

# Purdue University Football Media Conference

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West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

## Coach Jeff Brohm

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to the 2021 football season. We'll get an opening statement from Coach and then open it up for questions.

JEFF BROHM: We're definitely excited to kick off this season this Saturday. I think our players, our staff, we put in a lot of hard work, just like every team across the country, to get ready to have hopefully an exciting and successful season. There's been a lot of preparation, a lot of work put into it, but it's still about going out there and performing, putting it all together, being able to execute and do things efficiently throughout an entire game and find ways to win in the fourth quarter.

I'm excited to see our team compete and play. I think it's important that we continue to preach play hard and play tough and play smart and play to the end and continue to find ways to get better, but I do think that our guys are very eager to get on the field and play against an opponent, and we welcome Oregon State this weekend, who had a very good year last year as far as being very competitive in every game.

They had a big win against a top-25 team against Oregon. They were in pretty much all the other games. Only one game I think was by double-digit loss, so they had a chance to compete and win to the end. When you watch them play, they play hard, they play tough, they play to the end, and they're going to come in here wanting to get a W.

I think getting back in front of our stadium, in our stadium in front of our fans will be exciting for our players, exciting for all the Purdue fans, and we want to try to go out and execute, play hard-nosed, tough, physical football and play the game the way it's supposed to be played, and that is competing to the very end.

This Saturday at 7:00 we'll be ready to kick it off.

**Q. Just your level of excitement for this season? Last year with COVID and everything, it kind of had a cloud over just getting things going in that year. Are you back to maybe where you were when you first got**

**here, your excitement level and your energy level, and as the kids say, do you have that "juice" to get ready to open this season?**

JEFF BROHM: Yeah, I really feel that myself, our staff right now, our players, you put in all this work all year long, you dedicate a lot of your life to finding ways to improve and get better and win football games. There's no reason not to go out there and be excited, lay it all on the line, cut it loose each and every week, play free, want to make plays, want to be aggressive, want to go for the win.

When the game is over, you move on to the next one. Without question, throughout the course of a season, you hope to have a lot of high moments, but there are going to be some moments that aren't as good. You've got to be able to handle those, the adverse situations, to be tough, to be strong-willed, to believe in yourself and the preparation that you put in and understand that that's football.

Every week, everyone believes they're going to win, which they should, but half the teams win, half the teams lose, so you've got to be tough enough to handle the wins correctly but also handle the losses correctly and come back the next week and find ways to improve.

I am excited for our players. I think they've worked extremely hard. They've given us everything they have up until this point, and I know they want to go out on the game field and try to prove that.

**Q. Just your offensive line depth going into this opener, how many do you anticipate getting into the game Saturday?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, depth is a little bit of a concern, but every year you're going to have some form or fashion of that at different positions.

I feel like our line has improved to this point. Not until you get in a real game will you be able to tell 100 percent for sure, but I think they've worked hard, they've been physical, they understand what we're trying to do.

Probably six or seven guys is what you'll see in the rotation right now, unless some injuries happen along the way, and



then we'll continue to try to build that. I do think we have some very young linemen that are making progress. Will they be ready game one? We would prefer not to throw them in the fire then, but if we have to, we will.

**Q. Will Cam Craig be available?**

JEFF BROHM: Cam Craig has come back this week, has been nicked up a little bit, but we're going to try to get a full week of practice in with him and get him out on the game field.

**Q. Just with your receivers, obviously David Bell is the highlight guy there, but when you get past David Bell, maybe Milton Wright, how is the rest of that receiver rotation? How will that shake out on Saturday?**

JEFF BROHM: We like our receiver room. I think they've competed well. They've played hard. They've shown that they can make plays in scrimmage situations, which is important, because you've got to do that; that's the closest thing you get to a game.

So I think when you look at David Bell, Milton Wright and then you get to Jackson Anthrop who's been a steady performer for us and TJ Sheffield and Mershaw Rice and Broc Thompson and then even -- we've got guys beyond them in Collin Sullivan, Abdur. So we want to try to play as many as we can, but at the same time our best players are going to play the most. We'll adjust along the way.

But I think the receiver position is one of our deeper positions, and we feel confident whoever we put in will do a good job.

**Q. Have you decided captains yet?**

JEFF BROHM: We'll decide captains as we get to the end of the week. That will be something that -- every week there's a good chance we'll change that up.

**Q. Two guys that were limited in camp, Marvin Grant and Jamari Brown, will they be part of what you do this week?**

JEFF BROHM: Okay, so Marvin Grant has been back practicing with us, and he's a physical player that still has some youth, so the more he practices the better he's going to get, and I think when he knows what to do and he can be the quarterback and understand exactly what's going on, he can play very well. He's just got to make sure that mentally he's locked in and focused but he has a ton of talent and he's back healthy.

