

Big Ten Football Media Days

Thursday, July 24, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Michigan State Spartans

Coach Jonathan Smith

Press Conference



JONATHAN SMITH: It is great to be here. Media days kind of signify the start of the season as we get closer and closer. Still a lot of work to do in August and all, but it is a great time to get down here.

I want to echo appreciation for Tony Petitti, the leadership of the Big Ten Conference. First-class accommodations here in Las Vegas for these media days.

Really proud to be here representing Michigan State part of the Big Ten Conference. Along with myself, we did bring three players to represent us down here, and they've done a phenomenal job since I've been at Michigan State.

I want to recognize them. Start with Jordan Hall, linebacker, been here for three years. You talk about influence in our locker room. Does a great job on and off the field. Had a solid fall for us, but I appreciate what he's done from January until now. Had a great spring practice. Going to be a vital player for us this fall. Also a great student.

Nick Marsh had a phenomenal freshman, true freshman season for us in the fall. Another guy I recognize the work he's done to this point. Influence and leadership on the team, done really well in school. A lot of attention comes his way, and I think he handles that in a first-class manner, represents us in a great, great way.

Stanton Ramil. This game starts up front. Had a solid year for us on the offensive line in the fall. Another guy that continues to show leadership amongst our team. Had a big-time spring ball and expecting huge things out of him holding up that core of the offensive line. Really proud of those three guys that we came down here with us.

There's a lot of work being done. Headed into year two, we learned a ton. In year one, the conference, the place, the roster, I know there's fluidity. The college landscape can be fluid. We continued to learn. I thought it was really important, our retention that we were able to have with our roster and our coaching staff to be able to grow and improve off the first season. So excited about all

coordinators coming back, schematics being similar, to be able to grow and improve on that in year two.

Over 70 players on the roster will be with us again, and that was a vital part. The work that's been done this summer especially headed by our strength staff, Mike McDonald and that group. There's been a ton of work going on this summer, and those guys' bodies continue, bigger, faster, stronger, more explosive percentages. Leaps and bounds have taken place.

There's been a lot of work from year one to year two. That's going to be vitally important because, let's face it, Big Ten, in my opinion, best conference in America, a gauntlet of nine conference games against big-time opponents. We've got to continue to be ready to work to challenge, and we accept that challenge of playing in the best conference in America. With the atmospheres we play in, the road trips, the players, the coaches, the schemes, we're looking forward to that, wanting to be a part of such a big-time conference that way.

So with that, couldn't be more excited about this opportunity and challenge that's in front of us, and we're going to hit it head-on. I love the progress we've made on and off the field, and I look forward to taking some of your questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Coach Smith, you have a tremendous reputation as a developer of talent, but you've also demonstrated your ability to build relationships. I'm curious, everyone talks in the NIL era about money, but how much does your relationship skill-building impact even more when money is the same?

JONATHAN SMITH: Yeah, I think it's a big, big factor, relationships, showing a path as you get into a relationship that you're going to dive into the player, the person, the family, more than just beyond telling them how to get to 15 yards and break in or break out.

This landscape, yes, becomes a little bit transactional, and we're very competitive in that environment, but I do



describe it as that is a piece of the pie as they're looking into decision-making in regards to what school they're going to.

I think about the relationship side going into year two, now even relationships within our own state on the recruiting side, high school coaches. We've tried to make huge gains on that because that's a factor as well. It's still about a player that's developing in high school and he has relations with his family and his coach, and we want to be heavily involved in all of that.

Q. Last year you talked about your roots, lineage from the Mountain West, and everything you learned from your own coaching tree. How do you balance urgency and patience, especially right now in this era? How have you managed to balance that with the development of Aidan Chiles?

JONATHAN SMITH: I think we're always going to be urgent to improve and get better. I think you have to be in a nonstop state of improvement. Understanding -- I don't know if it's patience, but it's poise and an understanding that some things that he has to go through, some experiences, to find out where we have to improve on.

In particular to Aidan, I got a bunch of respect for him and credit for him because, yeah, he had some outstanding plays and some plays that were not good enough. It's our job as coaches to make sure we're surrounding him with, one, the line of scrimmage and those other ten guys on that offense making sure we're putting him in the best positions to have success.

I look at him statistically from the first half of the season to the second half. It was a whole lot better in the second half. He was improving. Some of that I respect I got for him because it wasn't always easy.

Year one... new staff, new scheme, new school for him. All of that, he was handling. The guy is a big-time teammate and competitor. I look forward to seeing him in year two.

Q. I'm just wondering, which position group do you feel is going to be the most improved this season, and which players have come around at that position to give you that confidence in that position?

JONATHAN SMITH: We're shooting to improve in all of them. I think a couple of areas we have to, it starts with the line of scrimmage offensively and that offensive line. We want to create more competition in that room. We have four transfers that came in in January that have had college snaps before. So that room in particular with the four, yeah, additions to the competition. We've got some

returning players at the offensive linemen and then continuing to take a step in their game.

The other piece I do think about, the continuity of schematics. This will be year two in the scheme for all of those guys with a big-time offensive line coach Jim Michalczyk. I have full confidence in that group really taking a step.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports