

July 31, 2015



An interview with:

COACH LEACH

COACH LEACH: All right. First I want to introduce back there, Joe Dahl, offensive lineman, and then over here is Jeremiah Allison. He's a linebacker.

Given the fact that typically regardless of what I say in opening remarks, you guys go ahead and ask what you want anyway. We'll get started with that pretty shortly. But proud of our group, the work we've had in the off-season and spring. We've got most of our guys coming back, so we're going to see how much we can expand their role, develop as a team and as players and coaches together. So we're excited about it.

Q. Can you talk about running the ball in the air raid offense?

COACH LEACH: Well, that's not entirely true. Our yards per carry are reasonably high, and our offense has led the leagues as far as yards and production out of our running back position, and been in the Big 12 a number of times. As we develop and we have three running backs back, young guys, but steadily develop behind an offensive line that's back, we're excited about the future of it.

Q. How would you rate the quarterback play between the line last year with guys coming back this year?

COACH LEACH: I think it's good. I mean, we were a great league last year. Last year is a quarterback league might have been one of the best in history. This year will be some new faces, but they'll be quality quarterbacks. The thing is these other guys, nobody heard of them at one point in time before too. Occasionally some of these guys that are great players are getting out just ahead of the posse because young guys are closing in on them anyway.

Q. Do you think having been out west now for a few years recruiting California,

recruiting the west coast, are there more guys out here than there used to be?

COACH LEACH: I think there's always been a lot, yeah, I think there always has been. You mean quarterbacks, right? But I think the development of them has been more aggressive. I think first of all, they play seven on seven nearly year round. Second of all, a lot of people are throwing it. The teams that I had the opportunity to be part of we've been throwing it since 1989. But now a lot of people are. Of course the NFL is too. So I think as people see it and develop characteristics of their own with their offenses, I think that all that plays in the hands of guys out there throwing it.

Q. What about your situation with quarterback? How do you feel?

COACH LEACH: Feel good. Two really good players. Both of them had good springs. Of course, Luke averaged 460 yards a game passing as a freshman. So I don't know. There might be some kind of a record. I don't know. But I tell you, that's a pretty good starting point. Biggest thing is he has a lot of composure and stability, and had the ability to go out there suddenly and play like he belonged there.

Q. How hard would it be for Payton to beat out a guy who's played in a couple games?

COACH LEACH: Well, I think the hardest thing's going to be because he's a quality player. Luke's a quality player. But I think that the one thing is both of them have that I think is very strong is they stay out of their own way. They're not one of those people that dwell on something to the point where they don't continue to improve, and also, they're very focused workers and learn quickly.

So the biggest battle is just going to be the quality of play of the other guy. So then we'll tee it up and let them both compete for it.

Q. What does this offensive line have to do to improve?

COACH LEACH: You just keep improving.

We're a pretty young offensive line. I thought it was impressive last year when you consider three of those guys had never played college football before, but played fairly well. Then now of course we've got them and a whole 'nother off-season under their belt and kind of a good mixture of older guys ask younger guys. We've got more depth than we used to have there too. That's offensively your most important position. Everybody talks about all the positions. The reason they have football is offensive line and defensive line. So that's been a key area for us to develop.

Q. How hard would it be for somebody to beat out the five returning starters?

COACH LEACH: On the offensive line? I think it could definitely happen. There were flashes of that in the spring. That could definitely happen. Then also hopefully then we have the opportunity to play a couple more guys, and then, of course be more efficient at running the ball, then maybe (No microphone) will come to our school. You never know.

Q. You guys have been recruiting California pretty well. You've got some big-name players over there. In your time at Washington State. What do you have to do to look for the type of recruits to come over?

COACH LEACH: I think the biggest challenge is a lot of people haven't been there. People that go there like it. I mean nearly every head coach that coached at Washington State has retired there. I think the biggest thing is to get them through there so they can get a visual. One of the best things about the footprint of this conference is you're only a couple hours away. Because we have direct flights to Spokane from nearly every area that exists in this conference, and that's been helpful. The other thing is we are a true college town and a conference that's predominantly urban settings.

So once they get there and see it, and they see the landscape and the atmosphere of a college town where you just step out your front door and everybody you're going to school with is right there, creates a level of energy that's very much unique, and I think that's why so many people return.

