

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Honored and blessed today represent my home state of Indiana and Indiana University here today. I'm looking forward to working with our new president Pamela Whitten and very excited about her vision for Indiana athletics.

Also very thankful for our athletic director Scott Dolson, who has shown tremendous support for our football program and very strong leadership during the pandemic. I would also like to take a moment and thank the Big Ten and Commissioner Warren for establishing the George and Viola Taliaferro Fellowship. What an amazing family. Blessed to meet George when I first arrived on campus, spent some time with him. Blessed to be able to spend time with his daughters when they came for the ceremony we had to unveil his statue that stands in our north end zone and I walk past every single day. What a great honor for a great family.

Brought with us some excellent football players and very fine young men today. Michael Penix, our starting quarterback. One of the best football players in the country. All-American linebacker Micah McFadden, All-American wide receiver, Ty Fryfogle, and All-Big Ten safety Marcelino Ball. Marcelino and Ty have both already graduated. Michael Penix and Micah McFadden will be graduating this spring with degrees in business management and sports management respectively. It's the most depth we have had on our team since I've been at Indiana.

Our offensive line is led by Caleb Jones, a man that has grown in his leadership on and off the field. So excited for his senior season at Indiana. Running back room led by Deland McCullough. Deland's coming back to Indiana to be our associate head coach. So excited to have him back on our staff. He leads a very deep and talented running back room.

Our wide receivers have been enhanced by addition of DJ Matthews, Cam Buckley. Very excited about Miles Marshall and his growth. Expect him to have a great 2021 season.

Our tight end room, one of our deepest rooms, led by all Big Ten tight end Peyton Hendershot. And our quarterback room, two individuals. I already talked about Michael. Jack Tuttle. Both guys have won Big Ten games, showed great leadership, and have become the face of our offense.

Defensively, so excited to have new defensive coordinator Charlton Warren from the University of Georgia. Charlton has done a tremendous job of learning our system and displaying tremendous leadership on our staff and with our players. It all starts up front for our defense. Very excited about the addition of Ryder Anderson, Stone Handy, Wes Kramer, to our defensive line, to a room that had a competitive, physical, and a group that I believe is really grown together the last several months.

Linebacker room. In addition to Mica we have strong leadership from Cam Jones and James Miller and Thomas Allen, a very mature group of intelligent, tough, hard-nosed football players.

Secondary led by All-American Taiwan Mullen and All-Big Ten safety Devon Matthews. Special teams led by Sean Wracher, one of the best long snappers in the country, tremendous leadership by him each and every day. All-Big Ten kicker Charles Campbell, and All-Big Ten punt returner, Reese Taylor.

Very excited about the start of our season. We have the opportunity and the challenge of opening up in Iowa against the Hawkeyes on September 4th. We also have a tough non-conference slate. Week three hosting Cincinnati Bearcats who have done great job building that program. Then we have the rest of our very, very difficult and challenging Big Ten schedule in front of us for 2021. Excited about the season. Love being in this venue. Love Lucas Oil Stadium. It's our goal to end up our season playing here on December 4th. Questions.

Q. You touched on this a little bit. What are your thoughts on opening up with a Big Ten game. It's nothing new for you. I know you opened up four years ago against Ohio State. Do you like that, just jumping



right in with a Big Ten game?

TOM ALLEN: I do. It's, like I said, it's going to be our third time since I've been here. It's my fifth year as head coach. And it's definitely a challenge without question. I love the way that it creates a sense of urgency with your team. The start of the season always creates excitement. There's always that level no matter who you play but when it's a conference opponent and when it's a team that of their caliber, Coach Ferentz does a tremendous job there, the consistency, the toughness they have had for so many years, and to go and play in that venue to start the season is going to be very challenging. But I love the way that, you always get better in the preparation process and when you're preparing for such a high level opponent that early, it helps you I think have a better season.

Q. So in 2019 PJ Fleck, head coach of the Minnesota Golden Gophers, he upset Penn State and that kind of made his program. It gained a lot of popularity and a lot of national attention. And in 2020 you guys did the same thing to start the season upsetting Penn State and you had a meteoric rise ever since then. How much have you talked to PJ Fleck about your two teams' kind of similar rises to stardom in the Big Ten?

TOM ALLEN: Well, I think anytime you have, you come into a league at a similar time and you have new opportunities, it was his first chance to be a Big Ten head coach, my first chance to be a Big Ten head coach, and so we share and talk about leadership and the way you build your program. And there's no question. I mean, you cast a vision for what you believe you can become at a certain place and I did that when I came to Indiana and talked so much about change in the expectations and creating belief and those expectations are beginning to change.

