

TRANSCRIPT OF SEC FOOTBALL COACHES CONFERENCE CALL - QUESTION/ANSWER ON GUNS WITH
MATTHEW STEVENS, AUGUST 31, 2016

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA - Jim McElwain

STEVENS: Beyond, obviously, the campus restrictions, do you guys have a team policy on your players owning handguns, whether they're registered or not?

MCELWAIN: You know, obviously you can't have them on campus. It's -- it's --

STEVENS: Right.

MCELWAIN: -- you know, university policy. And as part of our life skills program, it's something, especially with all the -- you know, with current -- current issues, and all that, we have a lot of discussion and talk about it. And -- but that's kind of how we handle it.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA - Kirby Smart

STEVENS: Kirby, do you have a specific policy on handguns with your players and -- or do you have a personal preference, or do you talk to your guys about that? Is there a specific policy? And if there's not, do you kind of have a conversation about it?

SMART: You know, we have, you know, initial conversation, and we have an education process. We have people come in and speak to the team in regards to that from the education standpoint. We also have team policies on it. Obviously, university housing, which probably 60 to 70 percent of our kids are in university housing, and that -- they're not allowed to have those guns in their dorms. So, you know, we encourage that. And we -- we really don't want our players carrying those firearms. I have, you know, situations in the past where I've been places that they might have a license to carry those, and that always concerns you. But they've gone through -- through it the right way when they've done that. So, it's -- the most important thing is making sure they understand that -- that nothing good comes from that when -- when they do it the wrong way.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY - Derek Mason

STEVENS: Do you have a personal -- or do you have a team policy on your players owning handguns legally? And if you don't, do you kind of have conversations to make your preference on that issue very accurate -- very obvious to them?

MASON: I don't believe -- I don't believe, you know, handguns are necessary for where -- for where they're at and for what we do. And so that -- that's -- that's been voiced. Well, it always comes up at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, especially when you got guys going home for summer

and doing what they do. Now, we do have a couple of players that I -- I believe go out and hunt. That -- that's different. I see that differently. I mean, in terms of, you know, sport, that's what they do.

But when we're talking about handguns, you know, on this campus, at Vanderbilt University or any other place, you know, I don't believe that there's a need for it. And our guys truly understand that -- that -- you know, they gotta deal with me, you know, I mean, coming down the pike. And, you know, I mean, if you look at our track record, we've done a good job. So, I feel good about where we are at.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE - Butch Jones

STEVENS: Can you talk about whether or not you have a team policy on your players legally owning a handgun? And whether you do or don't, can you also talk about maybe communicating that to players from all different kinds of backgrounds?

JONES: Sure. Well, you know, we talk about that very, very specifically in our Fourth and One program. And, you know, we have a campus policy that -- you know, no -- no handguns are permitted on campus by students. So our university has that policy, and we abide by that policy and we make sure they're educated on that policy as well.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS - Bret Bielema

STEVENS: Whether it's been at Wisconsin or now at Arkansas, I was wondering if you have a team policy on your players legally owning a handgun. And whether you do or you don't, can you talk about how you communicate that with players that come from all different types of backgrounds?

BIELEMA: Yeah. Actually, you know, my biggest fear when I took over at Wisconsin and with the -- Coach Alvarez, we had a huge group of kids who were hunters. And when we had bye weeks we used to always be concerned that they were gonna go out, run around, and -- and not necessarily harm for the gun, but just, you know, the -- the -- [inaudible] of being out hunting and the wear on the legs and all that stuff, so that kind of brought it to my attention back then. And we didn't have the same policy we have there that we do here, because A, there's been a -- obviously a big push the last couple of years.

