

July 23, 2014



An interview with:

COACH SARKISIAN

COACH SARKISIAN: I think Larry and his team do a special job making this event a special one and a great one. It's fun to be back at USC. It's a special place for me growing up in Southern California. Spending seven years as an assistant coach, and now to be back as a head coach is very humbling. We've got a tall task in front of us, but I really like this football team. It's a credit to the previous staff and the job they did in recruiting really fine young men that have been closer together to me than probably any team I've been around. These guys are a very tight-knit group. There is tremendous leadership on this team, and there is a lot of talent.

Obviously we have to go to training camp and put it all together and be cognizant of the fact that we have to work extremely hard. We need to have great competitive practices, but we have to allow the recovery in place so we're a healthy football team from the start of the season and we're a healthy football team come late November. If we can do that, I think we have a chance to do something pretty special this year. I'm excited about it. I brought two of our players with us today. Our returning starting quarterback Cody Kessler is with us today, and preseason All-American Leonard Williams is with us today. I think two really cool ambassadors for our football program, and two guys I know you'll enjoy spending some time with. So with that, we'll take some questions.

Q. on being back at USC:

COACH SARKISIAN: As I said, it's humbling. You don't know me growing up. There are a couple guys that knew me as a kid. I'm from a pretty humble town. I don't know if you've read the book "Unbroken" on Louis Zamperini, but he was a kid from Torrance. I think you learn to work hard when you're from Torrance, to push yourself to try to achieve some of the things that you want to achieve, and to have the opportunity now after growing up watching SC football, after coming to

SC out of high school as a baseball player, after being here as an assistant coach for seven years with some tremendous experiences, to now be back as a head coach, it's humbling. When you start thinking about John McKay and John Robinson and Pete Carroll, and to think that you're in that position now, it's a position, like I said, I'm humbled by it, but also one that I'm proud of the fact that I am that kid from Torrance. That is the head coach at USC that I think a lot of people can relate to and know that I'm one of them. I think that is really important to me.

COACH SARKISIAN: I thought they were talented. I really did. You watch enough film crossing over. I thought they were a talented group. I didn't know about the culture. I didn't know about the makeup. I didn't know about maybe where some of the depth issues could be. As we got going into spring ball and watched the development of some of the players that red-shirted, and I'm thinking about like Chris Hawkins, I'm thinking about an Antwaun Woods who played 20 snaps a game a year ago, I'm thinking about Toa Lobendahn, some of the new faces. Then I thought okay, couple that with Josh Shaw, couple that with Kevon Seymour, we have a chance. Now we still have plenty of work to do. Believe me. We're not out of the woods. We have a lot of work to do. But if we can do it the right way and manage them the right way, I really think we have a chance.

So it probably took middle of spring ball or so to get an idea of that to really see Leon McQuay play free safety in the run around. To see Gerald Bowman take the field. So there are new faces of guys that maybe haven't played a whole lot, but really talented players. I think they have a chance to be good for us.

COACH SARKISIAN: Yeah, Cody Kessler is our starting quarterback. Cody's a great player. You look at the second half of last season, and I thought he played extremely well. Obviously the bowl game was lights out, and MVP of that game. I recruited Cody really hard coming out of high school. I thought I was getting him quite honestly.

But he was a really good high school basketball player as well as quarterback. He was competitive. He won a lot of games and I think that shows in his play. He's ultra-competitive. He has great leadership. He's got extremely quick hands, which in our offense is critical for the quarterback's success. He throws an accurate ball, and he's got a year of experience under his belt of being the starting quarterback, which is always very helpful.

COACH SARKISIAN: Well, Adoree' [Jackson]'s a very talented young man. He's an explosive athlete, A world-class long jumper. He can run. He can do a lot of things. He can probably play DB, wide receiver. He can probably return kicks. Our challenge is to put him in the best position to be successful for him, one, and for two, what is going to give USC the most immediate success? Where can he impact us the most? That is what we have to figure out the first five or so days as we move forward. If he's playing on both sides of the ball, if it's only on one side, which side is it? If he's returning kicks, it remains to be seen. That is no different than JuJu Smith, Rahshead Johnson. We have some talented guys coming in.