In my neighborhood you run into all these people, and yeah, I went to Washington State. Couldn't get a job here. I'm moving back. We have all these retired people moving and coming back. I think I haven't found it -- the biggest difficulty is I've heard it's nice. I haven't been there. You've got to get them there. And our

facilities are the best in the conference. They were completed in August. We went from among the worst facilities in America, to now we have the best facilities in the Pac-12.

So you guys need to come check it out and then you can tell everybody and get the word out and everybody will know. Because right now it's kind of word of mouth. The other thing on that computer, as you look on the computer, it is that fancy. It is that nice. But all that stuff's bigger than it looks on the computer.

Q. What do you like most about the facilities?

COACH LEACH: Right in the middle of campus. We got very lucky that way, because the founding fathers of Washington State I don't believe said -- now some day they're going to build a football facility, and we've got to make sure there is space right here in the middle of campus. I don't think they did that. I think we got very lucky because it's literally the center of campus, and satellites out from there, which makes our players' day very simple. They start out in a dorm that's a heck of a lot nicer than the dorm I was in. Big, spacious, brand-new, sky deck up there with heat lamps and all this stuff. Then they walk across the street and there is the academic center. Then they walk across the sidewalk, and we have the biggest locker room that I've ever set foot in anywhere. We have 15,000 square foot weight room with windows over the practice field and the game field, state-of-the-art training room. A training table where we have two full-time chefs, a full-time nutritionist.

And then we've got seats in the team meeting room that make Joe Dahl look like a normal person, and I look like a kid in a high chair. But the thing about it is then from there you just go up the elevator and stairs and you're on campus in the middle of all your classes. So logically it's the best situation I've ever been a part of.

The other thing is, like I say, we're just very fortunate we were able to put --

Q. I have a question from Twitter. A young man would like dating advice from you.

COACH LEACH: Dating advice? A guy can get in trouble giving dating advice. What would I say dating advice? Well, the first thing is you've got to put them in a position where they'll talk. You've got to want them to talk, because you'll be nervous yourself. So you want a situation where you have to engage in conversation. You don't let them bring their friend with them. Now

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what I used to do is I had the two for one. You could buy two for one coupon book, and you go to the sandwich place, and oh, this looks good. What are we having? I don't know. You pull out the coupon and say here's the menu. But that's not the first date.

I think make sure you go somewhere where you can talk. If you go to Washington State, we've got five of America's greatest Rivers around there. That would be a great place. We've got dunes, mountains. You can hunt rattlesnakes, if you want to. You can fish for sturgeon. I tell you what, if you took her sturgeon fishing I don't believe she'd ever forget it.

Q. How does that translate into recruiting?

COACH LEACH: As far as the recruiting thing, I mean, the biggest thing with recruiting is you figure out what somebody wants, what's important to them, and then you illustrate how your situation fits with them. In the end how down the road it's going to benefit them. Whether it's the role they have on your team, but in particular the education, the environment they get to do it. Because you're going to be dead in a hundred years anyway, so you want to go to a setting where you think you can flourish, and then you're going to have great memories and enjoy.

Q. How was the Batman?

COACH LEACH: It's pretty good. I'm not a huge Batman guy. Now my kids are going to be really jealous, in particular the Harry Potter portion of the tour. But I do recommend you go. They have everything from Batman helmets to some cool brass knuckles that the Joker has to Catwoman outfits, and some definite villains. Then you can go upstairs to the Harry Potter exhibit and they'll stick a wizard hat on you and tell you what tribe you're in or whatever, or the fraternity or whatever. I can't remember. Mine was Huffle-something.

Q. Could you imagine the facilities becoming this extravagant 25 years ago?

COACH LEACH: Yes, and no. I guess I didn't know how it would manifest itself. I knew that it was going to continue to be an arms race. In college athletics continues, it's like one of the big benefits of the social media is that everything that happens in college athletics positively gets to be shared with a lot of people.

So a lot of people can be engaged in what's going on. Football has always been obsessed with technology and innovation. So

we've got to adventure for the sake of adventure. So I guess I felt like it would continue to grow. I didn't think it would go backwards. One thing that surprised me when we first put one in, and I'd never used it, but just the thought of it, and now everybody's got one of these practically. There is a hot tub with a treadmill in it. You can get it up chest high or a foot high. Then the jets blow into your chest to give you more resistance and you can speed the thing up and slow it down. There are cameras that go down there beside it that will measure all kinds of things, so you can tell range of motion and how injuries are coming back and that type of thing. Just how elaborate some of that stuff has gone. Also, I think the nutrition consciousness of what you're putting in the athletes I think is a very positive step.

