

# Penn State University Football Media Conference

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## Coach James Franklin

### Press Conference



JAMES FRANKLIN: Appreciate everybody being here in person or online, kind of reviewing the previous game and then getting into the next one. When you talk about the stats that we talk about every week, we weren't able to win those. Obviously that was the major factor in the game.

Lost the turnover battle, which was the biggest factor in the game. Penalties, drive start, sack battle, and explosive plays, really all the critical statistics we weren't able to win. Obviously you have a hard time being successful when you don't do that.

When you talk about the positives of the game, I thought our kids played their tails off, played hard, physical, and fast. Really did some good things for three and a half quarters.

Obviously there are opportunities for growth. We got to finish, we got to win the fourth quarter, we got to punt, kickoff, and kick field goals more consistently. And like I already stated, we can't turn the ball over four times against that type of opponent and expect to win.

When you get into Indiana and Tom Allen on the road, obviously got to know Tom really well since he joined the league. Have a ton of respect for him. Good man, good person, good coach.

Offensive coordinator, Walt Bell. I know Walt from his time at the head coach at UMass, as well as the offensive coordinator at Florida State and Maryland. High tempo offense, maybe the fastest offense in the country when it comes to tempo.

Guys that we're impressed with is the Auburn transfer at running back, Shaun Shivers, who we're familiar with. The running back that is giving them juice right now, Jaylin Lucas as both a return man and running back.

The quarterback, Connor Bazalak, who is also a transfer, and then a receiver that we're familiar with Emery Simmons, is also a transfer.

Defensively from what we understand, Tom is calling the defense, but Chad Wilt is the defensive coordinator. Obviously those two are working together. Chad is from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, but Tom is calling the defense from the way we understand it.

Got a lot of respect for Chad. Known him for a long time. Most recently was at Minnesota; was at Cincinnati before that.

Guys we are impressed with on the defensive side of the ball, cornerback No. 23 Jaylin Williams; defensive end No. 29 Alfred Bryant; will linebacker No. 44 Aaron Casey; corner back, seems like he's been playing there forever, Tiawan Mullen.

And then we're not really sure what's going to happen, but make the argument their best player, No.4, Cam Jones, has been out the last couple weeks and he's week to week, so we're preparing as if he'll be back.

On special teams, Kasey Teegardin is a special teams coordinator. Been there the last couple years. Jaylin Lucas shows up as kick returner. Their kicker, Charles Campbell, has been pretty consistent: 80% on field goals with a long of 51; 18 for 18 on PATs. And then also James Evans. They got a New Zealand punter who does a nice job.

That's where we are on the road. Be a challenging situation. Got to get our guys ready, practice well today, and go find a way to be 1-0 this week.

Open up to questions.

**Q. Now that you have two conference losses, would you consider taking a longer look at Drew at quarterback the rest of the way?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I guess first of all, it's not a decision that I make on my own. When there is big decisions like that I want to make sure that I'm not too close to it.

So had a pretty good conversation with Mike Yurcich obviously. Talked to Manny Diaz about it. Talked to coach



Whis about it. Talked Danny O'Bryant. So I talked to the guys that had either been a college or NFL head coach before. Talked to a guy that played the position as well and got everybody's thoughts.

We'll continue to evaluate it like we always do. And I understand the question, I truly do, but it also comes off to me when I've got that question multiple times as if this game is not really important.

So for us, we're going to look at who gives us the best chance to be 1-0 this week and go from there. And whoever that is based on this week's practice and preparation, we'll go with. That's really kind of how it's been all year long.

Again, I've had good conversations with a bunch of members of the staff about it making sure we're all on the same page, making sure we are all seeing it the same way. Obviously it's Tuesday so we haven't even practiced yet.

I guess that is where I struggle a little bit with there is still a ton of football left to be played, and whoever is going to give us a chance to be 1-0 this week and have a chance to win a bunch of games this year, for all the guys in the locker room, that's who we're going to go with.

But the question and similar questions like that I don't necessarily love the tone of it. But I get it, Rich. I hope this doesn't come off is an attack on you. I don't mean it that way.

