play, you give up 14, you're going to win. It doesn't make a difference who you're playing against.

Most times you'd have to assume that the defense holds them to 14, you're going to come out on top.

**Q. In terms of I guess the assumption that Robby Parris is going to be back this week --**

COACH WEIS: Yeah, he'll be back, but I think that if he's hobbled, we're going to -- we'll have these other guys set and ready to go. We'll just wait and see how it goes with Robby. I meet with the doctors here at 1:30. Even though they'll say he'll try to go, if it's what it was after he got rolled up again, which is what happened, if that's where it was, this will be a nagging thing that will take some time. He'll be ready to go, but the question is will we put him out there versus putting somebody else out there.

**Q. Anybody else get nicked in the game?**

COACH WEIS: Not that I know of at this time. If I do come up with somebody of significance, I'll let you know.

**Q. On the turnovers, you're plus five. A big part of that is committing zero yourself. I think you guys have five all year, which is No. 2 in the country. What does it say about a team that is that careful with the ball, and what do you think the key is to that because it's not like you're just a conservative passing team that's not throwing it down the field.**

COACH WEIS: Well, I think that each week you can talk about Jimmy Clausen and his development. Each week. You can talk about it last week against USC in the second half. You can talk about his fourth quarter performances throughout the entire season. But no better measure of the development of this quarterback can you give than the play versus Boston College a year ago to the play versus Boston College yesterday afternoon.

A year ago we threw four picks. We're throwing it to them, we're throwing it down the field. They're playing the same coverages. They're playing the same defense. Of course they had (Ron) Brace and (B.J.) Raji and (Mark) Herzlich out there, too. But as far as coverage in front and those things, it was the same.

But in this game you saw hitch after hitch after hitch, quick out after quick out after quick out. And if the halfback, if they weren't dropping a

lineman and grabbing a halfback coming through the middle in their defensive scheme, because there were a lot of times rushing three, and I know you guys all go back and watch the tape, you're going to see a lot of times they rushed two. They dropped both defensive linemen out and just rushed two guys a lot of times. So there's nine guys in coverage. But if the halfback would have been out, we would have been dumping the ball to him, too.

But just to watch him now, usually quarterbacks especially at a young age do not have the patience to play that game. He showed that yesterday, completed two thirds of his passes. Once again, when the game is on the line, you're down, throws a touchdown pass. Rather risky, by the way. But throws a touchdown pass. And that is his best measure I can really say.

If you just go back and watch that game a year ago, how bad we looked on offense, to watching us yesterday, no better story can be told than that one.

**Q. (BC running back Montel) Harris had 362 carries without a fumble before he put it on the ground three times and lost two of them. Can you guys see something with him that was exploitable? Was it a fluke or what?**

COACH WEIS: No, I think a couple times he got a helmet right on the football. I think that's usually a measure that a lot of times that ball comes out. But he got racked up pretty good a couple times. One time he was a little careless. But I think that there was some good tackling going on in the run game yesterday.

**Q. This is a little different. Friday the schedule for next year was released. How difficult is it looking at a non-BCS conference team like a Western Michigan, like a Tulsa, that type of thing going into it where they're quality teams, but the respect for them isn't there?**

COACH WEIS: Well, first of all, I give a lot of credit to administration for the work that they had to do, because it's become a very difficult task. Scheduling has become a very difficult task. I stay out of scheduling because I've got enough problems to worry about, and the last thing I want is Weis is now handling the scheduling. So I make sure I stay out of that one.

But the role that they have, that they're dealing with, trying to find opponents, especially when -- is it a home-and-home, is it just a one

game at your place, and then you get a game that you think you've got locked in versus a BCS team, and then that BCS team says, no, we'd love to make that work, but we can't make that work when you tentatively think you have it planned. It isn't as black and white as everyone thinks it is. I think (athletics director) Jack (Swarbrick) and his staff are always looking to try to get the best opposition they possibly can, but sometimes it's easier said than done and just doesn't work out as pretty as everyone would think it would.

So I think that when the schedule is out, we're happy to be able to fill the schedule versus quality opponents that have different connections. Tulsa you've got (Notre Dame alum and former Notre Dame athletics administrator) Bubba (Cunningham) there who was an ND guy, and Western Michigan you've got a local group that can get in here and get to the game and it'll be exciting for both their program and our program.

I think sometimes that task is almost a thankless thing because trying to find 12 now, especially with this only so many home-and-homes is a little bit difficult.

**Q. Two losses this year, and your guys bounced back and get a win the week after. You didn't really see that the previous two years --**

COACH WEIS: Tell me about it.