Q. You've kind of replaced [Pete Carroll], do you think it's important to carve your own path? How do you think he'll feel about that?

COACH SARKISIAN: That's a great question. When I left for the University of Washington six years ago and I had my final meeting with Pete was actually at the Rose Bowl. We just got done playing Penn State. His final words me walking out there was, go be you. Because when adversity strikes, the real you is going to come out anyway. I've always held on to that. I really feel like I have. Pete and I are different people. We're very different people. Do I hold on to some of the philosophies I learned from him? Sure I do. But we are definitely different people and that won't change here. You have to be yourself. I think I can be and by doing it the right way, I think he'll be successful.

Q. Did you talk to Lane [Kiffin] about the job or anything along those lines?

COACH SARKISIAN: Sure. You try to get some guidance on things, but ultimately I wanted to forge my own opinions. I really tried to come in and give everybody in the organization a clean slate and give them a chance to show what they were about and what their strengths were and

ultimately show their weaknesses. But you try to gather as much information as you can and then formulate your own opinions and keep moving forward. I think we've done a good job of that.

Q. on the non-conference schedule:

COACH SARKISIAN: I've said this all along, at SC and even when I was a kid, SC has always played the best opponents. I feel like we've always scheduled great non-conference games. This was a chance for us to do it. It was a chance for us to be a couple years removed from the sanctions. We're going to need a full roster to play those guys, that's for sure. You know, I think it's great for fans. I think it's great for college football. I think it goes back to a rivalry from the early 70s that might have changed the landscape of college football with Sam Cunningham and Bear Bryant and Coach MacKay and all those things. I think it's for our football program two years from now a chance to showcase SC football on a national stage against a team that in recent years has dominated college football.

COACH SARKISIAN: I love our front seven. I think our front seven is the strength of our football team. Leonard Williams, Antwaun Woods, Scott Starr, Hayes Pullard, Anthony Sarao, J.R. Tavai, Claude Pelon. I think it's a great group. Really good football teams are good up front on defense, and we have a chance to be that. Couple that with we've got a secondary that's gained a lot of experience over the last year or two, Su'a Cravens, Leon McQuay, Josh Shaw, Kevon Seymour, Gerald Bowman, Chris Hawkins who I mentioned earlier had a really good spring. Those guys had a good amount of experience.

So I think our defense has a chance to be very good. We have to continue to develop. I think our ability to tackle will be critical. We have to work on tackling every single day in practice and be the best tackling football team in our conference.

Scheme-wise, I'm not worried. Justin [Wilcox] is a tremendous defensive coach. He'll do a great job and have our guys ready to play. I have to make sure we're in the right frame of mind and we're physical enough defensively to play the way we're capable of playing.

Q. on the Pac-12 schedule:

COACH SARKISIAN: Well, I think it's tough. UCLA obviously with Brett [Hundley] coming back is going to be a tough team to beat. Taylor Kelly at Arizona State, tough team to beat.

The wide receivers at Arizona, tough team to beat. Utah, getting Travis Wilson back, going up there, tough team to beat. Here comes Colorado with their true freshmen. So it's going to be very challenging every week in our conference. I said this last year and I'll say it again this year. If you're not ready to play in the Pac-12, I don't care who you're playing or where, you can get beat. Washington State a year ago comes to the Coliseum, beats SC. Oregon goes to Arizona, gets beat by the Wildcats. Those are two games that are indicative. If you're not ready to play in our conference, you'll get beat. It's that good.

Q. Have you seen all the guys that are come through in the last 15 years ago, the returning guys, where do they rank compared to that '04 group with Rogers and Leinart, and a bunch of guys that played in NFL games? How good with those guys be?

COACH SARKISIAN: I think it can be good. Ultimately it's how they play and the product they put on the field. But I think they have a chance to be good. We'll see. I like to think our guys will improve. I'm sure Brett Hundley's gotten better, and Marcus Mariota, all these guys. It's the most important position in sports for a reason. Our conference is loaded with them this year, and it's going to make it very challenging on all of the defenses. Because when you have good quarterback play, regardless of your system, it makes life a lot easier for offenses to move the ball.

Q. How much better prepared are quarterbacks coming into college compared to when you first came to SC?

COACH SARKISIAN: I don't notice any difference quite honestly. I don't see a difference. I'd like to think I was pretty prepared. I don't know. These guys are -- I know I wasn't. I think guys are just working at their craft, working at their trade. But that's been going on forever. I'm sure when John Elway went to Stanford, he was pretty good then too. Good guys are good players. It's no different this crop of guys that we have now. I think the uniqueness to it, the offenses are really catering to the talents of their quarterbacks.

So if a guy is a runner, they give him more chances to run. If he's a passer like a Connor Halliday, they get more chances to throw. But the reality is I don't know if the guys are more prepared than they've ever been. I would probably argue that one.

Q. What is the biggest change that you think people will see either schematically or offensively?

COACH SARKISIAN: I think our glow in the dark uniforms. No, just kidding. That was a joke. I think, obviously, the up-tempo offensively is a big change. We're going to go fast, and that is something that will be very different than has ever been seen at the Coliseum. The schemes are going to look similar, but we are going to go fast. It's going to be a faster paced game. Hopefully a more exciting game for our fans, one that captivates them and keeps them into the game and utilizes the home-field advantage the Coliseum can give you.

Q. Anything exciting? Is there any new traditions or new things?

COACH SARKISIAN: We're always trying to make the experience of our fans the best that it can be. I don't want to disclose all the game-day activities and atmosphere. But I will say this, it should be a home-field advantage. When you put 90,000 people in the building, it should be hard to play in. We have to help generate that. We have to create that excitement. So hopefully we can get that done.

COACH SARKISIAN: Our guy last year at Washington rushed for over 1900 yards, so I believe in running the football. We're going to run the football. We're a run-first football team. My five years as a head coach I've had a thousand yard rusher every year, so I don't suspect that will change this fall.

Q. on Chris Peterson at UW:

COACH SARKISIAN: I'm happy for the University of Washington. I'm happy for those players. I think Coach Petersen is a very good football coach and I have a great deal of respect for him. I've said this earlier, generally when you're a coach and in that position, you don't really pull for different teams. You just kind of watch games and you get a feel. I can honestly say, I'm going to be rooting for those guys this fall. We all see them playing and in a different division. I want those kids to have a great experience. We put a lot of time and effort into that program over the last five years. I want success for those kids. I was extremely happy for them that they won their bowl game, and I'm hopeful they can go out and have a championship season this fall.

Q. on leaving Washington and the

student-athletes there contacting him:

COACH SARKISIAN: Not really, not too much. I don't want to ever get called for tampering or something if a kid tried to transfer. But a few of them have dropped by the building when they've been in town to say healthy, and it's been great. Again, I really tried to convey to them my heartfelt honesty of why I left and why I took the job that I took. I think the majority of them understood that. Maybe some of them didn't, that's okay. But they're good kids. When you bring them into the program and they give you everything that they give us for five years, I'm extremely thankful for that.

Q. Are you comfortable with how you left there?

COACH SARKISIAN: Yeah, I don't think it's ever easy. I don't know if you guys have ever had girlfriends, when you break up with your girlfriend, it's never easy. It's always hard. You do it the best way you know how and you just try to be up front and honest. You try not to disrespect one school or another school or some kids and another kid. In a perfect world, I wish I would have gotten to our players sooner so that I didn't have to hear it from anybody else. But at the end of the day, I got that opportunity to get up in front of them and address them so they knew exactly where I was coming from. And that's all you can ask for as a coach.

So I'm happy that they went on and won the bowl game. I thought Marcus did a great job of guiding them through that. I thought Scott did a great job in the coaching search in finding a really good coaching staff for those guys to continue to grow as a program.