Jamari Brown is back practicing, as well. We anticipate him playing. Right now he's in the mix behind Cory Trice and Dedrick Mackey, but he's done some good things, but we've got to get him just continuing to understand exactly what we're doing and be on the same page and there can be no mental busts, but he does have talent and length, so we like what he brings to the room.

We're getting guys back on that side of the ball.

**Q. Is Marvin earmarked to start?**

JEFF BROHM: Probably so, yes.

**Q. You've talked about a little bit and Marty Biagi talked about using more starters on special teams. As you look at this week and kind of where you're at with the balance there of your starters and using other guys on coverage units --**

JEFF BROHM: Well, we want to be aggressive to start the season and use who we need to use on special teams, so yes, there are more starters on those units. We want to continue to do that. Sure, you have to have a little bit of a balance of making sure your very best players are healthy throughout the year, but we want to excel on special teams, so we have opened up the full can on that, and anybody that we need to help us do well on special teams, that's who we're going to use.

**Q. Where are you at on your vaccination percentage going into the opener?**

JEFF BROHM: You know what, I'm pretty sure we're probably 95 percent or above. There's still just a few, but other than that, we've got a very, very high percentage of players and staff.

**Q. Could you kind of give us a sense of the impact maybe you expect these transfers to have for you beginning Saturday night? I think you've got six on defense, offense, special teams. You're going to probably need these guys to do a lot for you.**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I hope the impact the transfers have are great. We feel like they're definitely going to be a good majority of those guys in the mix right off the bat. Even the ones that may not be starting will play and we think can play effectively for us.

So I think of all the transfers we've brought in, all of them are going to see action, and all of them I think can help us.

I think that we've been fortunate to address some needs, and I think what we've done in bringing those guys in have

helped our team to this point, and obviously it's got to carry over to the games.

**Q. Can you give us in the sense on the likelihood of any true freshmen playing a role Saturday night and even beyond?**

JEFF BROHM: I wouldn't anticipate many true freshmen playing at all.

**Q. In the return game, can you give us a sense who's been working at running back punts and kickoffs?**

JEFF BROHM: Right now TJ Sheffield has the most experience; Jackson Anthrop behind him, as well; Marcellus Moore is back healthy, he gives us someone back there, as well. We do have a couple running backs backing up that. I don't anticipate that happening. Dedrick Mackey is backing up. I don't anticipate him getting in. And then youngsters Ja'Quez Cross is someone that I don't anticipate right off the bat, but it wouldn't shock me if at some point he gets in. He's done a good job for us.

**Q. You've talked a lot about wanting to be aggressive on both sides of the ball. Can you give us a sense on what that would look like offensively and defensively?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I hope it makes us look better. That's the approach we want to take this year. We had a good practice last night under the lights on the game field, trying to simulate some game conditions, getting lined up, people being off the field, communication, making calls.

To this point our defense, other than one scrimmage where we weren't up to par, has done a really good job, and we've guarded things tighter. (Internet interruption) that we could have, does have some depth.

Yes, the secondary is a little thinner, but we've got to continue to progress the other ones behind them, but at linebacker and defensive line we will have the ability to rotate a little bit and make sure that we're keeping guys fresh.

But I anticipate them playing well, and I think they've gained some confidence throughout spring and summer and fall camp, and now they've got to carry it over to the game, and they've got to keep that confidence, no matter if we're up by 14 or down by 21, and that's what you've just got to make sure of is that our guys understand that every game something new and different is going to happen. You've got to be able to handle it and react, but I anticipate our defense playing well.

Of course on offense we always want to be aggressive, but

we do want to have some balance, and we do want to be physical in our approach, and we do want to be able to run the ball downhill and hit some play action off of it.

Taking care of the football, being efficient, avoiding negative plays, creating a few big plays throughout the course of getting chunks of positive yardage will be important.

**Q. You always want to win your opening game. Can you just talk about just the urgency or what it means to get off on the right foot? You guys did it last year obviously against Iowa. A great opportunity here and you want to do it in front of your home fans.**

JEFF BROHM: Well, obviously the momentum is always good to have if you can figure out a way to win the first game, and without question we want to do that. It's at home. We want to try to win all of our home games. It starts with Oregon State. So yes, we want to win. We've put a lot of work into it, and we want to go out and try to find a way to win.

With that said, like every year, it's a one-game season, and we've had some years around here we haven't won the first game that we played well, and last year we won the first two games and didn't play so well.

You've got to be able to maintain that hunger throughout the season, and while game 1 is important, without question, and we're going to do everything we can to win it, there's 12 full games in this season, so we've got to -- we talked about a lot, we've prepared. We've got to understand that win or lose, you've got to be tough enough to move on to the next game regardless of how good you played, which you can sometimes let your foot off the gas, or how bad you possibly have played, where you sometimes start to second-guess and doubt and listen to a few naysayers.

It's important that our guys understand that. We talk about it. We communicate it. We always hope things go extremely well, but winning game 1 is going to be priority right now, and we're going to do everything we can to do that.

