

# Penn State University Football Media Conference

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## Coach James Franklin

### Press Conference



JAMES FRANKLIN: As always, appreciate you guys coming out and covering Penn State football. We appreciate and don't take that for granted. Obviously disappointed with the result of last week's game. Did not live up to our expectations or standards.

Over our time here we really haven't had those types of games. So obviously disappointed. When this happens to forces you to look at everything from the top down, starting with me.

You kind of go over the statistics in the game, turnover battle we lost. Had the one turnover to start the second half which obviously was significant. We're not getting turnovers right now. Explosive play battle we won. We were at 21%; they were at 11%, almost 12%.

The third and fourth down battle we did not win. That's been a fairly consistent theme all year long.

Sack battle we won.

Drive start battle we won.

The penalty battle we lost.

Going into that game UCLA was ranked 131st in the country and we were ranked fifth in the country. We lost that by eight yards.

Middle eight, we won that.

But at the end of the day the stats are the stats. We did not play winning football. There was some uncharacteristic things that showed up in the game. Every time we had a chance to swing momentum back in our favor, whether it was the blocked punt or the long touchdown, we get it back to within seven and all of a sudden they go on a drive and widen the margin back to 14 again.

We get a long touchdown. We get an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after the play. Again, things that we really haven't done in my time, so disappointed with the results.

And I get it. I get the frustration. Again, it started with me. We look at everything in detail. Now obviously we're on to Northwestern, doing everything we possibly can to get a win against Northwestern this week and get on a positive roll.

Open up to questions.

**Q. How would you evaluate the linebacker play Saturday, and if Cam Smith isn't ready for increased snaps, are you considering moving any of the safeties to linebacker to improve the depth there?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, obviously when you lose a guy like Tony Rojas, who has played a ton of football for us and is one of our better players, that's going to have an impact.

So more reps for Amare and more reps for DeLuca, and then obviously the plan is we're going to have to start playing guys like you mentioned, Cam. He played a little bit but not significant reps the way the game was going.

So, yeah, going to have to play those guys. Going to have to continue to develop them. Cam is part of that discussion. Specca is part of that discussion.

There is times we did some really nice things; there is other times where we didn't. We had some mistakes; had some missed assignments.

And most importantly, just playing with confidence right now. So that's a challenge. I think it's a fair question. You know, obviously whenever you lose one of your better players on your team, at a position we were already lacking depth, that is going to create some challenges for us.

So, yeah, that's going to be a point of attention all week long with our coaching staff, with the players. We are going to have to rotate those guys in there.

**Q. James, when you look at Kaytron Allen's production this season, in your mind, how important is it to get him more involved in the offense not only against Northwestern, but just moving forward? Just curious on your thoughts on how you guys used him**



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against UCLA.

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so I don't think there is any doubt that Kaytron is having a good year and been very productive. That's kind of what we look at each week, is how are we getting him touches. And then also it's not necessarily play count, but it's also opportunities that he's get to go touch the ball.

So that's something we discuss as an offensive staff each week. He's obviously been very productive. Obviously when things don't go well then that's one of the first things you look at and you say, he needs more touches and should have had more touches in that game.

So, yeah, I think that's a fair question. We had a similar discussion ourselves as a staff.

**Q. Coming into the season a lot of people who know a lot about this sport and aren't Penn State fans thought this was a chance to be one of the best teams in the country. I'm sure you thought that, too. I'm just wondering, you know, you said you question everything. Why do you think it's not happening, I mean in terms of causes more than effects? To say we've been inconsistent or haven't executed, those are like effects. What's going on? What are you seeing? Is there anything and is there anything you thought about that could change maybe the way you coach them the rest of the way?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. Yeah, so first of all, I think the first thing is there has been obviously some adjustments to what we're doing on defense and getting our guys to play confident within the system is still a work in progress.

I don't think that's a question. We're not playing as fast, as aggressive as we have in the past on the defensive side of the ball. Offensively that's probably where those question marks probably are as much as anything year two, with Andy and then also so many returning players on the offensive side of the ball.

