

Purdue University Football Media Conference

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Coach Jeff Brohm

Press Conference



(In progress.)

JEFF BROHM: Very good complementary football. Defense is playing at a high level. Offense is being very efficient, scoring points, taking care of the ball, creating big plays, not beating themselves, and that equals wins.

So we'll have our hands full and it will be the first test for our team on the road, so we're going to have a good week of practice, prepare well. Syracuse does a lot of things on defense to give you problems. They'll give you a lot of different looks, a lot of athletes on the field, and challenge the offense to make plays and try to create mistakes.

Like I said, on offense really good running back play, quarterback is playing very efficient, taking care of the football, sustaining drives, scoring points.

So we're going to have to play well in all facets of the game in order get a win.

Q. What strikes you about your running back, I think it's Murphy, and the quarterback, Shrader?

JEFF BROHM: Well, the running back you can tell has played a lot of football. He's got good instincts, really good the with ball in his hands, he can catch it out of the backfield, he can run it, he's tough. Like I said, the experience factor shows up when you watch him play. He just knows how to make a move, make a cut, and get yards.

Quarterback really is fitting in well in what they're doing, taking care of the football, getting easy completions, finding ways to get on the outside. He's a good runner himself, so that creates problems when the quarterback is athletic and can throw and run.

Q. Any different challenges playing in a dome?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I don't know. I've coached and played there years ago, but the noise is always going to be a factor. Got to make sure that visually you can see the

ball, which I don't think will be a problem. I've heard a few things here and there.

I really think the noise aspect for cadences and making sure that we don't have many penalties that are costly that shouldn't happen. But it can happen in a loud situation, so that's something we got to work all week and make sure we're prepared for that.

Q. Aidan and Charlie have got off to good start. Good chemistry there. What's the next step for those two?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think those two have proven that they can make big plays. They are a big part of the offense. Just being consistent all year is going to be the key for them, and staying healthy.

You know, I think in order for us to continue to improve we got to get more and more guys involved and make sure that numerous guys can step up and make plays in key situations.

You'd love for another receiver to break through in a game and have over 100 yards receiving or something similar to that. I think they're working hard, so we just got to continue to work through it and get guys as healthy as we can and go out there and try to help them make more plays.

Q. Now that Sanoussi has taken on a bigger role, what more do you need from him?

JEFF BROHM: Well, Sanoussi, like I said a couple weeks ago, really loves football. Loves to compete. He can hit you. He'll strike you. Not afraid to tackle.

I think understanding the scheme, being in the right place at the right time, being solid in the passing game, it's going to be very important.

But as far as playing football and hitting people and having no fear, he definitely has that. This is somebody who had off-season surgery and really isn't 100%, but plays his tail off and practices hard every day as well.

Q. Are you starting to see one or two of your defensive linemen emerge as maybe that guy that you



count on to create some pressure in the backfield?

JEFF BROHM: Well, we got to continue to work through that. I think Branson Deen has the most experience. Had a pretty good game the last game, so he's got to continue to make plays for us.

Jack Sullivan was able to make some plays as well. Kydran Jenkins has been a strong point to our defense. He is solid on the weak side of the defensive line, so any time he can create some big plays will help.

And then I think Scotty Humpich, probably wasn't his best game the last game, but he has shown signs. He needs to emerge as a playmaker for us.

Then Nic Caraway, a bright young prospect. I think just the more he understands and plays the better he can be.

Q. Just couple injury updates. I know it's early, but Broc, his status as you start the week?

JEFF BROHM: I think the status of those guys are about the same. Broc is going to be somebody we'll have to manage all year and hope that he gets healthy.

He did the first game, kind of, you know, reinjured his knee a little bit, and that's what he worked through. Wasn't able to really go the last game. Played a few plays and had to take himself out.

Hopefully that can get better this week. You know, Mershawn Rice is getting healthier and he was able to play, and Semisi, we'll see. Won't be able to tell that until later in the week.

Q. Jeff, I believe the very first game you coached as a head coach, first game Dino ever coached where you guys faced off, do you remember that in 2014?

JEFF BROHM: Yes, I do, vividly.

Q. Any recollections of the game and the type of coach Dino is?

JEFF BROHM: Well, it was a good day for us. Quarterback threw for a ton of yards, bunch of touchdowns, and we put up a bunch of points.

I think in that game their quarterback got hurt who was a really good player, either late in the first quarter or second quarter, and it hurt their team.

So the luck was on our side in that game and it was a home game and just kind of one of those he days for us

and got us off to a good start.

But as you look at Coach Babers' team now, he's coached a lot of football, he's been around, he understands the game. I think that he had a lot of close games last year that just didn't go his way, and they've learned from those games.

You can tell by the way they've started. Playing very efficient football. On offense, making good decisions, taking care of the ball, sustaining drives, creating a few big plays, getting the ball in the running back's hands.

Quarterback will pull it down and run it when it's not there, doesn't throw interceptions, so that's tough to break through. We are going to have to find ways to hinder that and put a couple stops in there.

