

# Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Indiana Hoosiers

### Tom Allen

#### Press Conference



KEVIN WARREN: Our next coach to the stage will be the head football coach of Indiana University, Tom Allen. Tom and his wife Tracy have made a major impact in the Bloomington community. Tom himself is a strong member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes and has just impacted the lives of so many men on his football team to make sure that he leads them in an honorable fashion.

I appreciate Coach Allen so much and everything that he's done for the Big Ten Conference, and I know he's excited about getting the season started. So with that, head football coach Tom Allen.

TOM ALLEN: Thank you, Commissioner Warren. I appreciate it. I'll tell you what, what a beautiful place to have this every year. It needs to be this every time we come. I hope it stays this way. Love being here, love being back.

Blessed to be the head coach of the Indiana Hoosiers and just excited for the 2022 season.

Our team has been working hard since January. The bottom line is things didn't go the way we wanted them to go in 2021, and when that's the case, you do one of two things. You either feel sorry for yourself, or you sit there and do a thorough evaluation of everything that you do, which is what we began in January and had a chance to go through that process, make changes, add some new players to our team, add some new staff to our program, and then allow us to get back to work, and that's what we've done.

We're very blessed to open our season for the fourth time since I've been at Indiana with a Big Ten opponent. So September 2nd we'll be hosting Illinois in Memorial Stadium on a Friday night. Just excited to welcome Coach Bielema, appreciate and respect him and the job he's doing in his program.

I just really feel like it's become a new tradition for us to be able to start the season with a Big Ten opponent, and I think it's become a great, great thing for the Indiana

Hoosiers.

When I think about the evaluation process we went through as a program and I think about the standard that we set in 2019 by breaking through and I think about the historic season we had in 2020, but I also understand that sometimes things don't go the way you want them to go. When you experience that, I think you get a chance to find out who you are and what foundation that you have.

So I really respect the young men that we brought with us today that have been a part of this team, were with us in 2019, were with us in 2020, were with us in 2021.

A guy like Cam Jones, All Big Ten linebacker that's going to be voted as a three-time captain this fall. That's really special. Doesn't happen very often. And he's a young man that brings a lot of great qualities to our team and allows us to be the kind of program I want us to be on the field, off the field, and in the classroom.

I think about Tiawan Mullen, first team All-American, first team All-Conference, cornerback, that came to Indiana with a vision and a mission to help us change our football program, and he joins us here today.

Also, A.J. Barner, tight end, that's been in the shadows of Peyton Hendershot All Big Ten tight end the last couple years, and now this is his opportunity to be able to show who he is on the football field. Love his leadership. That's a big reason why he's here today.

All three of those young men are All Big Ten academically, in the classroom. They're excellent human beings off the field, involved in community service and doing all they can do to help make our program really special.

I'm very honored to have those three guys with us today and get an opportunity for you to talk with them, meet them, and see how special they really are.

I also want to honor a special person as part of our university in Don Fischer. He's being recognized and announced today as the 2022 National Football Foundation Chris Schenkel Award winner for being basically for 50



years -- think about that. For 50 years being the iconic voice of the Indiana Hoosiers and just respect him so much. Well deserved honor that he has and a long list of honors that he's received over the years.

I just also want to just close by saying, before I take some questions here, that the opportunity to be able to impact, as even Commissioner Warren alluded to earlier, the lives of the individuals in our community and our players is what draws me to do what I do. I love this team. We've got a great opportunity to be able to build upon the traditions we have in our program and to be able to have a chance to take the field in 2022 after a tough 2021 and be able to have a group of young men come together and do something special.

So can't wait to get started. Fall camp will begin a week from today. We report on Sunday. Media day on Monday. First practice on Tuesday, August 2nd. So at this time, I'm ready for any questions.

**Q. With the quarterback situation, do you anticipate one person clearly winning it in camp and just being the guy all the way? Are there options for multiple guys? With Donaven, is he going to be 100 percent receiver, or is there a possibility he could be a little bit of both this year?**

TOM ALLEN: I'll say that we will go through this process of evaluating our guys -- and I will say by design we came out of spring football and felt like there wasn't a clear guy to name, so didn't do that. But I love the competition piece to the process and to be able to have to prove it every single day all summer long now into fall camp.

Obviously we'll have a starter named before the opener, but the bottom line is that, once that person is named, he'll be the starter. Not expecting a dual situation, but at the same time, as we saw last year and we learned up close and personal, that things happen, injuries happen, and you'd better have more than one guy that's going to be able to be your starting quarterback in your program. So I feel like we have that with several individuals.

Donaven is a young man who's played for us at quarterback position, has moved into receiver. But yes, we'll still have packages for him in that opportunity because of his skill set that he brings to our football team, and it's all about getting your best players on the field.