So you have to have a moment where you experience it and for us it was the start of the season last year against Penn State. The bottom line is you can talk about those situations. You can talk about wanting to learn how to finish and take your program to another level, but your players have to experience it, and that's what happened for us. So it just filled in a level of confidence and a belief that went to a whole other level for our guys in that locker room. And so, to me, you just have to, no matter what happens in those moments, you have to, in the past you've had to learn from being close. Now we have to continue to learn from having a chance to break through in those games and then use that for us to move forward to continue to build. That's what it's about. It's about us building off of the success we had in 2020 because everything you did last year, it's awesome, it's great, but it's in the past.

Q. Kind of the same question. I mean, a lot was

written and your post-game speech went viral after the Ohio State game last year. So what was the biggest lesson you took from that game against the Buckeyes in terms of chasing them in the Big Ten East moving forward?

TOM ALLEN: Well, they are the gold standard and that is who we're chasing. And our one word for 2021 is chase and we're trying to chase that greatness every single day. You think about that game and you often think about post-games and comments that are made and as I was sharing my heart to our team I didn't even think about or realize that there were videoing it, but at the same time, it's, oftentimes when you have those types of setbacks and you learn a lot about yourself, and I feel like adversity is where we really become who we are. Started that game and dug a big hole, and they're a very talented football team and they took advantage. But we just came storming right back. So I just, the toughness, the fight, the character that I thought that our team displayed by fighting and just, by just gritting your teeth and just locking that bit and locking that jaw and just not giving in no matter how bad it looked, because it was ugly for a big part of that first half.

But I think I said it on the way out. I think we're going to learn a lot about this football team in these next two quarters and we did. So I didn't want to leave that locker room without those guys hearing from me. I knew we had a long trip home. I wanted them to hear from me what I thought about them, and I wanted them to understand how we needed to use this opportunity to grow and allow us to continue to build this program. So it was definitely, that might have been as big a moment in the 2020 season as any was in that moment in that locker room after that tough loss.

Q. You have a lot of key transfers coming in who are going to be fighting for a starting position. How do you balance newcomers coming in who haven't put in the sweat equity that guys who have been here for three, four, five years with the best guy gets the position?

TOM ALLEN: Well, first of all, yeah, that is a challenge, but I think we work very hard to, even within the transfer portal additions, of find guys that fit with us, which is no different than what we do in recruiting, whether from high school or another college. Guys that fit the culture, fit the mindset that we're looking for, that will buy into the little things it takes to be great on game day.

And then the part about playing time, that's earned and it's told to them in the whole recruiting process, no matter how we recruit them. They got to earn those opportunities and the best players are going to play. And these are guys,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

several of them have had a lot of football experience at other schools and made a lot of plays and had had a chance to compete, but they're going to come in here and show that they're the best guy that deserves to play on our football team. So, but to me it's no different than anybody else. We had a whole roster full of guys that want to compete and that want us to be able to bring in great talent in this program because iron sharpens iron every single day.

Q. You coached in the SEC West at Ole Miss. Now you're in the Big Ten East. Are those the two best conferences, or divisions, excuse me, in college football, in your mind?

TOM ALLEN: Well, I know they're very, very challenging. There's no doubt about it. When you look at the history of college football and the teams that have had the most success in the past, there's a whole bunch teams in those two divisions on that list. And as you said, I've been a coach in both of those divisions and I do believe that the SEC and the Big Ten have separated themselves as the two elite conferences in the country. That's my opinion. Everybody else has theirs. But I've coached, that's the only two Power Five conferences I've coached in. So I just know how hard those two divisions are. I know how you have to be at your very best, but I also know this. This whole conference is really, really good and we play a lot of really good football teams, no matter what's East or West.

But, yeah, I think that that's a, it's been a great, that was great preparation opportunity for me was to be in that environment playing in some of those venues against some of those programs that have had a lot of historical success and to be at a program that had to go in those places and find a way to win.

Q. As you enter your fifth season, what's the identity of this team and how close do you believe you guys are to accomplishing those three numbers that you talked about at Big Ten Media Day in 2017?

TOM ALLEN: Well, that's up to these guys. Every year's different. Every year's new. Accountability, toughness, and love, that's who we are. That's our three pillars of our program and it's branded by the phrase Love Each Other, which we all know is LEO. So that's our identity. That's our DNA. That's who we are. That's not going to change. And for me, the ability of this football team, the 2021 Indiana Hoosiers, how well they buy into that they're able to live out those core values and become a true team. I do believe that individuals are made in the off-season, teams are made in the season. So those teams that figure out how to play the best together and allow themselves to be the best football team on game day, that's the team that's

going to win. So we're excited about the 2021 Indiana Hoosiers, but that's up to the guys that we brought with us here today and how well they lead and how well the guys that they're leading respond.

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