So last year there was an issue that became whether or not they were gonna legalize guns on campus. That, fortunately for us, has been followed through. So it kind of eliminates any campuses -- anybody on campus to have a gun. But we do have players that have licensed guns that -- obviously we have guys that come from quite a bit of different backgrounds where -- where they've grown up hunting or been involved with that. We do ask those guys to -- to make sure that they follow all the policies that the government has, but also keep aware that, you know, just even in the last two months there's been a huge -- a couple of examples even in our conference of guys that have been caught in bad situations that maybe they did or they didn't intentionally, or did intentionally, you know, get a bad situation out

of that. So it's been an eye-opener for our guys, and -- and hopefully they're gonna be able to move forward. We are a work in progress. I've constantly been trying to educate as well.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - Barry Odom

STEVENS: I was curious how we're -- how -- if you have a policy on your players legally being able to carry a firearm beyond -- beyond any campus restrictions? And I can also appreciate how hunting can become a completely different issue as well. But just specifically on if your players are legally able to carry a handgun? Do you or -- or Gary have a policy on that?

ODOM: Yeah, we've got -- we've got policies within our -- within our program, and obviously within the university, on -- on a number of things, and handguns would be one of those policies, yes.

STEVENS: Just to clarify, is it specifically the policy that you -- it's prohibited from your players doing so? Is -- do I understand that correctly?

ODOM: Yeah, you've gotta -- you've gotta make sure -- you know, with -- with the rules and -- and, you know, within -- within -- you mentioned hunting and some things like that. But if there's -- there's a handgun issue, then we deal with it. And, you know, not -- not allowed in the program.

STEVENS: How do you communicate that to players when you're recruiting guys from all different types of backgrounds and personal experience?

ODOM: Well, you talk about the culture on -- on -- you know, living the -- living the right way and the culture on being a -- a college student athlete and -- and address it. And I -- I believe in, you know, being honest and up front and, you know, making sure all the information is -- is provided very, very clearly.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI - Hugh Freeze

STEVENS: I'm curious as to whether or not you have a specific team policy on your players owning a -- legally owning a handgun? I understand there might be a campus policy of restricting them on campus, and I also understand hunting might be a completely [sic] issue whatsoever. But I'm asking, do you have a policy on your players owning a handgun?

FREEZE: You know, I -- our campus has one. You can't have one on campus. I do not. That is something that it seems like is becoming more and more of an issue, so I probably should spend some time thinking about that. I don't currently have one. We have a lot of kids that enjoy hunting on our team for sure, and particularly during the bowl season when we're -- when we're bowl prepping you'll see a lot of them coming in from -- from morning hunts. So, I think everything -- we'd have to think through that to make sure it's -- if you distinguish between, you know, a hunting gun and a -- and a handgun. But it's probably worth our time to -- to invest in, so I appreciate you bringing that to me. I know our campus already has one that you would hope would deter anyone from having a handgun on campus.

STEVENS: How do you go about -- whether or not you're going to have a policy, I guess, how do you communicate that issue with players [inaudible]

FREEZE: Well, we would -- we would tell them in a team meeting, this is a new policy that we're en -- that we're getting ready to enforce. So if this affects you, you need to pay it -- sit up and pay attention.

TEXAS A&M - Kevin Sumlin

STEVENS: Beyond, obviously, a campus restriction on the issue, or even hunting can be a separate issue, I'm curious if you have a team policy on your players legally owning a handgun?

SUMLIN: Yeah. We have a -- a no handgun policy here, as we've had since we've been here. But, you know, we also comply with the university rules and regi -- and regulations. And so, you know, there's been new -- obviously new legislation passed in the state of Texas that -- that we have to abide by legally. But we've had a -- a no handgun rule on our team since we've been here.

STEVENS: How do you go about kind of communicating that policy to players that come from all different types of backgrounds? I'm just curious [inaudible]

SUMLIN: I think you -- you just -- you have an opportunity to talk about that as -- as a -- as a staff and as a team, and in a team meeting, and -- and, that's just what we do. Just like you go over a lot of different things in -- in team meeting settings. And whether it's -- whether it's the expectations as a -- as a person, whatever the rules are, whatever that is, that -- you know, you communicate that with your team, just -- just like any other issue.