COACH SARKISIAN: You know, it's unfortunate. I did that Monday morning radio show with Mitch every morning. Every Monday morning after a game. Quite honestly, in hindsight I probably shouldn't have done that interview that morning. But I committed to the interview, and I did the interview. There was nothing done. I hadn't accepted the job at USC yet. Hindsight's 20/20. In those moments I probably should have stayed out of interviews and away from cameras. But I did it. I tried to handle it to the best of my ability. So looking back, probably the biggest mistake was just going on air. Mitch did his job. I'm not upset with Mitch at all. I have a great deal of respect for Mitch. He did his job. I tried to answer the questions as best I could. Unfortunately it didn't come out the best way I

would have liked, but that's life. You try to keep moving forward.

Q. I know you don't like to look ahead, but can you tell us the younger player's reactions?

COACH SARKISIAN: Our kids are funny. I really don't think they care. I don't want to say they didn't care. Our kids are so focused on the season. If you go ask Cody and Leonard, they'll probably get a little offended if you ask them because they're so focused on this training camp. So focused on Fresno State that they're not concerned about two, three years from now. They're worried about today. We've got a big sign up in our building, today is the most important day, and it really is. I think it's good for our program, and it's great that it's two or three years down the road. We've got Texas, I think, after that, and all sorts of stuff. But for our players, quite honestly, I think they're worried about Fresno State.

COACH SARKISIAN: I'm hopeful we can play more than that. Like I said, I think we brought in some good incoming freshmen, a J C transfer. Some red-shirt kids and kids coming off of injuries. So I'd like to think we can play more than that. But we'll have to learn that as training camp comes along, and how much depth we actually really have. I think we have enough. But, again, we need to be fortunate from an injury standpoint.

COACH SARKISIAN: For sure, for sure. We've modified our training camp schedule. We won't ever change the intensity of practice. We're going to practice hard. If you ask our players they'll tell you the same thing. We practice hard. It's physical, mentally challenging. How much is the key. If we only have ones and twos, we're not going to run the same amount of plays in practice as we would have if we had ones, twos, and threes on the depth chart. We're going to focus on the exact number of reps our starters are getting.

So if our practices end in an hour and 45 minutes instead of 2 hours and 15, so be it. We'll monitor the amount of reps they get, and we'll monitor the recovery time, which I think is so important. You look at sports science right now and recovery is so critical to the body and the success. We really invested in that a year ago at Washington. We had one season-ending injury a year ago at Washington. USC had 19. We were a no-huddle team a year ago, they were a traditional huddle team. So I think there are things we can do to preserve our players to get the best out of them.

COACH SARKISIAN: I don't know. They didn't send me their spring ball film unfortunately. I don't know. I think they're talented guys. I recruited them. I think Jeff, Troy, are all really talented guys. I know they have a couple young ones coming in as well. So it's a great challenge. A great place to be in. You love competition. That brings out the best in the players. They've got a very competitive group at the quarterback position.

Q. Did you feel like a cloud has been lifted? Are you feeling the effects from that?

COACH SARKISIAN: I've said this numerous times, we're going to focus on what we do have, not what we don't. We have a really talented roster of about 65 scholarship players. That is not ideal. That's okay. We're still really good. We still have a chance to be a very good football team. We getting to recruit 25 of some of the best people, players, students in the country to come to USC in next year's recruiting class.

So the focus has been more on us and not so much the sanctions. I think that could have been something we could have easily done and leaned on, and oh, whoa is me. We'll never have that mentality. The focus is on what we do have, and I think we have a good football team that has a chance to do something pretty special.

Q. On recruiting, how will that impact the landscape?

COACH SARKISIAN: Hopefully it makes it hard on the other schools. But I don't know. We're just trying to recruit the people that fit us the best. We're not chasing stars. We're chasing the best people, the best players to come to USC that are going to help our program continue to grow, get better, and compete for championships year-in and year out. How that of course as everybody else, I'm not really sure.

