

JAMES KAVOUKLIS | MICHIGAN FOOTBALL Ø<BÈ

My name is James Cavin Please I'm a junior and I play offensive line for the University of Michigan There's like an overall theme of advice that I've been given throughout my life that has helped me get to where I am now I had uh one coach in high school who he would always tell me uh there's probably some kid out there who has less than you but is working harder than you right now to get to where you want to be And that's just something I think about a lot whenever it comes to any activity I'm doing sports related wise just in terms of like I gotta work harder I gotta push myself And I think that's just something like a a good mentality that it instills in people to have Not even just with sports but once you get older and and whatever your job is for a just always know there's somebody working so you gotta work even harder I think one thing that I focus on is making sure that I'm always mentally in the right space that I need to be in whenever I work out whether it comes to practice lifting or even just like the mental aspect of games like watching film If you're not there 100% mentally then it's just a wasted opportunity and you only get so many opportunities to to maximize your potential So it's just about taking every rep seriously Some challenges that I face were just the mental aspect of of how everything goes I remember being a a sophomore and there's this freshman kid on the team and he hadn't even played yet in a game and we had a coach come and offer him to uh UCF and this kid ended up being a big five star recruit The potential was there He was a great kid I love him but I remember it being like I've I've been playing I make plays and this kid hasn't played yet He's just a freshman and that's just something that you gotta overcome and try not to compare yourself to others Just always know that I gotta make sure I have the right mentality when it comes to the recruiting process and and just making sure that I believed in myself and I trusted my abilities So my recruiting process wasn't what the normal one was just because we had COVID going on and and had to deal with that I remember specifically with uh Michigan even though I'm an offensive lineman here I was originally recruited as a long snapper And so I had one of the special teams coach uh coach Banta He called me my junior year He just talked to me He said he watched some of my film He liked it And throughout the whole summer of my junior year and then even my senior year I remembered I would have to like I would go out with my dad and I would take videos of me snapping the football send them to him He would coach me on it He'd let me know what he thought but I was just

making sure I was staying active in the process making sure he could see me And uh interesting enough like three days before signing day happened I got a call from the current O line coach right now Coach Newsome he was just like hey yeah you know we've seen your film we think you have the ability to play here We want you to come on and do both So that was kind of my recruiting process with Michigan So on the field I think the biggest things coaches are looking for is your leadership your your mentality and just how hard of a worker you are I know uh the coach I mentioned earlier who gave me the advice about there's always somebody working harder He would come out to the games and just every game he'd come off and uh I mean every time on the sideline I'd come off and he would just tell me like hey you know are you giving it all Are you doing everything you can And so he really helped me get aggressive in my game play to the point where I was like from the start of the play till the end of the whistle I'm gonna go hard and just uh putting your best film on tape matters a lot because if uh no plays off really cause that also affects of putting your best film on tape because if the coach looks through the whole game they see five plays You were jogging or you weren't going hard but you have one good play I think there's something that they're gonna look at and that's gonna it's definitely gonna build a negative opinion that they would have about you off the field I think when it comes to recruiting something important is just showing respect and that you care to coaches first impressions mean everything That's something everybody's heard throughout their life And I believe that's true So just always being ready to carry yourself in a with a high man you be respectful Look people in the eye shake their hands I think just all that stuff of being a good person Overall matters a lot When it comes to the recruitment process I chose Michigan because academics meant a lot to me So when I was deciding I was between Michigan Cornell and Rutgers I kind of sat there and I was like ok well if Cornell and me Michigan have the best academics and Rutgers isn't and they're good but it's not on the same level And then Michigan and Rutgers have better football experience The cor than Cornell would have been I kind of said well Michigan has both of everything and also when I came here on a visit it just it had a great feeling to it I liked it I liked what I saw And so that's how I ended up choosing Michigan Some of the things you pick up on just being at the college level that you don't you don't think about in high school is uh plays can be won before the snap even happens And that just comes with knowing defenses Like I in high school I never recognized any defenses I never really looked like at the bigger picture

of things I was only focused on the guy was blocking but getting here that was something I had to learn And so now once you have that knowledge you can tell you know guys are gonna go in a certain direction before the play even happens So if I know the guy is gonna be going right I know I mean that just makes my job easier I think the biggest takeaway I take from being on the national championship team is uh just like the overall team chemistry And one thing that sticks with me through high school is my coach had a saying that he always said and it was to have a good team You have to have coaches who care about coaches coaches who care about players players who care about coaches and players who care about players And once I got to Michigan right away I felt I felt that energy I felt that it was a good a good environment People cared about everybody in the building there's nobody left behind And I just think having that overall team closeness and the chemistry makes a big difference because when you have guys that can look to the right and left and they trust a person there that's a brother to them And I think that pushes people and makes them work harder And that also helps get through adversities cause a lot of programs you see there's not good team chemistry when adversity hits they fall apart but being able to kind of come together and and stick together as a unit makes a big difference when it comes to winning you know an overtime game against Alabama in the Rose Bowl Uh If I had to tell my younger self any advice I would just say to trust myself Uh you've always got to believe in your abilities and and nobody's gonna want anything better for yourself than you would And so I would just wanna always know that like no matter what I'm doing I'm gonna find a way to make it work out and and to not let any outside influences or distractions get to you