

Ulysees Gilbert Wants ZipsNation to Know... “We Are a Brotherhood”

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After a recent Saturday scrimmage, the Zips’ junior All MAC linebacker Ulysees Gilbert is the last of roughly 100 players to exit the locker room. *“I was just chillin’ with the guys,”* said Gilbert, who then added; *“I’d like everyone to know that we’re a brotherhood. When I got here as a freshman, that feeling was there, but it was on and off. This year the whole vibe of the team is so much different. We’ve all bought-in, we all talk to each other, we all hang out together outside of football...it’s just such a brotherhood. On the field we all talk, we have so much chemistry, everyone knows what they’re doing. It’s just such a great feeling when you’re comfortable out there on the field, because when you feel comfortable everything just flows. That’s what I like about this team, and this season.”*

Has the camp been rough? *“Right now I feel we’re healthy. We do have a couple guys banged up, but more guys have bought-in (to off-season conditioning), more guys are taking care of their bodies in the training room getting treatment, and I think that will pay dividends as we roll into the season and help us be very successful.”*

When asked, as a linebacker, what he sees happening in front of him on the defensive line this year, he uses an unexpected adjective: *“It’s lovely. They’ve raised their game, they’re becoming a great group and getting a great push. They’re getting into the backfield on both the pass and run...they’re just doing a great job. It feels good when I see that, because it makes it easier for me to do my job.”*

On the talent level within his own linebacker group, Gilbert was nothing but positive – *“It’s great. We’ve got Hauser back, and he’s a 5th year veteran. He knows what he’s doing and I just have so much chemistry with him. We have (Travonte) Junius and (Nate) Bishoff playing really well on the ‘Sam’ (strong side).”*

While Junius and Bischoff haven’t seen heavy playing time to-date, Gilbert says there’s a lot of value in their years in the Zips program; *“They’re pretty much in my situation as far as being a veteran goes. They’re getting way better.”* On Demarcus “Moon” Lloyd, who had a nice pick off a Robbie Kelley pass in the morning scrimmage, Gilbert says – *“He’s behind me, but he’s a hell of a player. It’s great to have that competition around me...it’s making me a better player. It makes them better too.”*

Gilbert says he expects to be a much improved, disruptive force in the opposing backfield this season. *“They have a lot of blitzes for me...they have a lot of blitzes for our linebackers period. I’m working really hard to get a better rush this year. Last year I had a few times where I slowed down. I didn’t go full speed all the way through and that’s my fault. That’s the thing I’ve been focusing on this off season, and that’s why I feel I’ll have more sacks this year than last (2016: 11.5 TFL’s and 4 sacks).”*

When asked about the upcoming Penn State game, Gilbert gave some insight on what he expects to see. *“Early on, on 1st down and 10, I feel like they’re going to be in ‘10 personnel’ (1 RB, 4 WR and no TE), and I feel they’re gonna try and run it. We gotta stuff it...we just gotta stuff the run.”*

On a 3rd and 10? *“I feel they’re gonna pass. And I know our DB’s on the edge, they’re unbelievable this year. I have so much faith in them, I just don’t see (Penn State) being able to pass when they need it.”*

“We’ve studied Penn State a lot. Since we’ve known they were going to be our opponent, we’ve been on ‘em. We’ve been looking at Saquon Barkley...I’m just so excited to go up against a running back like that..., we’ve been looking at McSorley, the lineman, the wide receivers...we’ve been looking at them since we knew they were on our schedule.”

“I feel like we’re coming in very prepared. They’re a great team...you can’t deny that...but I feel like with the defense we have this year, and the team overall, I feel like we can roll on anybody. I think it’s gonna be a great game.”

So why play a “Power 5” team like Penn State if you’re a “Group of 5” team like the Zips? What’s to be gained? Gilbert explained – *“To go up against a player like Saquon Barkley helps me to be a better linebacker for the future, because if I ever make it to “The League” there’s going to be backs like him on every team. Same with McSorley...the way he scrambles and changes speed...how he sits in the pocket and the way he throws...seeing how Big 10 wide receivers move, and how the linemen are way bigger than what we typically see in the MAC...all those things you experience in a game like this only helps you take your game to another level, and helps you against every other team you play.”*

“You know, games like this are what we pray for. These are the games we’re so excited about because, although we’re D1 football, this is a bigger stage. To play a team like Penn State is amazing to us...to upset them is a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and we’re going to take full advantage.”

Gilbert and former Zip, now San Diego Charger, Jatavis Brown remain close. Brown recently offered his protégé’ some advice on approaching Penn State. *“He pretty much just told me to play my game. To study my butt off. Read keys...read the lineman...know what they do. He told me you need to be more disciplined in games like these because teams like Penn State will take advantage of your mistakes. It’s more of a discipline game...you gotta mind your Ps and Qs. You gotta know what you’re doing. You want to have fun, but you can’t just go out there and do anything, because if you do, they’re gonna ‘do their thing’...and they ‘do their thing’ very well.”* He summed it up – *“Play your game, have fun, trust the person next to you, and just do your job.”*

If, to a man, that advice is heeded in Happy Valley, the Zips and Ulysees Gilbert might just produce that “Shock the World” upset that escaped Jatavis’ 2013 team by a mere 36 inches in Ann Arbor.

And to the brotherhood of Zips players, coaches and fans that would be absolutely lovely.



photo: Dr Z of ZipsNation.org