Q. After going through the evaluation period through the summer, is the responsiveness of your staff good?

COACH SARKISIAN: I think they like our staff. Our staff is very down to earth. I think we're real. I think we've got really good expertise when it comes to coaching the game of football. I think when the recruits get around our current players, our current players are going to give them exactly how they feel about our current coaching staff, and I would imagine that's going to be some real positive feedback.

So recruiting is an interesting thing because it flows in waves. It goes on for such a

long period of time, you get a commitment in July and everybody's jumping up and down, and these guys aren't signing until February. This is a long time. This is a long process. It's critical that we don't shoot or use all of our bullets before July and not have anything in September, October, November, December and January. So we have to continually develop relationships with recruits, families and coaches so they feel really comfortable with who we are as people.

Q. Has there response been different to you now that you're at SC?

COACH SARKISIAN: I don't know. They're probably better to ask than me. I don't know.

Q. Any difference when you talk to them?

COACH SARKISIAN: I've always said this: There is something unique about wearing this shirt. When you have that SC interlock on your chest and you walk into a school whether it's in Southern California or anywhere else, this talks about eleven National Championships, six Heisman Trophies, more NFL draft picks, more All-Americans, more all-pros, more Hall of Famers than any other school. So it is a powerful brand. So if that gets me into a couple more schools or a couple more kids that want to talk to us or come on an official visit, I'd gladly take it.

Q. on the phrase "Turned Up SC":

COACH SARKISIAN: I don't know. That was brought to me by our players that that's what I should be saying.

Q. What is it?

COACH SARKISIAN: Turned up SC. Next thing I know there is a Billboard with my face on it saying turned up SC too. So it's just something fun. You try to stay connected to the kids as best you can. And if that little saying gets us stats, then that's great.

Q. How fluid is that position?

COACH SARKISIAN: All of our positions are quite fluid, quite honestly. They wanted a depth chart at the end of spring ball, so we had to give them something. So we're going to go back into training camp and let guys compete like crazy. There are guys coming off injuries, Aundrey Walker, Jordan Simmons, there are some other new faces, Damien Mama, Chris Brown, and Viane showing up.

But to Toa's credit, he's worked extremely hard. He's done great in the classroom, had a really good spring practice, and he's worked really good. We get a chance with the new rule to watch our guys work out some, and Toa's looked great in the workout. So I would foresee him being there in the middle of the battle for a starting spot.

Q. on Leonard Williams' fitness:

COACH SARKISIAN: I'm blown away. He looks in great shape. It's credit to Ivan Lewis who was named the National Strength Coach of the Year, but I think Leonard is indicative of a lot of players on our team. They're in great physical condition. I can only imagine Leonard's at 100% of what he's going to look like this fall. I know the offense isn't particularly fired up about going against him in practice every day, but he's going to make him better. He's a really talented guy. And for his size and the speed with which he plays the game and how much he loves the game of football, when you watch Leonard play, he loves playing. He loves playing. He plays hard.

So that is probably a better question in the training camp, maybe even into the season quite honestly, because he didn't participate in the spring coming off of the shoulder surgery. I'm frustrated after practice because the offense can't get a first down, then I'll probably be able to compare him to somebody.

Q. on defense:

COACH SARKISIAN: I like our defense a lot. I think we're very good. We have a really good scheme. Like I said, I love us up front on defense, and Justin's expertise at the secondary. So I think we have a chance to be a very good defensive football team. I think we're going to have some youth on offense, whether it's at the receiver spot, up front on the O-line. That doesn't mean we can't be very good offensively. But we're going to be relying on more youth offensively than probably we will be on defense.

Q. on George Farmer:

COACH SARKISIAN: He's in great shape. Out of the knee brace. In a really good frame of mind. I'm hopeful George is going to play the way he looks like he can play because he's still the fastest guy on our team after the knee surgery. He's still a big, physical guy with a really good skill set. If George plays the way he's capable of playing, that's a really good tandem when Nelson Agholor's on the other side. And you have Darreus Rogers, throw in a Steven Mitchell, that group is

really talented, plus some of the young guys coming up.