**Q. How big of a step is that for them to be able to bounce back after a tough loss and get these wins?**

COACH WEIS: I think that probably is one of the more underrated things that people have talked about. You picture yourself, these kids, you're talking about 18- to 22-year-old kids. So they lose to USC on the last play of the game. Now everyone takes off and goes home but them. So they're the only ones around campus. Does that give them more time for rest and everything else? Great. But you're feeling sorry for yourselves, you just lost against a top opponent, everyone else is home on break.

Our biggest job as coaches was to rally the troops. But you've got to give a lot of credit to those kids.

And on a sidebar there, I also want to thank the students for getting back here. I looked up into that section with the student body, I remember when I was on fall break I don't



remember getting back before about midnight on Sunday night. I don't remember, maybe I did, but I don't remember. But there it was, the student body, when they could have been home for another day when fall break really ended today, and there they were in force.

I'm proud of the way the guys rallied from the tank that they were in and came and fought against a team that has been beating them forever. We got that out of the way and got that off their back. But I think that now it gets us in a position where everyone is back, the students are back, and we can move forward.

**Q. And not necessarily to jump ahead to next week, but is it unusual for a pairing for a, quote-unquote, home game that you're obviously traveling pretty far for?**

COACH WEIS: Yeah, we'll treat it like a road game. We won't treat it like a home game. Even though it'll be our home game, it'll still be foreign territory. And then the travel schedule and the flight and the hotels and everything like that, we'll treat it like the same procedure we do for a road game, even though it's a neutral site game.

**Q. Is it hard to prepare for a first true travel game this far into the season where you have to go on flights and everything like that and getting the kids back adjusted to that when the previous two road games were quick trips?**

COACH WEIS: I think the most important thing for our team is that now they've bounced back for a win with a win against Boston College, and now we have to go on the road to play Washington State in a game where the players have to clearly understand that if they go there and just feel good about themselves too much and don't go to work, we could be fighting for the 100th week in a row in the same situation. And I think that's going to be the important thing for the coaches, having the players understand that this week.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the play of Kyle McCarthy? He seems to be always in the right spots at key times.**

COACH WEIS: Well, he certainly has made a number of critical plays for us. I think that besides the fact that he's the captain of the defense, I think that it seems like a lot of these games where the games -- we can say three already at least now, right? Because he makes the

last play in the Michigan State game and then he makes the hit on the last play of the Washington game when they're throwing the ball down the middle of the field, and he has the first contact on that, the guy who had his hands on the ball. Now he has two interceptions in the second half (against Boston College).

He's a guy who's made game-changing plays. Besides the plays he just makes during the game, he's also made game-changing plays. It's seal-the-victory type of plays. You can't give him enough credit for that.

**Q. Is he a guy that you point to to maybe some guys that don't get on the field early and say, look, this is a guy that had to earn his stripes and get there and this is what you can accomplish?**

COACH WEIS: He's a perfect example of really what college football used to be, you pay your dues, you come in, you pay your dues, and you just keep on working your butt off. And then eventually you get your opportunity to get on the field and you make the most of it. That's what he's done, and I think that he's a perfect person for a lot of the younger guys to emulate.

**Q. You talked a little bit about the explosive plays. I think you measure explosiveness ten-yard runs --**

COACH WEIS: Ten-yard runs and 20-yard passes.

**Q. The runs dropped from a high of every game to, I think, a low of two last night, but it's been the complete opposite on the passing play; it's gone from a low at Nevada and increased every game. What do you see, what do you think the key is to fixing the other problem, the second half of the problem?**

COACH WEIS: All right, so the first thing is -- sometimes I'm asked a question on a Saturday after the game on defense, I want to wait until after I know what the call was, see what the coverage was and see what the breakdowns were. As you know I'll never talk about the players or coaches in a negative light, but at least now what I understand the problems are, if I thought the problems for the most part we're just no good, it would be a bigger problem with -- we'd have to fix it. And I would think that with the exception of about one ball that clearly was a jump-ball situation

where anyone could have -- either guy could have made the play or could have knocked it down, all the other plays were just a high-low, getting beat inside, more technique things than anything else.

And I think that because I know now what the coverage are and the answers to the test, I think there are some things that -- like I said, we've previously already addressed today. There's some things that we can do to try to get that number down.

**Q. Overall were you pleased with the defensive changes that were made? Do you think that they led to some improvements?**

COACH WEIS: I think that the changes we made in conjunction with stabilizing who's doing what, I think the changes were all good changes, as long as we stabilized what we're doing. I think we've seen improvement on the defensive line. We've seen improvement at the linebacker position.

I think last but not least, we have to finish this off with the secondary, and I think by the end of the year, all three things -- I'm not waiting for the end of the year, don't get me wrong; I'm counting on it this week. I'm not saying six weeks from now we'll have it all figured out. I'm saying I think we're on a track where at least we have identified what the problems are and therefore can fix them.