And we've been inconsistent. I know that's -- that was part of your question, not using that word. If I had the answer I would give it to you right now, but that's what we're working through every single day, is finding ways to be more consistent.

That's in our execution, in our playcalling, that's in all of it, again, from the top all the way down starting with me, all the coaches, the coordinators, the players. It's all of it.

You know, special teams has probably been the area that we have been the most consistent this year, year two with

Coach Lustig. So we want to build on that. Obviously the blocked punt, I used that as an example to show the players on Sunday that really worked out exactly the way it should work out.

The coaches came up with a plan to get Dani matched up on the long snapper. We repped it a few times in practice, made some adjustments. We had some good discussions with the players. They went out and executed the plan and we had success.

You know, we need to take obviously a similar approach on offense and on defense to put ourselves in the best position to be successful.

So, yeah, I get it. You know, we're not the only team that's in a similar situation like this. Like I mentioned before, there are examples as recent as last season, teams that have had tough losses and have been able to overcome it.

We need to overcome it as quickly as we possibly can, tune out the noise, focus on getting better, but also recognize and understand we've had two losses in a row that are frustrating for everybody involved.

**Q. Your offensive line, you returned most of it from last year. They looked really, really good toward the end of last year. To the viewing public they don't look the same this year, even with a lot of the same guys. You mentioned inconsistency before. Is there anything you can point to with this group as to why they're maybe not performing the way at least a lot of us were expecting?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, obviously we are missing Donkoh this past week. That was a difference for us. But from the beginning of the season, again, I think that's fair. I think the word that I've used is inconsistent. It's not what you want to hear but that's the reality of it.

We've done some really good things at times. We have not dominated the line of scrimmage the way you think we're capable of dominating the line of scrimmage.

And not playing as fast and aggressive as I think we anticipated.

So are there specific reasons? Yeah, but not that I could give you broadly. There are specific reasons on each play when you have five guys out there or six, if you include the tight end, and one guy doesn't execute the block the way it needs to be executed. You know, what happens is on each play it may be a different guy not executing at the rate that it needs to be executed at or not as physical as it needs to be or right footwork or landmark.

So it's a combination of those things. Again, I know you're asking a specific question that he covers it for the season, but that's challenging to do when it's more play by play.

**Q. How was the tone and tenor in the locker room Sunday and do you have any concerns about losing that room?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, this is a resilient group. I think when you watch the game obviously we have two losses, but there is no signs of that on tape. Our guys battled and played really hard. We didn't always play smart but we battled.

We had a chance to win both of those games when maybe there were times where that did not like look it was the case. Two weeks ago we give up two touchdowns back to back and looks like we're in a tough situation. We battle back and go to overtime.

Not enough to win the game and ultimately that's all that matters, but specific to your question, we did the same thing last week. Is there hurt in the locker room? Yes. No doubt about it. Was there hurt on Sunday? Yeah. No doubt about it. And there should be.

But we got a strong group, a resilient group. We got a bunch of leaders that have been through adversity in their past. So, no, I don't have those concerns right now.

But obviously a big factor in all of this is they have to tune out the negativity and focus on the things that matter and that are going to get us better.

**Q. You've said multiple times it starts with you. I don't think anybody would ever accuse you of not working hard enough. What does that mean that it starts with you? What could you be doing better?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, I think it's all of it, right? It's how we game plan. It's how we practice. It's how we develop. It's holding everybody in the building accountable.

It's all of it. You know, but I'm also not going to allow two games that are extremely disappointing to overshadow the growth that we've had in this program over the last 12 years.

So it's a balance of both of that.

The reality is we're talking about right now, and the last two weeks weren't good enough. Ultimately I'm responsible. So I hired the staff. We've recruited the players. I'm

ultimately responsible for all of it. So offensively, defensive, special teams, I'm there to support those guys. I'm there to challenge. I'm there to hold everybody accountable. That's the nature of my job.

I totally get that. Totally take responsibility for that.

**Q. Couple quick follow ups. Is there some regret -- you talk about the middle eight a lot -- of not operating with more urgency toward the end of the first time when you were sitting on timeouts? And also, should you have been rushing the punter on the safety? Wonder about those couple things.**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so couple things. The first thing is the end of the half. When you don't execute the fourth down and are not able to finish the drive and do what you want to do, then everything else is left up to interpretation; fair?