**Q. What challenges does Oregon State present from a schematic standpoint offensively and defensively? They've got a number of different guys at quarterback; it's a little bit uncertain who's going to start. What do you look at when you see them on them?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, when you watch Oregon State you can tell that they're a hungry football team. They're out to prove themselves, as well. They want to make a name for

their program and continue to improve.

Beating Oregon when they were in the top 25 was big for them. They were competitive in almost every game to the very end and had a chance to win.

We're going to have to play well. They want to run the football. They want to control the ball. They want to be physical in their approach. They want to play sound defense. Their defensive coordinator has a Wisconsin background, so they do some things very similar to that, which Wisconsin has always been great on that side of the ball, especially here recently.

We've got to play well. We've got to do the small things while we continue to try to create plays, and we've got to win the special teams battle, but they're going to fight to the end. When you watch on video throughout the entire game they play to the very end. Our guys need to understand that and they need to know it's going to be a full 60-minute game that we've got to hang in there and play as hard and as well as we can throughout the entire game.

**Q. Still a full week of practice, obviously, before you step out on the field. What are some boxes you're really looking to check just through this week of practice, and how do you maintain the intensity and the focus leading up to the game?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, we've had a good camp. We had a good practice last night that I think was very beneficial. As you get closer to game 1 you want to make sure certain guys get to the game healthy and that you have a full arsenal as you possibly can, so that will be important as we continue to push the envelope and get better.

Now we've put in a lot of work. We've got to continue to just put in the weekly preparation for the opponent and get our guys healthy to the game and get them out there playing hard and confident for all 60 minutes.

**Q. Where is your defense right now in terms of where you want to see it, and how is it going to look different from what you had at the end of last season?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think our defense has experience. A lot of guys that have played football, that have been on the field. There's not a whole lot of newcomers in the starting unit other than maybe a transfer or two.

I feel like they've been in a lot of battles. They've gone through some adverse situations. We've challenged them to challenge things more and play more aggressive and take more chances in both our approach but yet in their technique and fundamentals. And we've seen good signs

of it at times.

Now it's a matter of getting out on the game field and carrying that over, which is always important, and you hope that it comes through that way. Sometimes it may turn out great, sometimes maybe not. You've got to be able to bounce back.

But I like how they practice. I think they understand what we're going to try to do and how to do it. Really defense is about playing hard, flying to the football, finishing plays, creating turnovers, creating havoc, getting after the quarterback.

That's what we've got to try to do.

**Q. You've mentioned before being more personally involved with it yourself; what has that looked like here the last couple months? Is that sitting in on more meetings, is that spending more time on the practice field with them? How has that been?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, it's been fun. I think we've got a great group of coaches. I think we're on the same page. There's been a ton of communication way back to the postseason, through the spring and summer until now. I think we understand what we want to try to look like.

But yeah, I'm in the film room with them and just pointing out a few things that I see. But the communication has been good. They're great to work with. I think we've got a collaborative approach where everyone understands that we all take responsibility for our actions. We've got to put the best plan together for our players to succeed and go out there and compete and have a good chance of that. We've got to be able to adjust along the way. We've got to have a little bit of creativity when we need to.

But we've got to stay together and figure out a way to get it done. Every week will be a new challenge, and we've got to be able to hang in there ourselves and make sure that we're committed to the fight that it's going to take all year long to play the game and to coach the game of football. But I like our staff, and I like our players, and I like the makeup right now. We've just got to, like I said, game day is when you test yourself and you've got to come through under pressure, and you've got to do it every week.

**Q. What is Oregon State's defensive MO?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, like I said, their defense has a little bit of resemblance to Wisconsin and what they do. They're going to change the front up a little bit here and there, they're going to slant the line, have some movement. They're going to try to be aggressive in their approach and

stop the run and get after the quarterback.

We've seen a lot of video and tape, and now it's about executing and adjusting along the way if something happens different, and finding ways to make plays and getting positive yards.

**Q. What's this camp been like relative to last year in terms of the actual day-to-day operation of a football program during a pandemic? Is all of that stuff pretty much off the table now? Can you just focus on football, or is that still part of the day-to-day?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, we're going to prepare to play the game and prepare our guys, but we still wear masks in the building. There's still certain protocols that we take with our football team. We try not to focus on it. Does it still go on? Yes, but it's for the benefit and for the good of all. But we're meeting when we need to meet.

A few things are off limits that we try to do to keep the building safe and clean for all, but I think it's all beneficial, and our guys handle it great. It doesn't affect what we have to do and how to go about preparing, and then we get outside on the practice field, we practice like we've always practiced.

**Q. Can you speak to adding Sampson James?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, we're happy to have Sampson James on our team. He's come in here and he's worked hard. I think him and Coach Barclay have hit it off, and they understand that we're going to get him as ready to play as we possibly can. He wants to go out there and prove himself.

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