Q. You almost landed Cody Kessler at Washington. How is it going to be having him?

COACH SARKISIAN: I think it's going to be great. I've always admired Cody's competitiveness. He's got a big heart. He's a tremendous leader and he's talented. I think Cody fits our scheme very well. I expect him to have a very good season, quite honestly.

Q. When you have a player like Leonard and expectations are so high, is there anything that you do to council guys?

COACH SARKISIAN: It's just being up front and honest with them. I met with Cody and Leonard on Monday just to talk about this day. Trying to guide them. Trying to help them. But really worry about it after the season. That stuff doesn't matter if you don't play good. The most important thing is to go out and play really good football.

COACH SARKISIAN: I was a guy that from the day I came in to the day I left that program is in a much better place today than it was six years ago. We put in a lot of hard work, and we got that program back on the right track into a place where it deservedly should be. It's a special place, a great place. To build the stadium and get the kids we recruited and to have left what we did in the classroom, how positive that was in the classroom and the community, and I'm hopeful people recognize the work we put into it, because it is in a much better place today than it was six years ago.

Q. How have you changed?

COACH SARKISIAN: A lot more patience. You learn to be a lot more patient with your players. Learn to be a lot more patient with your coaches. I think you learn to allow your coaches to coach, and you don't micro manage them. You hire good people to do their job. I think in the end with the patience, with the calm, there is a little more sense of confidence and belief and I think that you learn that. You go in and you get there and you're trying like gangbusters to win games and win games and win games. When in reality I have a responsibility to develop young men. I think the developmental aspect of my job evolved and got better and better as the years went on, and I think this is the best I've ever been in that aspect of my job. Sometimes you don't quite

understand that in year one or even year two. It takes time.

Q. on Cody Kessler:

COACH SARKISIAN: He's got really quick hands. He can make and see things extremely well and make decisive decisions quickly. I think that comes from his basketball experience, playing point guard, having him make those types of decisions. For us, that's vitally important. Keith Price had really quick hands in our system and threw accurately, and I think Cody can do the same thing.

Q. on moving Leonard Williams around:

COACH SARKISIAN: I think it will change some. Leonard's got a very high football IQ, so we'll rely on Leonard to play multiple positions, because if I were playing us, I would want to know every snap. So we'll try to move him around as best we can and put him in position to be successful.

Q.

COACH SARKISIAN: Really I'm trying to do the job the best way I know how to do it. I'm not here to make any excuses for anybody. I'm not here to apologize. I'm here to lead USC football in the right direction and to try to win championships. To graduate our players and develop young men. I've never come into this thing thinking I need to apologize for anything that's ever gone on. It's about what are we doing today? How are we getting better today? Embracing an amazing community of people at USC to come on board and do it with us. That's how I've always been. I want people to be part of this thing for us, and hopefully they will be. Hopefully they're at training camp the first day and we get a bunch of people out there embracing this football team because that's what makes us play special.

Q. on changes to the SC program since he was last there:

COACH SARKISIAN: Not necessarily. I'd never been in the McKay Center, so that was a huge upgrade from the old Heritage Hall we were in before. But I'll say this, what surprised me is for a program that was on sanctions for the amount of time they were on, that was hit with the loss of scholarships and the bowl bans and all of that, during that time to raise \$120 million to build a brand-new football facility and to redo Heritage Hall I think says something about the power of SC. I don't know many schools that could have won ten

games twice during the middle of sanctions with the loss of scholarships and built two brand-new buildings, I think it says a lot about the power of SC.

Q. Do you feel the pressure to win?

COACH SARKISIAN: I don't feel pressure at all. I love my job. I focus on the task at hand. I focus on today. The moment you start worrying about the what-ifs, you're going to miss what's right in front of you. I'm focusing on you guys today and our two guys back there. I hope they do a great job. I can't wait. Our guys are off this week and we give them a week off. They're back working out next Monday. I can't wait to see them, and they go to work. Quite honestly, the chips will fall where they may. We'll play good football and be a well-conditioned team. We'll be tough-minded. We'll use sound schemes, and we're going to play with amazing effort. Ultimately the ball has to bounce our way a couple times, but I think we're going to have a good football team. We'll see what happens.