Q. What is your vision for Washington State football? (No microphone)?

COACH LEACH: Well, I think you just continue to progress and improve. I thought we took a step on offense, led in a lot of national categories, but we've got to steadily improve. Defense and special teams, we've got to improve there. The good news is we've got a lot of people back. We've got nearly everybody back. Some of them were pressed into service before it was probably ideal, but they're what we had. Of course that experience, I think, will be helpful this year, and we have to continue to build on it.

But there's never really any set point. It's just you've got to really enjoy the process and improvement and do it every day. It doesn't really matter how good you are and where you're at. We'll show the video to our players and stuff like that. But after the Super Bowl and after the Pro Bowl, Jerry Rice would run up and down that hill just like he was a rookie and trying to make sure that the 49ers didn't cut him because he was one of the greatest players that ever played.

Q. With all the new facilities, and I'm sure it comes with new different toys and stuff you've been given, you don't seem like the kind of guy to really embrace that. So how do you change or do you just let other coaches do it?

COACH LEACH: Embrace the what?

Q. Embrace the new facilities and new toys that you're talking about, the treadmill, the water, and stuff like that. Are you embracing it or leaving it up to others to deal with that?

COACH LEACH: No, what I embrace is the fact that the job can be done more efficiently.

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That you can come back from injuries efficiently. You can feed guys quickly, and efficiently, and nutritiously. You can show your film in a meeting room where you're not crowded and somebody's looking over each other's head and you've got great film and technology to show them.

So you can teach better and more efficiently with more clarity. Then, of course, the weight room you can condition them. You can have everybody in there at the same time. You're not on top of everybody. To me, what's the most appealing is the efficiency part of it. Then, of course, you want really nice stuff that they'll be excited about. I'm not as, perhaps, into that part of it. But I'm really excited about the efficiency it gives you as far as doing your job.

Q. Have you tried the underwater treadmill?

COACH LEACH: No, my dad did though one time because they talked him into it. He wanted to do it just for exercise. There would be people that go in and jog. But I haven't. I've seen it happen. I raised it real high and I pretended I was walking on water one time.

Q. I have a schedule question, do you have any input on the home game not in Seattle this year?

COACH LEACH: No input, but excited it's all at Martin Stadium. And a portion of it had to do with the fact that a lot of our alums and fans kind of really embrace the opportunities of coming back to Pullman. They've got the whole process, the whole tailgating thing and look forward to as many weeks of that a year as possible because we would gain people when we went to Seattle, but we'd also lose a portion that wanted to stay with their routine there in Pullman.

Q. How do you see Jeremiah coming into his own?

COACH LEACH: Well, he's always been smart. He was a salutatorian at his high school. Then he just brings a lot of energy. He's a high energy guy. Jeremiah's got optimism all over him, and I think it translates to different people, and to the players as their level of play has steadily improved.

Q. Continued

COACH LEACH: That and the fact that I think he's talking about being an attorney and I forget. He's got pretty big aspirations as guys that work as hard as him too. I think he's building his experience space and his portfolio as well as an

opportunity to reach out. Jeremiah's background is such that he's been through some tough times that people helped him through. So I'm sure that some of that has to do with giving back in the same fashion that he's appreciated.

Q. Have you talked to Conner Halladay and did his decision to leave football surprised you?

COACH LEACH: The decision surprised me. But the biggest thing, and it's about as simple as everybody's got their path and selects their path, and he decided he didn't want the National Football League to be a part of that and just kind of wanted to move on. My biggest hope is that he doesn't regret it. Because he certainly had the ability to play and things like that. But, yeah, it did surprise me.

Q. Did he consult you at all? Did he talk to you before and after the decision?

COACH LEACH: Yeah, just a little, but it was kind of point blank. There is no, you know, I'm not going to tell you it hasn't run through my head and I haven't thought about it, but the whole thing is just quite simple I think he just decided he didn't want that journey and was just kind of done with football and wanted to move on to other aspects of his life, and he's never varied from that. But I hear from him quite a bit and I see him, so I certainly wish him the best.

Q. Has he expressed the interest in coaching to you?

COACH LEACH: Last I heard he wanted to be a golf pro, because I know he likes to golf. He goes to Coeur d'Alene and bats it all over the place, and they travel around the country and golf.

