

# Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

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## Kansas Jayhawks

### Lance Leipold

#### Press Conference



LANCE LEIPOLD: Yes, well, thank you and good morning to everyone. It's definitely a pleasure to be here, probably this year even a little special since we didn't make it down here last year.

I was joking earlier that after this event today, I think it's probably officially a year into how everything works, and I think that is pretty resonant within our program, as well, as we continue to grow and develop and build our program.

We're excited about year two. Year one was definitely a whirlwind, but we feel the foundation has been set in many ways, feel very pleased on how we finished last season, where we progressed here in the spring and some of the additions to our roster, and we're excited to get going here in August.

I'll open it up for questions.

**Q. After this first year, how do you evaluate success? How do you evaluate progress and kind of what you're trying to build?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: It's an excellent question. You know, I think what we're really saying is sometimes how are you going to measure progress when it's not showing up in the win and loss column all the time. I think our players have really embraced it.

We understand and we emphasize, as well, we're not in the moral victory business, and we understand that completely. But we're always looking at, whether it be individual improvement in certain things, how we've gone about our daily business and really how we've connected dots with our players about becoming better holistically, whether it be weight room or academically and better leadership, better teammates, that these things are going to stack upon themselves and help us on game day.

I think the proof of that is when a 1-8 football team goes on the road and finds a way to win and plays even some

better football maybe the next two weeks and start showing the signs of closing gaps that we have to do.

I think that's going to be very imperative again this year, and I think our guys understand that.

**Q. You mentioned the good close to the season, but a couple weeks before, push Oklahoma in that game. How much good momentum did you take from that into the close of the season, kind of carrying that over into the off-season?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: What we took from that win and -- well, I think the one thing, again, when you all know, or mostly know, these young men and some of the guys that are here with us today have gone through multiple head coaches, not just one or two. Some are on three. Some have had -- Earl Bostick Jr., our offensive tackles had at least eight position coaches. And that's not normal, and it's really not fair.

For us to be a program that can develop and stay consistent, we have to earn trust. I think the one thing that that win is we started to play better. I think the players understood our routine, our message was going to be consistent and we weren't going to waver from it.

When they saw that and started to get better in what we were doing and understanding, I think it started to show itself late in the year, and that win, obviously, and the injection of Jalon Daniels at quarterback really helped us the last few games.

I've said it, also, is that with that confidence, I think to me one of the most apparent things was our first spring practice. The volume and confidence of communication, especially on the defensive side of the ball, was night and day from the fall. And to me it was, hey, we understand it more, we're confident, this is what we do.

All those different things hopefully will help us, again, play faster, play with more confidence, build on the other things that we need to take a step, especially on the defensive side of the ball, as I said.

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**Q. How important is it in this rebuilding process to have the transfer portal and also now the lifting of the scholarship limits?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: As we know, this program had put itself in some tough positions scholarship-wise, so that will help, whether it's going to alleviate itself right away this year, but a year from now I'll be very confident that we'll be where we need to be in that scholarship count.

And I think across the board for programs like us, it can go either way, as we know, though, with the portal. You've got to do a great job within your roster. I'm very proud of the fact that we haven't lost anyone in our two deep from last year that didn't leave by graduation.

But at the same time, we've been able to add to that to create. And the thing we've tried to emphasize within the program also is for us to get better we have to be better within our own locker room first. We have to be Kansas as we go about it. We have to be better than we were the day before. And one of those things that you have to do to get there is you have to embrace competition.

Sometimes we've had positions, whether it be by youth or other things, that guys haven't been pushed every day in practice to maintain that spot and that playing time, and I think we're able to do some of those things through the portal and create some of that as we head into August and the 2022 season.

**Q. Jalon Daniels is here. You didn't name a starting quarterback until right up until the end last season. Are you ready to name a starter? And if so, what does it mean to have a quarterback this early?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: You know, I think Jalon is here for a lot of reasons, especially the way he played late in the year for us. The two games he played here in the state of Texas as well as against West Virginia, a lot of things.

I jokingly say I haven't named Devin Neal the running back, starting running back, either, so it's something there. And I think your question is very good and very valid, but I think it also goes back to my previous answer a little bit, is embracing competition and doing things.

I think our program knows. I think Jason Bean understands his role and where it's at right now. Jason Bean has I think had a very good spring and took steps, as well, and he will continue to get better, as well.

But we know right now where Jalon is and what we expect him to do in August and as we get ready for game one.

As I answer those things in a very vague way, I still say a year ago, if I was sitting here in front of you, I wouldn't have known because I hadn't seen anyone really throw a pass.

Again, to know where we are at the quarterback position in 2022 in July versus last year, it's night and day difference, and I know we'll be able to take advantage of that.

