Butch Jones Has One Word To Describe

His Team’s Approach: **RELENTLESS**

It was Butch Jones and University of Tennessee Vols Day at the the Rotary Club of Knoxville (RCK) on July 16 at the Crowne Plaza in Knoxville. RCK invited all and any area Rotarians to attend and the room was full of 260 Rotarians and guests to hear UT’s new first-year coach.

After the meeting was opened with an interesting rendition of “Rotary Rocky Top” and Coach Jones signing for a long line of autograph seekers with hats and shirts and footballs, he gave us a dose of his football philosophy.

“Our biggest challenge is the limited amount of time we have to set the expectations about our identity, our style of play and our standards,” he said. He said the most important things in the pre-season is establishing team chemistry, the team’s sideline demeanor, and answering the “who are we” question.

He had a team of Navy Seals in for two days to work with the players about leadership and teamwork. After his speech his team was spending time with Knoxville Police Department. His father was a chief of police in Michigan.

As he prepares his Vols for their season opener on August 31 against Austin Peay (6 p.m. kickoff), he said the defining word about the football team is “relentless.” “Every day, everything we do is based on being relentless in our approach to the game,” he explained. “Our pace will be non-stop. When we change ends of the field at the quarters, you’ll see us sprinting because we want to win physically and psychologically.”

Jones also announced that he is working on opening up Neyland Stadium to the fans for a Saturday night pre-season scrimmage that would be free. “I want to do this to let our players play under pressure and go fully live with fans in the stands,” he said.

Here are some other comments Jones made:

* “Leadership separates teams and we’re looking for leadership. We are working with young man between the ages of 17 and 21 and they’re all different. It’s interesting how parents can raise two kids the exact same way in their family and the turn out so different.”
* “We talk about discipline a lot. It is the fundamental aspect of being successful at football and in life.”
* “Building greatness takes times.”
* “One thing we don’t want to do is to put the football on the ground – ever. We want our players to hand the ball to the officials after every play. We even have our managers wearing officials’ clothes so the players get used to this by handing them the balls.”
* Someone asked him who may stand out as difference makers in games. “I can’t practice with them yet, but I keep hearing about a true freshman wide receiver named Marques North. He’s got size and speed and we’ll need him quickly.”
* He says he is developing a very special friendship with former Vol Coach Phillip Fulmer and is enjoying getting to know former Coach Johnny Majors.
* He’s proud about the grade point averages of his players in the recent spring semester. “We had 46 guys (of about 100 players) with 3.0 GPAs or higher and our overall average GPA was 2.82 and that may be No. 1 in the nation.”

“My goal is to get this program back into the elite of college football,” he said. “This is a very special university, a very special football program and there’s no other place like it.”