To me it's an interesting question.

**Q. Would like to follow up on Rich's question though. We have not seen Drew practice. That's how you evaluate him. How has Drew been practicing over the last month?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: It's interesting, because you guys do get to see it. Actually looking at everything, studying everything, it's amazing how many programs don't allow media in practice anymore. Kind of went through each of the Big10 teams and kind of looking at everything. Obviously looking at offense, defense, special teams, looking at strength and conditioning, looking at all of it. Media access, looking at all of it.

But he's done a nice job in practice. He's done a nice job in practice. Offensively there is a lot of excitement about him.

**Q. Do you have a philosophy or just thoughts and feelings on playing two quarterbacks during a game? Is that something you would consider? Is that kind of**

**against the way that you look at things? Is it just the situation at hand? Just wondered your thoughts on that.**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Well, considering we've already done that this year I don't totally understand the question, but each circumstance is kind of on its own. Again, whatever is going to give us the best chance to be 1-0 this week.

**Q. You talked at the outset about how you lost the key battles, statistical battles that you look at on Saturday. I wonder if watching the film, how do you think it went on a snap-for-snap matchup basis? I thought it looked like in a lot of ways you matched up well with them, particularly on the line of scrimmage. On a sort of play-for-play basis, what did you see when you looked at the film? Am I making any sense at all?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: No, again, I'm not sure what they're rank is right now. They're a very, very talented team. I thought we played our tails off and competed really well for three and a half quarters.

They were able to make some plays late in the game from an opportunity standpoint, a talent standpoint. But your point is good. We matched up and competed and battled, and although they made some plays, we were able to eliminate the impact of them.

We turned the ball over early in the game. Their defensive ends were able to get their hands up and bat a few balls down. Nine times out the ten those balls go to the ground and they were able to make plays on them. Then our defense was able to play really well and make sure that we didn't give up touchdowns off those turnovers.

So all in all, again, I think our kids matched up and played their tails off for three and a half quarters. I also know this is a team, even look at them when they played some earlier games in the season, where it's been competitive in the first half and not as competitive in the second half. We were able to do that for the majority of the game.

But we got to finish. We got to finish better.

**Q. Kind of on that tone, what you just said, do you as a coach, looking at growth and looking at getting better week to week, do you watch that film and hope players look at the first 50 minutes where you're really good or the last ten minutes where it's not so good? Where do you think the most growth comes from?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think you got to look at it all. You can't pick and choose the stuff you like and discard the stuff you don't like.

To me, the thing that was obvious to us as a coaching staff, and whether people agree with this or not, we're better than we were two weeks ago. We played better. We're better than we were a week ago.

We have gotten better. Not enough to beat that type of team. We totally recognize that. But we got better. When you watch the tape there was a ton of stuff on that film to feel good about and be proud of.

But you talk about four to six plays on offense, four to six plays on defense, and two to three plays on defense, and against that type of team, those plays are significant.

But, yeah, I think you got to look at it all. I think after watching and studying and critiquing it all, all of us, I think we felt like as a staff that we got better.

But we had critical mistakes, and against that type of opponent, when you make a critical mistake, they got a chance to make you pay for it.

**Q. You were talking about the idea that people say a quarterback change sort of disregards the idea that you should put your best foot forward every week or that the game doesn't matter. For you, what's the material value in, let's say, eight wins versus 11 wins in a season, regardless of where the losses come from? And how do you balance the responsibility that you have every week to put your best foot forward with the responsibility to prepare for the future to the best of your ability?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think that's a good question, and specifically how you stated it. I think I have a responsibility to the guys in the locker room as well as the coaches to give us the best chance to win as many games as we possibly can. And you threw some numbers out there.

And what you would like to do at the same time is getting better and building for your future. I hope that you can do those two things together. I don't think they're exclusive of one another.

Obviously there is going to be a lot of factors that play into that that will allow you to maybe prepare for the future a little bit more, but I just think there is a balance between the two. I think there is a balance between the two.