Let me finish. But to me, you can't say that we should have used the timeouts and then say, well, we left them time to get a field goal. Like you can't have it both ways. We're trying to go down, score a touchdown, and leave as little time left on the clock as possible.

We get the first down; now we're able to use the timeouts and use as much time as we possibly can.

The other thing is they called timeout on fourth down. Yeah, I get it. When it doesn't go the way you want it to go everything will be questioned and challenged. To me you can't say that we should have used the timeouts and also criticize us for leaving time for them to go down the field and kick a field goal.

I don't understand how you can make both arguments at once. I also understand.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, the safety, obviously we were expecting them to punt it deep and us to put ourself in a position to set up a return. They ended up taking the safety there, which was a discussion on the headset, which approach that they would take. Obviously we needed to have guys in position to rush the punter for a safety there in that situation.

**Q. How would you evaluate the job Andy has done up to this point; 70th in total offense?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, again, all of it ultimately is my responsibility, and then there is a shared responsibility between myself and the coordinators and the assistant



coaches. Up to this point, we have not been as productive as we expected to be and anticipated being.

We've had slow starts. If you look at what we're able to do in the second half, that's more I think who we're capable of being. But we can't go on the road and start slowly and do that two weeks in a row and really -- you know, it's interesting, because we went down the opening drive and got a touchdown.

The issue was obviously they were able to score and get an onside kick. So I think we had three possessions in the first half on offense and part of that is the offense's responsibility to stay on the field and maximize those possessions, and part of it is getting off the field on defense to give as many possessions for offense as possible.

But myself and Andy share that responsibility, and we have not been productive enough at this point of the season.

**Q. Have you considered making any staff changes after the start to the season?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. Again, I understand all the questions. Ultimately, it starts with me. And then like I just mentioned, there is shared responsibility between myself, the coordinators, and the assistant coaches. I have a ton of confidence in those men or I would not have brought them in the building.

We're a results-oriented business and we need to produce, so my job is to hold everybody accountable and create an environment where the players and the coaches can be successful. That's what we're going to do moving forward starting with Northwestern.

**Q. We're nearly at the mid-point of the regular season. Kaytron and Nick both have about 60 carries apiece and Kaytron is averaging three yards ahead of Singleton at this point. Who is determining on your staff which running back is involved play to play, series to series? I know you said looking at it in postgame, you've had some discussions about it, but what was the confidence level that led to you get Singleton 15 more snaps than Kaytron over the course of that game going in?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, so we discuss rotation as a staff every single week. That's part of the coordinator's plan. That's part of the position coach's plan. So for us, we're tracking touches more than we're tracking plays. Those guys are rotating by series, but we're tracking touches.

Obviously that was a discussion after the game. It was also a discussion before the game, that we need to get Kaytron more touches and more carries.

**Q. You already talking about you said that you had discussions with some of your coaches and assistants regarding how it adjust and move forward from UCLA looking forward to Northwestern. What have those early discussions been like how to change the game plan looking forward.**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, the first thing is stick together.

I think what is human nature is to point in other people's direction, and making sure that as a staff that we're not doing that. We're all starting with ourselves and our responsibilities and our side of the ball. I've been places when times get tough the defense is pointing fingers at the offense or the offense is pointing fingers at the defense or special teams. We're not going to do that.

So it's everybody owning their responsibility in this. Staying as positive as we can, not spending energy on the things that don't help us get better, and find solutions on the film. Find solutions back on the fundamentals.

At the end of the day that's what it comes back to, is the fundamentals and techniques and coaches. Those things never leave, and we got make sure that we are executing the fundamentals and the techniques within the scheme.

You look at us specifically on the defensive side of the ball, we didn't have a bunch of missed assignments in the game. We're not executing the scheme or the techniques and fundamentals at a high enough level, whether that's defeating blocks, our eyes being appropriate, those things.