Q. You've written several books.

COACH LEACH: Yeah, make sure you tell everybody they can get them on Amazon, and they should have a number of them. Don't forget the Swing Your Sword one too.

Q. What is your next book going to be about?

COACH LEACH: I don't know. I'm open to suggestions. It's kind of like each one of them seems like kind of a daunting task like, oh, my gosh, is this possible? And then you get into it and you roll along pretty good, and then by the end of it, because you've read it about six times as you look at it carefully, and you're not reading it for pleasure, you're reading, at least in my case, I

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have the sense that, okay, this is now printed on my tombstone, and unless it's perfect I have to live with this forever.

So then it's a lot of, do I like this word? Is this word too strong? Is this word too weak? Which one is the right one? Should this paragraph be here? So there is a lot of that second-guessing. Then when it comes out there is quite a sense of satisfaction, although you're not really interested in reading it again for quite some time. But they've all been exciting for different reasons. Geronimo just came out on paper back, so that was good. Yeah, it's always sort of come together as why don't we do this and what of this? Of course the idea of it is a lot of fun. Then there is a little procrastination, and once you're into it kind of explodes from there. They've all been fun, but there is also a very busy quality to it too.

Q. What was your inspiration behind it?

COACH LEACH: When I was a kid, back then you played Cowboys and Indians a lot. It's not quite as popular now. People play machines now. So we played Cowboys and Indians, and I always wanted to be the Indian. So then I had never been to a library before, but I heard there were libraries, and I was pretty young. I was probably, I don't know, first or second grade. I'm like, what is this? You can get a book and take it with you? So I asked my mom, why haven't I heard of this? We have to go.

So I go to the library and it's me and my sister. She says, well, each of you can get a book. I said, all right. Where's the Indian section? Then I'm thinking, okay, now -- I felt like she was kind of withholding information from me just a little. This business that I hadn't been made aware that libraries existed prior to this. She says, you can get a book and I'll read it to you. Well, I wasn't sure when or if I was ever going to get back to the library, so I made sure it was a big book. Got a big book on Geronimo, and like a trooper, she read it, and she read it to us. She'd have to explain stuff, because it wasn't one of those with a bunch of pictures. I think that's what she had in mind and she was hoping for when she suggested get a book and read it to us.

But she read the whole thing. From there I became interested and read everything I could on him. Then when we did Swing Your Sword, the guy that helped put that deal together represented a guy named Buddy Levy, and Buddy Levy has done a book on Cortez, a book on Davy Crockett, and done a number of books. Then Buddy and I got acquainted. Through Scott, the guy that

helped put Swing Your Sword together, well, we did Geronimo.

Q. Can you talk about your relationship with Sonny Dykes? You guys have little small bets between the two of you?

COACH LEACH: No, not really. The thing is I've known him for a long time. He was my GA at Kentucky, and he worked for me at Tech, of course. Then once the game starts you're just kind of teeing it up. There are players running around everywhere and you just kind of focus on solving a set of problems that it presents.

Q. Do you feel proud when you see he took the air raid system as well and implemented it and it's taken off pretty much too? You kind of mentored him into that offensive line. Do you take a little bit of pride in that?

COACH LEACH: Well, he's a good quality coach, so I knew he'd do well. Also I knew that he really liked kind of our concepts, what we did offensively. So it doesn't surprise me that he went ahead and stuck with it and that the philosophies were very similar.

Q. What are your thoughts on UCLA?

COACH LEACH: Well, good team. Real good team. They're always explosive. The biggest thing that I guess I see when I watch UCLA is you notice how explosive they are. I've never been -- I've never coached a game in the Rose Bowl, so that will be fun. It's a great stadium with some history. So it will be exciting to go play there.

Q. With Luke coming in as I guess the presumed starter, is there a different level of expectation that you personally had for him?

COACH LEACH: Not really. Just steadily improve. He does a great job leading the unit. Just really, even though he's a youngish guy, he does as good a job at managing the offensive unit as anybody I've dealt with. He'll continue to get better.

Q. Do you think walk-ons deserve a special route of earning the respect of their teammates?

COACH LEACH: Maybe. I mean I've had some really good walk ons over the years. But I think that if they're the right type of guy, I think you really get focused, committed effort, because they have a little something to prove. Also they want to earn a scholarship.