For me, I think you guys know, we've said it enough, but ultimately I got to do what's best for Penn State to be 1-0 this weekend.

Again, when I say that, that's not me making this decision on my own. It's making sure I've talked to enough people, and not just at the quarterback position, but every position. That nobody is making decisions in a silo by themselves.

No one is determining the defensive end or defensive tackle reps on their own. It's a discussion with the defensive staff and then myself as well.

So you're trying to factor all those things in. The plan is to be able to do both at the same time, which isn't always perfect or ideal, but that's what you're trying to do.

**Q. That was pretty much what I was going to ask. I just want to add one more element and get your thoughts. With a quarterback is it more difficult -- with offensive and defensive linemen you can rotate guys in and out; linebackers, you can rotate guys in and out and get them experience. The only way a quarterback gets experience is playing. Is that preparing for the future more challenging when you're dealing with a quarterback scenario?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yes, because to your point, other positions you do more rotation, no doubt about it. You get guys in and out. I think that's a fair point.

It's harder to do, and that's why the practice reps and experience is so important. And then also the number of games that you're able to get your backups into the game, which we've done. We've been able to do that a decent amount this year. Hopefully we can continue to do that.

**Q. You mentioned in the past Olu being a really smart, academically focused guy. How has he handled the increased attention on him from an NFL draft analyst and draft world perspective? We also saw him leave in the middle of the final drive of the game against Ohio State. How is he holding up?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so as you know, injuries, I don't get into a whole lot of specifics and details. We'll see how this week goes with him.

And then when you talk about the attention that Olu is getting based on his future, had a meeting with his mom and dad and Olu on Sunday, which was a very productive meeting. They're awesome people.

Just really was able to get their perspective on things, show them how we can be a resource in terms of getting them a lot of information so they can make an educated decision.

Just being as supportive as we possibly can be. And

they're awesome people. Got a very close relationship with them. So does Coach Troutline, so does Kevin Threlkel. Kevin exchanges texts with mom almost every day, and that was before all this stuff was going on.

They seem to be handling it well, but it's a lot. The way the rules have changed has made it worse. I know in some ways I think it is better, but in some ways -- like in the past you couldn't talk to an agent. The majority of the agents that followed the rules would follow them, and there would be a few that wouldn't obviously.

Right now their phone is ringing off the hook constantly. I think sometimes those rules were good because it created a barrier for them a little bit. It's a lot, but I think they seem to be asking all the right questions and for the most part handling it well.

**Q. If I could follow up on Olu, what is he doing so well that's appealing to NFL scouts? I know you're not an NFL scout, but you coached at that level. For a kid at 19 to be projecting like that so early, how unique is that for an O-lineman?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's crazy when you say 19 years old, right? What I try to talk to the players all the time about is whether it's on an individual basis in terms of playing time or whether it's on an individual basis and trying to be all-conference or whether it's on an individual basis trying to get drafted and get drafted high, or even from a team perspective, it's about consistency.

Almost all the guys in that locker room have shown the ability to flash from time to time and do some really special things. I think that's what separates Olu. He's just so consistent with his approach, with his habits, with his maturity, with his drive towards being elite really in everything that he does.

You know, he's got a chance to be an academic all-American. He has a chance to be the academic Heisman winner. I think we had one other in Urschel, and obviously being talked about as a first-round draft choice.

I think the biggest thing is he has unbelievable play strength. He's strong in the weight room, but has got unbelievable play strength. He's usually in great position. If he is out of position, he has the ability to get himself back into a winning position against a defensive end.

But more than anything it's just about his consistency. You watch the tape and the guy has play after play after play of protecting the quarterback's blind side and finishing blocks. And no drama.

To be honest with you, I don't think I've got a question about Olu all year long until he started to be talked about as a first-round draft choice. Why? He's just doing this job. Most people only notice offensive linemen when they're not doing their job. Now everybody wants to talk about him.

He's an awesome kid. Out of Gonzaga High School. Went to school in DC. That program did a phenomenal job with him, the parents did a phenomenal job raising him. Just a really good example, model of doing your job at high level consistently. And people notice that. I don't care and industry you're in.