**Q. I know you probably don't like comparing players, but I was just wondering where you thought Jimmy was in comparison to Brady Quinn?**

COACH WEIS: Because I have had Jimmy for three years off the field, I think that mentally as far as our system and what we're doing, I think he's ahead of Brady. I'm not saying he's ahead of him physically, I'm saying mentally, because he's playing at a very, very high level. To have the numbers he has, and the numbers for me are not about yardage. The touchdown-to-interception ratio is one of the ones that we addressed all the way back in training camp and that number right now is probably the most telling tale that you could have with the production he's getting. That means that he's really gone the extra mile to make sure he has a clear understanding where to go with the ball all the time.

Just like last week, we got sacked five times. Sometimes taking a sack, believe it or not, is the smart thing to do. Now, it's tough to tell a

quarterback that. Hey, taking a sack is a smart thing to do. But there's been times in the past where we would go ahead and throw a ball off to the bad guys rather than to go ahead and take one or throw the ball away. So he's made significant progress in those areas.

**Q. You're 5 and 2, just kind of overall if you'd talk about there's always things that maybe keep you up at night, the plus five in turnovers, yet you barely win, but you won. Where do you think the team is now? Are you happy with the direction it's going in?**

COACH WEIS: I think that the team, if they weren't happy last night, they're going to be happy by the time they leave today when I point out the fact that they just beat a team that's beat us six times in a row. I think sometimes after a game like that you're more relieved than happy. You're relieved you won instead of happy you won. And I think when you're playing against a team -- if anyone thinks that Boston College came in here expecting to lose, that wasn't their mentality.

So first things first. Enjoy the fact that you won the game. But at the same time there's a number of things across the board that we have to fix to get better at. And we have fixed a whole bunch of them. We have fixed a whole bunch of them, but if we want to be peaking -- okay, and to me the best time to be peaking is at the end of the year, and I think that's what the intent is. You want to win them one by one. We're just taking one step at a time.

I think that yesterday's win put us one step closer to being able to achieve some fairly high level of success. Washington State is up next.

**Q. One final question. I'm from San Antonio, and I was wondering what you thought about coming to our city.**

COACH WEIS: Actually I am a big fan of San Antonio, not because of games there, I just like the town. I like the Riverwalk, I like the area. I'm really looking forward to going there, as is our team. I think that it's a great venue. I've been in the dome before. I think that anyone who gets an opportunity to spend a few extra days in the town would be remiss, because they'd be missing out on some good stuff down there.

**Q. First of all, any report on Tyler Eifert? Everything go well there?**

COACH WEIS: Tyler is actually going this Wednesday night. He's actually flying out to -- for a couple days with the specialist, the guru.

**Q. In Phoenix?**

COACH WEIS: Yes. So we'll let you know. Whatever the guru says, I'll let you know that.

There's two different tacks they can take, so before you take them, we're going to. There's always like the main guy, and every time there's an injury, so he's going to see the main guy.

**Q. Also, in regards to Jimmy Clausen, it's another week, he played great, he's fabulous, all that. I hate to say it gets old, but --**

COACH WEIS: There's a but?

**Q. It's a pleasure to watch him. I can't believe they're paying me to do this. In any event, in the second quarter there was a drive where you're going down to score the first touchdown, and it was 3rd and 3, and he rushes, and instead of sliding and not taking a hit or whatever, he lowers his shoulder and he goes into a guy to get the 1st down. And then on the touchdown pass, he's pressured, he's kind of -- I don't want to say saunters to the right, but steps to the right, keeps looking ahead, finds Golden, scores. Are those two concrete examples of when you talk about his leadership and his development, are those two concrete examples you can point to and say, those are plays that a mature quarterback makes as opposed to a young guy?**

COACH WEIS: I think that I'm going to cite another play, too, in addition to those two, because I think they're very good examples. The first one, when he's running with the football, as much as I possibly can, I would want him not to take a hit, as much as I possibly can. We're not that type of offense, and he's not that type of player.

But there are times where he's put himself before the team, for the team, when it comes down to picking up a 1st down. That just shows how he's evolved in his toughness.

But not only that roll to the right where he threw to Golden on the deep return for the touchdown. But also if you recall earlier in the game, in the first drive for the field goal, he rolled to the left, which for him this is like a miracle, so he rolls to the left, and Golden runs -- pulls back out

again, and we ended up picking up the 1st down there. That's probably one of the first times since I've been here, since he's been here, that I've ever saw that happen, where he instead of -- felt the pressure, and instead of -- automatically last year he would have just bailed to the right anyway. That's where he always would have gone.

But now he's always looking to step up, and in this case he rolled to the left and then got his hips around and made a perfect throw to Golden that picked up a big 1st down for us. It's a very clear sign of an evolution of a player.

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