Then I think on defense, they have always been an attacking defense. Kind of comes from the Rocky Long style of defense from San Diego State. Give you a lot of different looks, different fronts, move all over the place, and just play aggressive downhill style.

So we're going to have to really understand what we're going against and not cause that to have us -- have turnovers and negative plays, because that's what they've been really good at that, is getting turnovers, getting negative plays, and creating havoc.

Q. Payne Durham has four catches for 50 yards. I'm sure you want to get him going. How much is Garrett Miller's absence really impacted his ability to flourish more early?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think it's a combination of things. He's actually played well. Didn't play a whole lot in the last game.

You know, he's got a big role to block for us and catch passes. We're really not utilizing the two tight end set as much as we had in the past. Sometimes when we do we have an extra tackle in the game.

So that's probably taking away from his ability to be successful in the passing game for us, but he'll be utilized plenty. I think we could've utilized him more last week, and then the game got to where we didn't want to cause him to get injured, so we took him out early.

Want to get him ready for the next game because we're going to have a long stretch of games now that will be tough and physical every week, and we're going to need him healthy. And, yes, he's going to have to make plays for us. He's done a really good job. Just haven't targeted

him as much.

Q. Five wins away from home last year. Do you think that the team is set up to have more success away from West Lafayette? Seemed like you still got a pretty veteran roster.

JEFF BROHM: I think last year was just one of those years where when your backs are against the wall, which a lot of times they will be when you play in this conference, because every week is going to be a tough match up, you just got to find ways to win. I think we had a couple opportunities on the road where we had to step up and find ways to get a win and we did.

So that was huge for us. We gained confidence. Helped our team move forward. We adjusted as the season went on. Got a little better I thought throughout the year, and that was important.

But think when you go on the road you got to understand that you got to really be sharp. You can't beat yourselves. You got to figure out a way to gain momentum early, take their crowd out of the game. If you can do those things, which we were able to do against Nebraska and Iowa, you give yourself a chance.

Now, if you're playing behind the eight ball, it's going to be a long day. That's what can happen here in the dome, is if they get that place rocking and they're up early, it's tough to overcome. That's what we're going to have to figure out a way to create big plays and also be efficient early on and keep this game close.

Q. Can you as specifically as you can to how you do personnel-wise, replace Jalen Graham. I know you got different running teams, passing teams, formations. But talk personnel-wise? I know Chris Jefferson is a guy. Who else is really going to see more time in his absence?

JEFF BROHM: Well, that's the challenge we have right now. Jalen is a big part of defense. Done a great job for us. Probably our most valuable player on that side of the ball.

You're able to kind of play a lot of different personnel sets with him in there because he's a big athletic body that can play the run and the pass.

So right now we don't quite have that type of body, so we've got to have a couple different ways to use that position versus teams that spread it out, versus certain personnels that mostly like we throw the ball.

Which I think we have some okay answers for that that I think will help us and get better that we were able to use in the last game. Now when we face running sets in personnels and have to get bigger, that's where we have to have a good plan to -- whether it's moving Jacob Wahlberg over to that the Sam position, possibly Ben Kreul, or even Semisi if he's healthy.

Right now just getting him back healthy will probably eliminate him from at that position.

That's going to be the key, clogging things up in the run game with a bigger body.

Q. Was Ben Freehill, did he get hurt?

JEFF BROHM: Yeah, Ben strained his groin, I believe either in the first game towards the end or maybe even in practice. That caused him to not be able to go this past week.

Q. Should we all still be excited about Devin Mockobee? You think he has a role moving forward?

JEFF BROHM: I think so. Devin has shown this to us more than just this past game. He had a really good fall camp. You know, he made some really good runs. Got some elusiveness to him, got some speed, got just some natural ability to make guys miss.

Sometimes when you haven't seen the game yet you don't know for sure if it's going to carry over against real live opponents. Then of course as our schedule continues to get tougher and tougher, starting this week with a very tough opponent, you know, we'll see how his talent stacks up.

But he will definitely be in the mix and will be in the rotation and will play football for us.

Q. Jeff, obviously you talked a little bit already about Charlie Jones' first couple games. As teams continue to key in on him moving forward, what kind of things are you hoping are going to open up here for your offense?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think the ability to throw the football to Payne Durham has always been efficient, work between the hashes, got to make sure we utilize that. You would love for Tyrone Tracy and TJ Sheffield to emerge as playmakers and be consistent. Mershawn Rice when he's healthy can do a good job we feel like, but he has to be healthy and able to go full full speed. That's kind of been the key with him sometimes when he's not healthy. You know, when need him to go full speed.

Deion Burks has some speed that we've got figure out ways to get him the ball as well. And then there are some others that are right on the cusp of going in also.

But if Broc is fully healthy, that would help.

Q. Tyrone Tracy got some touches early just due to the just the game script in general. What are the challenges in balancing his opportunities in terms of designed plays and just having it on the field for different things in the passing game route, things like that?