**Q. Talking about the ongoing dialog with your coaching staff at different positions, when it's the quarterback conversations and one guy is an unprecedented four-time team captain and the other is a true freshman, how much is that, beyond th talent, beyond what you're seeing on the practice field, how much of that is a centerpiece of those conversations?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: It's funny that you say that, because I've noticed this year, and I actually even think this week, I've noticed this year a ton of it. I don't know if it's the COVID six-year deal or what, but I noticed a ton of guys that were voted captain in pre-season, you know, that aren't starting anymore across the league or opponents that we've played.

So that really hasn't factored into any of the discussions we have had. Sean has earned that through the players' vote and how he's conducted himself all off-season; so have the rest of the captains.

But then there is still kind of a responsibility for doing your job at high level. I think that's the thing that I don't know if everybody recognizes, because I understand the emotion and passion and all that kind of stuff.

If you go back and watch the tape, the guy played his tail off and made some really good plays in that game and made some really good plays in the previous game, which I think I came in here and talked to you guys about. He made two throws in the last game as good as I've seen him make since he's been here.

Obviously four to six plays we got to get rid of. That was not part of the discussion of what you just brought up.

**Q. I wondered how much, you've talked to a lot of people, been open about that. After a game like that, with a sixth year player, how much input or discussion has there been with him in a one-on-one way post Ohio State?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: When you say input...

**Q. The sixth year dynamic changes the customary way, and the same at the other end where there is player freedom for the young players. Is it different now with that dynamic than maybe it was when you had a kid redshirting and you knew it and those type of things?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. Again, I do. I think that's a fair question. I think just based on six years and time and experiences, it obviously lends itself to having a different level relationship. There is no doubt about it.

But I would say there is guys that just based on their personalities have been in the program two years that I'm very close with just because of how open they are and that's the relationship.

I got other guys that are older guys that have said like 12 words that I wish I was closer with. One of the things me and my wife talk about, one of the things we miss about being a position coach is the position coaches don't know the team as well as I do because I've been in all of their homes, you know, been the consistent factor here, but you don't get to know one position or one player on the same level.

When it's your position and you have them over for dinner every Thursday night, you're tracking they're academics, talking to the parents, and dealing with issues and girlfriends, breakups, and things like that. I don't get all of that.

So I miss that. But, to your point, just six years and the nature of the position, and back to Tyler's point about being a captain, I have more conversations with the captains than I do other positions.

I think it's a little bit based on the kid and the personality. Like Jerry Cross is a kid who is very open and engaging for a young kid who hasn't been on campus very long. It's really player specific.

Right now the weird place we are in college football with guys being in programs for six years, that factors into it too. It's not like I'm talking about that. I don't think it's appropriate to ask him what he thinks.

Although he did come up to me on Monday -- excuse me, on Sunday and wanted to talk to me on Monday. We haven't had that conversation yet.

**Q. Going back to the quarterback, and you said about**

**talking with Mike and Manny about it, what has Mike told you about Drew? What's impressed him this year? What are some of the things in practice he's doing? How have you seen him grow this year?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, probably some of the stuff that you guys have seen out at practice, it's funny, I remember standing there with Joel Klatt. I think to may have been before the Purdue game. Joel watched five or six throws, and he's a giant human being with a quick release that can get the ball out and make all the throws.

So he's got tremendous arm talent. Some guys that are big, strong armed guys are not very accurate. He has shown to be accurate. He'd throw from different launch points and angles. For a young kid, and I think Sean has been a big part of this, he's doing a really good job of preparing.

I really think that whole quarterback room is as well. Those guys are really working hard and preparing the right way, probably more so than maybe other quarterback rooms I've had in the past. They have done a good job and Drew has been a big part of that.

I think I told you guys before, probably Sean's super power is how he studies the game and understands protection and the run game. So him in meetings and some of the dialog and discussion with Mike and the young quarterbacks I think has been really valuable for those guys.

So he's doing a lot of things well. Again, he's still a true freshman.