**Q. When you kind of look at the bigger context of where you guys are in this season, what do you feel like you individually need to do better? You said it starts with you. You hired everybody. What are you focusing on and how do you try and ignore the noise when it's gotten pretty loud?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, again, we got to find a way to beat Northwestern. That's all that matters. Obviously you go back and you study every game and you look at it in great detail and say, what could we do better? What can we execute better? What calls would we like to have over?

And then also why did we make the call that we made? Fundamentals, technique, footwork. All the fundamentals it comes back to. And for me, it's holding everybody in the building accountable. That and making sure that it happens. That's my responsibility.





You know, after that, after going back and studying the things that we didn't do well and the corrections that need to be made moving forward, from that point it's what do we have to do against Northwestern to get a win, and start getting this thing rolling in a positive direction where people are excited and looking forward to the rest of the season.

**Q. You mentioned earlier the growth you made from when you got here to now. With results like this in a season with these expectations, when you start 3-2, does that shake your belief at all in what you can achieve at Penn State?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, again, fair question. I believe in Penn State. I believe in our players. I believe in the men in the Lasch Building, men and women in the Lasch Building, and I believe in myself. Obviously after the last two games we're going to get these types of questions.

I get it.

But, again, when you look at the complete picture, which right now no one wants to talk about; we want to talk about what just happened and the games we just played. I get that, but I need to make sure that everybody within the Lasch Building keeps everything in perspective. We get this fixed, move forward, find a way to beat Northwestern.

As you can imagine, we're as motivated as we've ever been to do that.

**Q. Going back to last week, do you think that -- obviously given the results, do you think there could be an over-emphasis on trying to not turn two losses into three? Do you think that's something that you guys kind of considered at all following the aftermath of the game?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: I would say no, except the fact that we just have to tune all the stuff out that doesn't put us in the best position to be successful and focus on the things that really matter the most.

But tuning all that outside noise out that does not help us go out and beat Northwestern, that's critical. So that can be challenging at times. But we need to make sure that within the Lasch Building everybody is focused on controlling the things we can control and playing really well against Northwestern and not only winning the game, but playing better and getting excited about what we can do this season.

**Q. Few minutes ago you said that you were not playing as fast or aggressive as we have in the past on**

**the defensive side of the ball. Considering the move to get Jim and what you talked about and what we heard about the facility, about what that means, is that a letdown in game five of the season? I know you mentioned there is an adjustment to anew scheme. Are you surprised that after four game of football that that's what you've got?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, obviously, again, we're not where we need to be right now. Am I surprised? Yeah, I'm surprised where we are in all three phases and where we are after last game.

Yes, that's accurate.

**Q. James, I don't ever remember you not coming out and give is the scouting report of the opponent. You didn't do that today. Why was that?**

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's fair. That's fair. Obviously focused on the last game as much as we possibly could, so I'm glad you asked. I appreciate that, Mike.

Getting into our next opponent, which I would love to do, so I definitely should have done that. Northwestern and Coach Braun, he's done a really good job. Promoted from the interim head coach. Got a defensive background. Has done some really good things in his past, in his history. You see this team taking on his personality.

Defensively, you look at their defensive coordinator and obviously the head coach has a big part in that. Tim McGarigle, second season. Four down defense. Cover four. Very similar in some ways I would say to what we see from Iowa.

We been impressed with their defensive back, No. 9 Braden Turner, No. 91 Aidan Hubbard, No. 37 linebacker, Mack Uihlein, and defensive back No. 6, Robert Fitzgerald.

On the offensive side of the ball, Zach Lujan. Same deal, second year with coach. They're an 11 personnel and 12 personnel team. They got a transfer quarterback from SMU, Preston Stone. We been impressed with him. Can do things not only with his arm but also with his feet.

Running back No. 5, Kaleb Komolafe downhill, physical runner. And then wide receiver Griffin Wilde, who they got as a South Dakota transfer.

On special teams, Coach Creighton, a long time special teams coordinator. Been doing it a long time. We been impressed their punter, No. 11 Luke Akers, and kickoff returner No. 6, Joseph Himon. Mike, I appreciate you

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bringing that up. Yeah, I normally do that. I apologize for missing it.

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