**Q. Having the veteranship of guys on the defense wanting to come back, how important is it to have guys like Kenny Logan and the defensive line to really set the tone for the up-and-coming freshmen that are trying to set a new standard in Lawrence?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: Well, it's very important when your upperclassmen, guys who have played in Big 12 games and do those things, set an example. Setting an example can be in so many different ways, and for us we talk about taking care of ourselves, whether it be the diet, the weight room habits, the sleep, all those things that we kind of have really put some parameters on for our guys, and to see it and how to go about it.

And as we know, so many players have the aspiration to play professional football. We talk about being a pro now, and being a pro is going about your daily business in the right way, just like many of you have to do the same thing.

Guys like Kenny, and Caleb Sampson is here, as well, we have guys that have been through a lot of different things and different ways of doing it, and to show our young guys is extremely important.

Also, it's important for them to -- there's a lot of ways to win football games, as we know, and we believe in building the program and our own philosophy and ways. And when we integrate some from the transfer portal, it's extremely important that they understand how we go about it at the University of Kansas.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the addition of Ky Thomas. You mentioned Devin Neal. What does it mean to add Ky Thomas, a local kid coming to Kansas, and what do you expect the share of the reps to be with two solid running backs?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: We're excited about the addition of Ky Thomas, right down the road from Topeka. He had an excellent end to his season previously at the University of Minnesota, desiring to come back closer to home.

Devin and Ky have known each other since youth football days in youth sports. Devin was heavily involved in the recruiting visit process and communication, so there's not -- and Devin understands, being a Lawrence native, how

important it is for us to build this program, build it with depth. And it's going to be healthy competition, but they're going to really help each other.

Again, for us to add more local players is definitely the desire and a thing that -- consistency, flat-out more wins and doing it in a way that's going to be done right, we understand that in time that that'll help us in recruiting in general, especially with local players.

**Q. Kansas has beaten Texas twice in six years; what's up with that? And how often do you hear about beating Texas?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: Well, obviously the Texas win, and as we know, we've been starving for some wins, so any of them we're going to talk about. When you beat a program with the tradition and past success of the University of Texas and resources, all in all it's something that we're going to be proud of.

I've said this, as well; to go down there at 1-8 and where we've been is probably one of the things I'm most proud of, is that the preparation and the things that our guys kind of still were doing what we were asking, especially in year one, especially the timing that we came.

There's a lot of times unfortunately in college football where guys can go through the motions, and this team didn't do that. And I'm extremely proud of them and our staff for that and the fact that we went down to Fort Worth and played with some great effort there.

It made it easier to walk in some Texas high schools, to be quite honest, that there may be that chance that maybe we didn't get on young men before. Now we have to build upon it, but it's definitely something positive. But I know that Coach Sarkisian and that program is going to be -- we probably hit them at a time when they were in a struggle and were able to take advantage of it, but we know obviously this is a new year, new challenges.

**Q. Last year you had such a short time to prepare, 11, 12 personnel on offense, 4-3, 4-2-5 on defense. With more time to prepare, will we see more wrinkles or more complexity this year?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: I think so, again, especially on the defensive side. We were asking guys that were outside linebackers to become defensive ends.

I think part of the things we've done in recruiting is tried to recruit a little bit more to that and what we were going to be, again, trying to -- that limited time and without a football, without spring ball, what are we going to be, where

do we hang our hat, what are we going to try to be good at offensively, I think we've been able to answer some of those questions and find ways to be more multiple on each side.

But with that, it's still going to come down to fundamental execution.

On those notes, and we talked a lot about the time frame, and I understand that, but when you look back at -- some things I think kind of get lost in the shuffle. We went from one of the most penalized teams in the Big 12 to being one of the least penalized teams in the country. And that says a lot about the job our assistants and our players did, and I think also the job we did in ball security and some of those things.

Now, the next thing you do is continue to develop your playmakers, find ways to be more diverse on both sides of the ball, and I look forward to that in year two.

**Q. Lance, you mentioned him a couple times, but Devin Neal, where does he go from what he did last year, and what do you see for his future?**

LANCE LEIPOLD: Well, if you have a chance here, if you haven't, get a chance to visit with the young man. You can see he's a very -- he's mature beyond his years. He's passionate about helping Kansas football get where it needs to be. Lawrence native, two-sport athlete. Played on the baseball team, but did not miss a spring practice.

As I mentioned about Ky Thomas, we also have Sevion Morrison, who transferred from Nebraska, and Daniel Hishaw, Torry Locklin played some running back, he's another versatile player.

He understands, he embraces that culture of competition as much as anybody, and he knows that maybe last year he burst on the scene a little bit. He won't have that luxury this year. But again, he's one of those guys that's going to prepare and take his game to the next level.

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