**Q. To go back to Olu, you mentioned all the intangibles he has. Is there anything you learned from him specifically and his development that you can apply to other offensive linemen? We haven't seen linemen take that step that quickly in your tenure.**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's not just our time here. It's unusual. You don't usually hear of a guy that's a first year starter 19 years old. Also helps that he's 6'6", 315 pounds and is smart and strong and intelligent.

Yeah, I think what we always do, whether it's through recruiting or development with guys that we got or guys that have gone somewhere else, you're always kind of going back and studying best practice and what you did well and what you can do better.

I think Olu is an example of what we've talked about in the past. When you've recruited Olu and you kind of have your -- let's say you got a list of 25 characteristics with Olu, he

checked most of the boxes.

What I have found over my time, whether NFL or college, guys that have a lot of boxes checked, they usually do well.

I think Trace McSorley is a good example of that. He may have not been 6'3", but he checked pretty much every other box.

I think through recruiting, whether it's in college or the NFL, guys that just have a lot of high-level traits, like Olu, your hit rate is going to be a lot higher, rather than some guys that may have one really elite trait but lacking in some others.

And it's easy to get caught up in that one elite trait. Really fast or really big, really strong arm, whatever it may be, that you tend to rationalize or overlook the other things.

**Q. Going back to your running backs, obviously we saw Kaytron start on Saturday. What do you like about his running style, the way he's played? And how has Keyvone handled his role?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, Keyvone has been hurt. You guys know I don't get into injuries. And sometimes for a situation like this. Keyvone has been out or limited for five weeks.

We are hopeful to have him back. When we have him back we feel like we got three really good backs that now at this point of the season are experienced and can make plays in the pass and run game.

Yeah, those two young kinds have really complemented each other really. Kaytron has the ability to set up blocks. He has tremendous vision. Like the run we saw on Saturday, he has the ability to finish runs with power.

You know, just a very well-rounded running back. Got a very high football IQ. I think really him and Nick are really good complementary pieces much as with have seen around college football and what's happened with Keyvone, you want to rotate those guys as much as you can to keep them healthy. We have been fortunate this year to pretty much every week have at least two backs that we feel really good about.

So it'll be nice hopefully if we're in a situation, hopefully have Keyvone back this week. Just met with him yesterday. Had a really good meeting with him yesterday.

**Q. You mentioned Tom Allen as the play caller for Indiana. What does he do from a defensive structure that challenges teams? Seems like during his team at Indiana he's been a very tough out for a lot of teams in**

**the Big10.**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think this is like one of the first years he's gone back to doing it, but I think obviously defensive coordinators and people with similar philosophies and things like that, he's like a lot of defensive coordinators. It is very important for him to make you one dimensional and stop the run. He's going to use as many resources as he has to to stop the run.

Whether that's in recruiting, whether that's in scheme, numbers in the box, whether that's angling or slanting or stunting or however you want to describe it, dropping safeties down the box like we used to do with Marcus Allen who actually sent me an autographed jersey yesterday, which was really cool. Super proud of him.

A lot of different ways to do it, right? He's committed to doing it and making you one dimensional. When you study all the analytics, that comes true over and over again. Not only this year, but really his career to your point. Really shows up on short yardage situations. Third and fourth down short yardage situations.

And then they do some good things coverage-wise where they probably have a little bit more diversity coverage-wise through scheme to try to make up for the commitment that they're make to go stop the run, to try to force you into some bad decisions through scheme.

So like just like we have faced over my time here those coverages can cause you problems and create some opportunities, but there is weakness in every coverage as well, and hopefully you have the right play call at the right time and the quarterback is seeing it the same you are.

It will be a challenge. Be interesting to see how it thing plays out.

**Q. Parker Washington had his best game of the season, almost 200 receiving yards. Has he asserted himself as the team's No. 1 receiver?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. I don't think there was any question of that based on what he had done last year and the year before. He was coming into the season and he was the most established wide out we've had at Penn State on our roster. Mitch had done some good things but not yet at Penn State.

So, yeah.

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