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY - Mark Stoops

STEVENS: I'm curious as to how you handle -- or if you have a policy on handguns, your players legally owning handguns on your team?

STOOPS: Yeah. They -- we do not allow any handguns. I have made it very clear to them that I do not want them owning a handgun, even if it's -- they have a legal permit. And they -- they obviously can never have a handgun on campus. But, you know, I make it my policy to -- to tell them no guns, and come explain to me why they may need a gun. Because we definitely should not need a gun living in Lexington, Kentucky. So that's my policy.

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY - Dan Mullen

STEVENS: I probably ought to know this, but do you have a pol -- team policy on your players legally owning a handgun? And whether you do or you don't -- I understand there's obvious campus

restrictions and hunting can be a completely different issue, but I'm just curious if you have a team policy on -- on handguns?

MULLEN: No. I'm not -- we have a no weapons policy on the team that, you know, I don't think there's any need for our guys to carry weapons. But I -- also, we live in Mississippi. You know, we have a lot of guys that go hunting every single weekend and when they have a day off in the fall. So, you know, I don't -- I try to separate the two between that. That we -- you know, guys, obviously it's a -- it is a -- it's a felony crime to possess a weapon by a student on a college campus. You know, so we make sure they understand that. But I -- we kind of explain to our guys, you know, if they're in a situation where they -- they are carrying a handgun, they probably need to try to avoid those situations in general. And now, obviously, hunting and all the extracurricular activities that our guys do, you know, can trump some of that, but make sure they -- I'd rather they leave that stuff at home and with all their hunting supplies.

STEVENS: That conversation [inaudible] like [inaudible]

MULLEN: You're breaking up on me there.

STEVENS: I'm sorry. Is that a conversation you kinda maybe had to have more extensively or more as you recruit so many players from different backgrounds [inaudible]?

MULLEN: No. It's a -- it's a conversation I've had since the day I've become the head coach. That's always been in place as part of our core value system, to -- the no weapons policy.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA - Will Muschamp

STEVENS: Whether it's been at your tenure at Florida or now at South Carolina, I'm curious if you have a team policy on your players legally carrying a handgun? I know that there's a campus policy, and I know that hunting can become a separate issue as well. I appreciate that. But I'm specifically just kind of asking about handguns.

MUSCHAMP: Sure. You know, as far as handguns are concerned, we do whatever the -- the school policy is. And here at the University of South Carolina you can't have handguns on campus. There is a concealed weapons permit that you could -- possibly could have, but we go along with the -- the athletic department and the university guidelines as far as handguns are concerned.

STEVENS: If you have players that are living off campus, though, is that something that concerns you, is [inaudible] them? [inaudible] concerns in that regard?

MUSCHAMP: No. We -- we -- we -- you know, we have our guys abide by the school rules, you know, and -- as far as those things are concerned. And it's something that they understand, you know, day one of -- of, you know, camp, when we started and went through the rules and regulations of our football team. And we expect all of them to abide by those rules.

AUBURN - Gus Malzahn

STEVENS: I wanted to ask you to clarify something you said [inaudible] about Stephen Roberts' suspension and your policy, if you have one, on handguns with your players, or is it just a personal preference for players [inaudible]

MALZAHN: Yeah. Well, first of all, we have a university policy that prohibits firearms on campus. And, you know, we try to constantly educate our players, you know, as far as that goes. So that's -- that's what I meant.

STEVENS: When you communicate to them, how do you go about doing that when you have players from so many different types of backgrounds [inaudible]?

MALZAHN: Say -- say that again. I couldn't hear you.

STEVENS: When you have so many different types of players from different types of backgrounds and situations before they ever get to your campus, how do you go about [inaudible]?

MALZAHN: What you said at the very end, I couldn't hear the last sentence?

STEVENS: How do you go about communicating it when you have 85 scholarship players with so many different backgrounds?

MALZAHN: Yeah. I think, you know, that's -- you have your standards and expectations in every area. And that's just part of being a part of the team.