

# Reich raves about QB Smith's 'elite' football mind

BY DENNIS WASZAK JR.  
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Frank Reich played with Jim Kelly and coached Peyton Manning, Philip Rivers, Andrew Luck and Matt Ryan during an NFL career that has spanned more than four decades.

So, he knows an outstanding quarterback when he sees one.

That's what made the New York Jets offensive coordinator's effusive praise of Geno Smith on Wednesday so noteworthy. It is not a bit surprising.

"I am just so impressed by Geno," Reich said before minicamp practice. "I cannot express that enough. I know we haven't played any games yet. We've got a long way to go. We've got a lot to prove and everybody's got a lot to prove."

"But man, he is on point. His preparation is top notch. His football mind is elite."

The 64-year-old Reich certainly knows how that looks. And it has taken Smith just a few months to make a believer of his new coordinator.

"The way he's communicating in the huddle, at the line of scrimmage, the way he communicates in the quarterback room," Reich said of Smith. "I've been around a lot of really smart and good quarterbacks. All I'm going to say is, we're in good shape."

Smith's long and



Seth Wenig | Associated Press

New York Jets quarterback Geno Smith, top left, and offensive coordinator Frank Reich, top right, participate during an NFL football practice in Florham Park, N.J. on Wednesday.

winding NFL journey has returned him to the place where it started in 2013. He was the face of the franchise then, a second-round draft pick and a big-armed passer with unlimited potential. Inconsistency, injuries — including a broken jaw suffered from a punch by a teammate in a locker room dispute — and perhaps some immaturity derailed his first stint with the Jets, who moved on after the 2016 season.

Now 35, Smith was an unlikely offseason priority for New York, which wanted a seasoned veteran who could help Reich jumpstart its stagnant offense. The Jets traded a sixth-round pick in March to Las Vegas for Smith and a seventh-rounder, creating a reunion that even the two-time Pro Bowl pick couldn't have imagined.

"I'm in a good place," Smith said after practice Tuesday, "and we just have to keep working and keep getting better every single day."

The first day of minicamp practice offered a vivid reminder of what once was for the Jets with former head coach Rex Ryan, whose son Seth is the team's pass game coordinator, watching from the sideline in green and white gear in practice — and reconnecting briefly with Smith.

"It was so special, man," a beaming Smith said. "Any time I get to talk to coach, it just brings back the nostalgia, man, all those games we fought together. Obviously, he was part of the staff that gave me my first opportunity in the NFL and I'm forever grateful for that. Any time I get to see coach, I'm excited."

# Burrow sees similarities between this year's Bengals and 2019 LSU national title team

BY CHARLIE GOLDSMITH  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

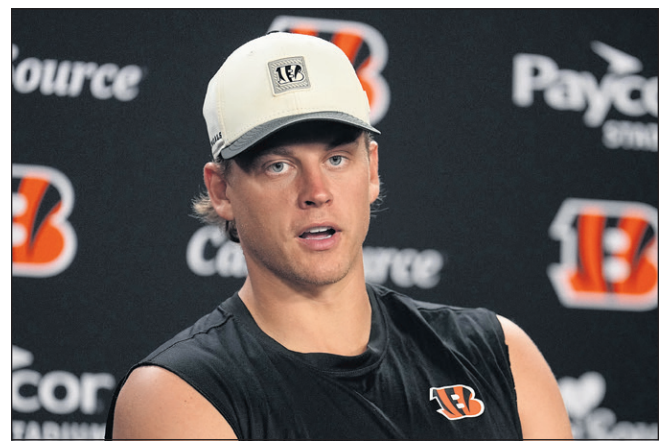
CINCINNATI — Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow says that he feels similarly about this year's Cincinnati team to how he felt about the LSU squad that he won a national championship with in 2019.

"I'm so excited to get started and get moving," Burrow said. "I wish we ramped this right into training camp so we can continue to improve. I feel like there's so much greatness we'll be able to achieve this year that I'm just excited to get going."

The Bengals have had an aggressive offseason, rebuilding the defense through free agency and adding veteran leaders with winning experience. With new players Dexter Lawrence, Jonathan Allen, Bryan Cook and Boye Mafe, Burrow says that the Bengals have everything they need to contend.

During the spring program, he said that he was impressed with the types of players that the Bengals brought in.

"We have guys that have been there and done that and also guys who have had a lot of individual success and not necessarily the team success that we're looking for," Burrow said. "Guys like Dexter (Lawrence) and guys like Jonathan (Allen), bringing guys like that in is so advantageous to a lot of different people. Players trying to improve makes it easier on coaches. We



Carolyn Kaster | Associated Press

Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow speaks during an NFL football news conference in Cincinnati on Wednesday.

have guys with so much talent and I'm just excited to put it all together."

The Bengals had full attendance in OTAs and minicamp, and coach Zac Taylor canceled the final two practices of minicamp with the Bengals having gotten in the work he was looking to see.

The Bengals bring back all 11 starters on offense from last season. Burrow says that the unit looks "great."

"All the guys are putting in a lot of work to try to improve," Burrow said. "With the veteran players we have coming back, they're doing a great job of setting an example for the younger guys and trying to teach them how to be great. I think the spring has gotten everybody better. We need to continue that over the next month before we come back."

Burrow said that with a lot of urgency entering 2026, he has been conscious about his leadership

style this spring. Offensive coordinator Dan Pitcher used the word "blunt." Burrow used the word "mean."

"This offseason, I really focused on trying to bring urgency to the room and try to just get everybody to understand the level of urgency that we have this year; the level of play that's going to be required from every individual who steps on that field," Burrow said. "I've tried to communicate that. I've tried to be a little more vocal in a mean way. I think that's a little out of my comfort zone, but that's somewhere that I'm improving. Maybe it's good and maybe it's bad, but we'll find out."

The Bengals haven't been in the playoffs since the 2022 season. Expectations are high for a team with a lot of key players who have never appeared in the playoffs in a Bengals uniform, and Burrow plays a huge role in leading the team's effort to get there.

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