

Nebraska Red-White Spring Game (April 11, 2015)

Nebraska Head Coach Mike Riley Quotes

On what he saw from Zack Darlington this spring

"I think Zack, it's been so long since he's been able to play in a game, I think as the game progressed he got more comfortable. By the time he threw his touchdown pass I thought he was seeing things real well, playing confidently and he has a nice quick release and he's a good athlete. I think those are his main attributes.

On a pecking order established at the quarterback position heading into fall

"I would say we probably do. I've got an idea but we don't have to decide or announce it today. I wouldn't do that. The kids would know first, if there was an order but there will be. We have to have someone take the first snaps and the second snaps and the third snaps. We will have a pretty defined first, second and third string going into the camp now that we have spring ball over. I will talk to all of the players in the next month individually. It will be another time of year that is good for me to get to know these guys personally. There were parts today, we had a couple good screens, a couple good opportunities at deep balls, nothing that was really exciting consistently. There were some nice looking running plays that were encouraging. I think as good as it was for the players to play it will be just as good for the coaches to take what we have been doing and condense it before we add any little parts. I was just a little worried at the end of this last week that we had tried to put too much stuff in for spring practice, but it was probably OK."

On whether he was nervous for today's game

"The players had nerves, I did too. I think for me personally there has been a lot happening in the last two months, and it's frankly still kind of a strange feeling. There are a lot of mixed emotions but a lot of this is simply very exciting, feeling yourself in to a new role and new place, and I think that is what is touching about it is the amount of support and caring the fans have. There's nothing like being around people that care in general, when you are a football coach and there's this much support it's pretty neat."

On quarterback AJ Bush

"AJ was one of those guys I thought started out very nervous but then settled in and started making some plays. Then he threw a couple interceptions that were more mental than physical, but I think we all saw glimpses of what he can do there."

On the environment for today's game

"I've been in an environment like that before but not even close for a spring game. That's what really separates it. I don't want to overdue it, but I've been around a lot of really great fans but what really stands out about today was the amount of fans. I think it's a very consistent feeling of what you are always getting about this place, we think we have the greatest fans in college football and they're out to prove it all the time. It's a pretty interesting thing to be a part of."

On having the Gatorade bucket dumped on him

"That was a first for a spring game. I was glad to do it though. I moved to the Red sideline just in time to end the game and get my record right to start it."

On whether anything should be made of Johnny Stanton not playing until later in the game

"Don't make too much out of it right now. We had a hard job in getting that many quarterbacks ready enough to play in the spring game and perform. Sometimes it's a very small difference in who gets to play for us. I wouldn't put too much into that until we come out with a definitive depth chart."

On Tommy Armstrong's performance this spring

"The hard part for a guy that has been playing for a couple of years is all of the sudden having a new system put in. I thought he did a really good job of learning it and there's some new football that he's dealing with. The thing that never wavered about Tommy was, and is a separator for him right now, and that's his confidence. He's a confident guy and he plays like it. When something doesn't go exactly right he doesn't blink, he goes right back out there and plays. I like that about him and I think the football part of it is a tough thing mid-way through your college career to have what you know pulled out from under him. That's a tough deal for him. But I think he's done well and he should continue to grow."

On the what he plans on doing for the last month before the players get a little break

"I think that one of the main things will be getting to visit with them about specific goals they need to accomplish before the fall. Then they will begin work right down here (the weight room) very soon again."

On Terrell Newby's positive performance today

"I liked that. I've been noticing that about halfway through spring. I think that his ability was pretty evident today. We also saw today from other backs, that we have pretty good depth."

On Terrell Newby's skills

"I think he is a versatile athlete. He's a good back, good runner. I think he understands pass protection and I think he can catch the ball well. A guy with what we've done in the past with those things can function pretty well."

On the defense

"As you could see today, we were pretty vanilla on defense. What it all boils down to at the end is a guy's ability to get off a block and make a play. I think that the more you practice like that, the better it is for you defensively. The other parts can come and all the curveballs you can play with. We have learned a lot about what the guys can do, like defeating a block and making a play or seeing something and making a play. That will be good information going into fall camp."

On whether they will have a post-spring depth chart

Yes, how soon it will be I am not sure. But it won't be immediately. We have a weird time of year coaching-wise because what comes next in the coaching world is that April and May evaluation time. The combination of the next month and a half we should have something after that."

On the simplicity and lack of extra curricular things for today's game

"I loved that. The first thing that was behind it was that we had enough players to do it correctly. I think the players liked it better. I don't know how many players said to me it was just fun to be able play a regular game. It was really neat to be able to have all those live special team situations that we can look at and use as teaching opportunities in film for the fall. I asked AJ Bush the other day when the last time he had been tackled. I think they had one scrimmage a year ago, so he has probably been tackled a couple of times since he left high school in Georgia. I think we all kind of cringe about getting the team to the season healthy. I sure liked how we were able to do it this spring by limiting a lot of live work through spring practice so we can teach and learn to play fast. I think we had four days where we said these next 12 plays are live. This was like having all of that time to get ready to play and then playing game. It sounds good to me and it looked good. We got to play a lot of football and we got out of it pretty good."

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On the toughest position to establish an order for the depth chart

"Linebacker. I think the guys that have played this spring have done a nice job, but we just have to get more depth. I think even the guys coming in that we have signed will play a factor as we finalize that depth chart eventually for the games."

On how the special teams have progressed

"The special teams have progressed well. I think the specialist guys themselves have all gotten better. I think Sam (Foltz) is a terrific athlete and punter. I've coached three NFL punters, four counting when I was in the NFL. I think he might be as consistent as any of them that I have been around. I have been really impressed by him. We take a lot of time teaching special teams technique, whether it be punt return technique, kickoff return technique and I think we got a lot of that stuff established. I think the kids caught on pretty well. We had some pretty good looking plays today, we had a couple pretty exciting returns and I think we have some pretty special returners in those areas. I think we did a lot of good things to set the foundation for fall camp."

On the jet sweep

"It's been a good play for us for quite a few years. It's kind of funny how it comes and goes. Sometimes it's probably because of the person. We've had some special people to use with it and De'Mornay (Pierson-El) looks like that kind of guy that can make something exciting happen. I think that sweep play is always going to be something that is part of our identity. There's some other stuff that goes with it that has always been fun to do, and it's nice to see it take shape like that because when it's going it gives you another running weapon in your offense."

On Nate Gerry

"Nate (Gerry) should be going full speed by the middle of June. He had kind of a little freaky deal the other day with his knee, he did a little something with it. It was bad news, then good news and good news after that."