JEFF BROHM: I think with Tyrone the key is getting him so many touches a game. Whether that's at receiver, at the running back position, I think he's a unique type of player that has talent at both.

You know, his strength is not necessarily just running vertical routes and getting open, even though he does a very good job. His strength is get the ball in his hands and let him go make some plays, because he will run hard. He has got some elusiveness to him as well when the ball is in his hands, so strength to him.

We want to make sure we can utilize him all over the field and find ways to get it in his hands quick. If we got to throw it to him deep, that's fine. Just making sure he gets his touches is going to be important.

Q. Obviously short day for King Doerue this past week. Gets in the end zone for the third time, red zone, then you got an extended look at Dylan Downing and Kobe Lewis behind him. Where do King and Dylan need to move forward in the rushing attack, and how can Kobe Lewis provide more depth at that position?

JEFF BROHM: I think King has been consistent. Had a little calf injury this past week that we had to nurse through, but he did a good job. Didn't get a whole lot of reps after the first couple series.

Dylan Downing definitely has done a really good job for us. He's improved a great deal from a last year. We feel like he has a great grasp of our offense, has lost weight, gained speed, he runs hard, he has good hands, and he just kind of understands what we're doing.

Kobe Lewis will continue to improve. He's got good ability. Just hasn't been in the system very long, so some things just don't -- he has some indecisiveness at times because he hasn't been here long, but he'll work through that.

I feel like we've improved at that position and need to

utilize all three, four, five of those guys that you mentioned throughout the year. That's going to be important.

So it's good that we have capable running backs that we are feeling more comfortable with every week.

Q. When you took Charlie this summer, did you know he could be that kind of wide receiver for you? And if so, how? There wasn't a whole lot of tape in terms of him being used the way you were going to use him.

JEFF BROHM: Well, fortunately for us, when we found out that Charlie was leaving Iowa, biggest advocate was Aidan O'Connell, so trusting what Aidan knew about Charlie was the best information we had. Aidan came through on what he said.

There wasn't -- it wasn't like we were extremely smart and knowledgeable on the situation. We had watched some quick video of Charlie and his punt returns, he was really good on special teams, but there wasn't a whole lot of video at receivers, but a few catches here and there.

But Aidan has a history with him. I guess maybe trained with him before and grow up around him and just kind of knew him very well. So we trusted Aidan's past history with him. Really didn't get him here until late, so not like we got a great look at him in spring.

Got him here late in the summer and he's come in and done a really good job.

Q. Kind of getting to clear sideline after halftime, did any of those guys you got in the game do anything to help themselves moving forward in case you need them, guys who ordinarily probably wouldn't have played in the game?

JEFF BROHM: Well, it was great when you have a chance during the season to get a lot of the guys in the game. You know, normally -- I know we did have one last year against UCONN, but in the past we really haven't had any games where we've been able to empty the bench. It's just kind of how we play and or the schedule, which is fine. We love competitive football every week.

But to get young guys in it, get them a feel for college football in a game was great. I do think even just getting Austin Burton reps and Michael Alaimo reps and even Brady Allen was important. Playing the young running backs more, getting a look at them, was great to see them play more football.

You know, getting some young offensive linemen in was good. They still have a ways to go, but they got to play,



and that was great to see. Saw some young tight ends and receivers. I think on the defensive side of the ball, playing more defensive linemen, it was good to see those guys. We felt like basically the third group of defensive linemen that came in that were young did a really good job.

We feel like we have some promise there in those guys, in Caraway, and we had Mo at tackle and we had Yanni at the other defensive end.

You know, so probably one I'm forgetting, now but they did a good job. But on defense we have quite a bit of experience. We rotate quite a few guys that are already playing. It's always important to get guys in the game to just get a feel for it, and they can take that and learn from it and move forward.

Q. How close is Tee Denson to getting on the field?

JEFF BROHM: He's a ways away. Unfortunately, you know, he had a double sports hernia. Not just one, but two. The recovery has gone okay, but there was some scar tissue that was bothering him that he had to kind of get that worked on as well.

So it's just I'm not sure when that will happen.

Q. I believe Syracuse defense, they play, what, 3-3-5 5 alignment there. What are the challenges from a passing game standpoint to find the openings in the secondary?

JEFF BROHM: Well, that's the issue. Their defense presents a lot of problems because it's unique. It can have three guys on the line of scrimmage and a bunch of guys playing at different levels and bunch of guys attacking and blitzing from all over and just gives you a lot of looks.

If you look at the history of that defense and where it originated from, they've always given people problems. That's going to be a challenge for us, is you've got to be able to see things after the snap, got to be able to see moving parts, block moving bodies. They're not just going to be a traditional front and look that you can work against every week.

You're going to have to work against what you've seen. But they have a lot of movement, and that normally presents problems for offense in general, especially offensive linemen.

Yes, it is a challenge, and you have to find a way to figure out a few big plays it create, but at the same time, you can't have a bunch of negative plays. You've got to be patient enough to just work through it and get slight chunks of

yards and hopefully get bigger chunks at times.

It will create problems for us.

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