COACH SARKISIAN: Patience, patience, patience. Having patience with players, having patience with recruits, having patience with our coaches of really taking time and not having knee-jerk reactions to things but really being patient with everybody involved in the program has been something that's shifted in me. That's the first piece. The second piece when I first got to my last job was wins, wins, wins, wins, wins, and it took a year or two to understand the whole responsibility of being a head coach, of developing our players in the classroom, in the community, as people, forging those relationships with them to be the best developmental coach I could be as much as it was win as many games as I could win. This time around a lot more aware of that.

And quite honestly, probably giving me a better relationship with our players already than I had early on at Washington. So I feel very connected to this team. I feel like our staff is very connected to these players, and to me that goes a long way.

COACH SARKISIAN: Sure, but we do that with our schedule all the time. I don't think that's foreign to any school. We do that all the time. We just felt like it was the right thing to do for our program in 2016. Would it have been right this year? Probably not, quite honestly with the depth and where we're at.

But for 2016, it felt like the right thing to do

for our program. We've always played great opponents here, and that goes back to the '70s, when Coach McKay took SC to Tuscaloosa to play Bear Bryant. That's never going to change. But the timing needs to be right. I felt like in 2016, the timing is right.

COACH SARKISIAN: I guess my biggest concerns are that we manage -- I don't know if it's with the team, but more on me. That we manage training camp well, that it's hard and hard enough, but not too hard where we're not prepared to play. The goal is to be the best football team we can be come August 30th. That is the challenge. That is the ebb and flow of a training camp of four weeks of making it mentally and physically hard, but also making it to where we're in the best position possible in from the 30th.

I think so many times with youth today and I think just in our society we're all about the end result. Everybody wants to know what's our record going to be? What is the score going to be? And we lose sight of the journey. We lose sight of the experiences that are along the way. So I guess my concern is that these guys embrace the journey, embrace the experiences, enjoy the experiences that are going to last them a lifetime. The record and the scores, that is the byproduct of all of that. That is the end result. So I wanted to make sure they enjoy the journey quite honestly.

COACH SARKISIAN: Maybe. For us, we're just recruiting the guys that we think best fit our system today. I was fortunate enough to coach a dual-threat, one in Jake Locker, but he's really the only guy that I coached that was that way. The rest of our guys were a little more traditional, so that's probably where my comfort is with a guy who is a passer, not a runner. So that's just where our focus is.

COACH SARKISIAN: Yeah, well it was getting hired in December. Getting to know the players, them getting to know me. Hiring a staff and ultimately recruiting which I thought we did a good job of, and getting our systems in place, and implementing them for spring ball and learning our team on the field then hitting the road again, and embracing our donors, getting on a speaking tour and getting prepared for training camp. It's a unique cycle, but it's the same cycle. You do it every year. And that is what's unique about our job and what I love about our job. It's not the same. It's not Groundhog Day. Our job takes on a lot of different responsibilities along the way, and

now we're getting into the part everybody loves and that is the football piece of it all.

Q. For your journey though, how is it different for you?

COACH SARKISIAN: I'm in a different pool at media day than the other one. No, there is so much different. There is so much the same, but there is so much different. Again, probably the biggest difference is this is my sixth year as a head coach as opposed to my first year. I'm at a place where I spent seven years as an assistant, as opposed to a place that was brand-new to me. So I'm probably a little more familiar with my surroundings even today than I was as a first time head coach at Washington.

But there are a lot of things that are very similar. I'm going to start training camp. Our players are going to report Sunday. We'll use the same meeting schedule on Sunday that I used six years ago at Washington. We'll start practice that Monday and a lot of our meetings and times and walkthroughs will be the same ones we used at Washington.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports