

Harris, Jennings get QB guru help

Glenn Guilbeau 3:48 p.m. CDT August 23, 2014



(Photo: AP)

BATON ROUGE – As the final week of competition for the LSU starting quarterback job opens on Monday, neither sophomore Anthony Jennings nor true freshman Brandon Harris can complain they have not been coached.

Not only have each received the experienced, skins-on-the-wall guidance from NFL quarterback teacher turned LSU offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Cam Cameron, each attended the trending camp of quarterback guru George Whitfield Jr. in San Diego over the summer.

Whitfield, 36, is a former 4,000-yard passer at tiny Tiffin University in Ohio with big former clients, such as Cam Newton, Andrew Luck and Johnny Manziel. Last May, he tutored Harris and Jennings during separate weeks.

“I honed in on my mechanics,” Jennings said recently. “He’s about getting you to be more accurate and driving the ball better. He gets you to be better at the little things by remembering your mechanics. That helps you to be more accurate when things get to flying around us.”

That would be Saturday at 8 p.m. when the No. 13 Tigers play No. 14 Wisconsin on ESPN to open the season at NRG Stadium in Houston. LSU coach Les Miles said he would not inform his starting quarterback that he will be the starting quarterback until Thursday.

Jennings finished a game last season against Arkansas by throwing a 49-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Travin Dural with 1:15 to go for a 31-27 victory. He started the Outback Bowl win over Iowa but did not perform well, completing just 7 of 19 passes for 82 yards with an interception. He also did not look great in the spring game.

Harris, an early enrollee last January, looked better in flashes in the spring game, but he was erratic as well. Whitfield worked on his drop primarily as Harris mainly worked out of the shotgun formation at Parkway High in Bossier City, lining up several yards behind center to start a play.

“He made me understand why we take this drop on this route and this one on that route,” Harris said. “I didn’t take many drops in high school. Here we’re in a pro style system with an ex-NFL coach, which was one of the reasons I came to LSU. I thought working with George was very beneficial.”

Whitfield was as impressed with Harris as were the recruiting services, where he was the No. 2 dual-threat quarterback in the nation by ESPN, No. 3 by 247Sports and No. 5 by Rivals.com.

“There isn’t a quarterback in this class with his arm talent,” Whitfield told 247Sports. “There isn’t one kid. He will develop, and he will get bigger. He’s going to be playing after college. He’s smart. He’s wide-eyed. He cares.”

Miles will make the final decision, but he respects Whitfield, who became a coaching intern with the San Francisco 49ers this summer.

“I think Whitfield is such a tremendous fundamentalist and a guy who can really describe how a guy throws the ball,” Miles said. “He also helps with the decision making. I think both guys were improved by it.”

THAT’S A WRAP: LSU completed preseason practices on Saturday with what Miles termed “organizational” work. The Tigers will begin game week Monday after a day off Sunday.

“So, for all intents and purposes, the hard work is done,” Miles said. “I like where we’re at. I think our team is kind of rounding into shape in preparation to play. I think the team is committed to each other. I think it’s a real quality group of people. But more than that, I think their execution is becoming better and better as we approach the season.”

Miles will be looking for sharpness at practices this week.

“It’s more of getting in a groove game week and letting our guys understand what we expect from them in game week,” he said.

TAILBACK U: Miles continues to rave about his tailbacks – true freshmen Leonard Fournette and Darrel Williams and seniors Terrence Magee and Kenny Hilliard.

“I think our running backs really had a great fall camp,” he said. “And I think they’ll be very ready to play in this game.”

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: “It was just exactly what this team needed. We decided to throw the ball more today because we saw it that way.”

---LSU coach Les Miles on watching Zach Mettenberger’s 64-yard touchdown pass against the Saints last week with players in the team meeting room before a scrimmage.

LSU LIVE CHAT: Ask LSU reporter Glenn Guilbeau a question about the Tigers in the first live Tiger chat of the season on Monday at 10 a.m. Go to shreveporttimes.com to join the conversation.

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