**Q. Micah McFadden has been the heart and soul of your defense the last three years. Obviously you lose him and return Cam Jones. Can you talk about the three transfer linebackers you've brought in and how they've worked to replace a player of McFadden's**

**caliber?**

TOM ALLEN: Micah was special. Pretty obvious on the field, tremendous young man off the field. Love him and his family. Excited for his new opportunity with the Giants. He's just beginning there in their training camp.

So that is a void that Cam Jones has really responded to in a huge way and the leadership piece as well in that linebacker room. I'm a former linebacker myself and coach the position, played the position, and you're only as good as your linebackers and your defense.

So you mentioned the guys that we brought in. I think Cam is going to be a big part of it. I think Aaron Casey, another young man that's going to step up and do great things for us this season because of his work ethic and his passion for our program and for himself to be able to be his very, very best.

Bradley Jennings coming to us from Miami, and Jared Casey coming to us from Kentucky, two transfers that I feel give us two Big Ten type caliber players that have already played the position at other schools. To me, that excites me because that position is big for us.

Dasan McCullough is another one who's coming in as a freshman that we expect to have opportunity to help us and see his development and see how he responds to playing Big Ten football.

So that's a room to me that's critical for our team to be able to play at a high level defensively, and I always evaluate our linebackers by two key things. You've got to be a leader, and you've got to produce. It's about leadership and production. That's what that position demands, and that's what I expect those guys to do.

**Q. Following on with the quarterback question, I guess, as you went through the spring, new coordinators on offense, just getting a lot of that sort of built up and installed, what has changed about what you're looking for from the quarterback position as you do transition into a different offense?**

TOM ALLEN: I think any time you make those changes, there's the learning curve. So basically, everybody kind of started on the same point, as Connor Bazalak came in in January, Jack was already there, Dexter was already there, and all the other quarterbacks in that room that were here.

So there's some common things you're looking for. I think, as you come off this past year, it's a great reminder of the value of protecting the football. It's such a huge part of our

game. We all understand the value of the turnover ratio and how that's such a big part of winning football games, and that quarterback touches it every single snap, so protecting that football is a huge priority.

To me, it's about having a great mastery of the offense and where to distribute the football to the right players per the scheme that we're having and per the call. So I want to find a guy that's able to do both of those at a high level, and you've got to win that locker room. That's what it comes down to.

Even though nobody really huddles anymore, when you talk about the idea of stepping in the huddle, no matter how much time is on the clock, if that guy is in that huddle, we know we've got a chance to go win the game with him as our leader. To me, that's what I want our team to feel from that guy, and that's their individual responsibility to earn the position.

**Q. Tom, you guys were voted last in the Big Ten East media preseason poll. Is that something you think you can use as motivation?**

TOM ALLEN: There's no question. You've got to look at those things a certain way. Last year was the opposite, near the top, and it didn't work out that way, right?

So I think to me, when you talk to our players today that are here, you talked about our team, you pick anybody out of there, and they're going to say one thing. It's about September 2nd. That's our focus. That's all we're worried about. We talk about ear muffs and blinders in our program, and that's part of it.

I get it, we earned it. That's part of the process you go through. I feel like our team understands that we've got a chip on our shoulder and something to prove.

**Q. Obviously we found out yesterday David Ellis and Deland McCullough II are obviously not playing for medical reasons. What led to the decisions for those two guys, and is there anyone else for medical reasons that's not going to be part of the program this year?**

TOM ALLEN: Not expecting any others at this time unless something happens in the next couple of weeks. Just some longstanding challenges for both of those young men with injuries and to be able to get to that point.

Disappointed for both of them. Met with both of them many times and communicated with their families through that process. That's just a tough decision you have to come to, but it's a medical decision that we as a coaching staff are not a part of in that regard. It's always about the health

and welfare of our guys and thinking about their long term health and being able to have a body that's going to be able to not have long term issues.

So respect those guys. Proud of them. Appreciate them. Going to be with them, and they'll stay with us here in a different capacity until they graduate.

**Q. You mentioned moving Donaven McCulley from quarterback position to wide receiver. How is he adjusting to that position, and who has been responsible for taking him under their wing?**

TOM ALLEN: I think he's responded well. I will say that he came to me. He wanted to do this. We had a great talk together about that. He's a highly competitive young man and one of the best athletes on our football team, and he wants to be on the field. He wants to be playing. He wants to be involved in special teams and have those opportunities.

He's got a big, athletic frame, but there's obviously a learning curve to be able to grow. I think to me Coach Henry is taking him under his wing, our new receivers coach, and his NFL experience is tremendous. We coached against each other. I was at Ole Miss. He was at LSU in those three years. We battled against each other there. Just a ton of respect for what he brings.

His whole coaching style and philosophy, just the way he handles our players, I think Donaven's responded very, very well to him. I'm excited to see him be able to have this new opportunity and be able to help our football team be more explosive on offense and win football games.

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