

# Purdue University Football Media Conference

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West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

## Coach Jeff Brohm

### Press Conference

JEFF BROHM: Well, we're definitely excited to advance to the championship game and represent the west. Tremendous opportunity for our football team.

Like I said after the game, to get to this point to put ourselves in a position to compete against, if not the top team in the country, one of the top teams, and they've proven it every week.

Of course we'll have our hands full. Michigan has played lights out this week. Very well-coached. Tremendous defense. I think their front four, plus basically their front seven will be the most talented team we've played to date. They're big. They're stout. They rotate a lot of guys in. Good in the secondary. Just statistically one of the best defenses in the country.

On offense the running game, the tight ends, the O-line, really athletic, dynamic quarterback who can make plays outside the pocket, you know, extend plays, throw the football vertically.

You know, right now they're the complete package, so we just got to get to work and practice well and go out there and cut it loose come game night.

#### **Q. Just speak to the opportunity you have as a program on Saturday night.**

JEFF BROHM: Well, that's the exciting thing, is we put ourselves in a position for this opportunity to represent the Big10 West and play in the championship game and represent this university, this state, go play in Lucas Oil for a Big10 Championship.

You know, we want to enjoy the moment that we're in right now, but at the same time, once we get back to practice -- we got to get back to practicing and competing and getting better, and the only way you're going to have a chance is if you prepare the proper way and as the week goes on, start to gain confidence and believe that you can achieve anything.



And then of course Game Day just have to go out there and cut it loose and leave it all out on the field and play as hard as we can.

#### **Q. Do you feel like in the role of underdog there is no pressure, you can kind of play free? Do you like that role?**

JEFF BROHM: Yeah, there will be more pressure on Michigan of course. They have a chance to really do something special this year and they're in great position to do that.

For us, you know, this is a one-game shot to play in a championship game and roll the dice and see what we can do.

#### **Q. Can you speak to the success you've had as a head coach against top-three ranked teams? I think you're 3-0. Here you've get another crack at team ranked No. 2.**

JEFF BROHM: Well, you know what? When you play those type of teams you have a little luck on your side. You have to play your very best. A lot things got to go your way. I do think that we will prepare hard. I do think that we will give it our best shot. I do think that as coaches we got to put in a plan that has a couple wrinkles here and there that gives us an edge.

We've got to figure out maybe what has slightly hurt Michigan at times on both sides of the ball and see if we can do something to take advantage of it. Of course, it's going to come down it being aggressive, making plays, executing, blocking, tackling, and then having the ball bounce our way.

Of course, on any given Saturday, anything can happen.

#### **Q. Knowing what we know about Aidan's situation that he was dealing with on Saturday, was there a notion of him not playing the game? What do you think of the effort he gave given those circumstances?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, things happened very suddenly, so, yes, there was concern about whether he would be



available to play. Understandably.

So we just wanted to support him as he was going through that, be there for him, answer any questions he had. I think being around his teammates I think did slightly help.

Then of course he had to manage all the emotions and the things he was going through, which I can't imagine how hard it would be.

Without question I give Aidan a lot of credit. He did what he thought was best. He played his heart out for his teammates and gave us a great effort.

Of course he's got things he has to deal with this week as well, but I think we'll be there to support him, and whenever we can get him back here to get back to work, we look forward to that.

**Q. Coach, first meeting between Purdue and Michigan since the your first year here, 2017. Can you recall at all just what it was like preparing for that game back then? And I guess just during your time here what you have kind of improved upon as a coach, what you've learned about Purdue a program, what you have learned about the Big10 to kind of set you up for the position you're in now?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I remember that game very vividly. I think that they were coming in with a stout defense once again. They weren't as dynamic on offense at the time, so we thought if we could figure out a way to shut them down on offense and create a couple scores we might have a chance.

I think we started with a trick play and picked up some yards and hung in for a while, but then they pulled away at the end. I they've definitely elevated their game the last two years and they're playing lights out right now.

For us, we just try to continue to get better. I think as you play in the Big10, you have to become a complete team to win. Doesn't matter what you can do on offense, you have to play well good, sound defense. You have to be stout. You've got to be able to run the ball at certain times at least and move the changes that way and get yards that way, due to a lot of things, defensive structure, weather, you name it.

You got to still have explosive plays and be able to score when you need to. I just think that -- and also special teams has to do their part. I just think all three segments have to play well in order to win in this conference. There is a lot of parity and good football players and coaches.

We've tried to gradually help all three segments get better so that we can perform and win football games.

**Q. You mentioned it already, a little already, the Michigan running attack. Blake Corum is playing as well as any runningback in the country. He's been dealing with an injury, so I am not sure of his status for this upcoming week, but they have a backup running back in Donovan Edwards that's played really well last week as well. What are the challenges for your defense and potentially two great running backs and how they kind of compare to some of running backs you played this year?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think both those running backs are two of the best in the country, and they have proven that week in and week out. They have a great offensive line. They play a bunch of tight ends. They get in running sets. Then you throw in an athletic quarterback, they can pull it at any point and run; now you got to account for him.

So that creates a lot of problems and it will be very challenging for us. So we have to figure out a way to be physical at the point the attack, put enough guys in the box to be able to stop the run, but yet you can't abandon covering the pass, because they took advantage of that this past game against Ohio State. Hit a lot of big plays.

That's why they were able to score a lot of points. They hit big plays in the passing game. They hit big plays in the running game. We have to eliminate the big plays. I think if you watch Michigan's defense, and we watched a lot this morning, there is not many big plays there, so they do a great job of not allowing the big play and making you earn it and work all the way down the field.

So that is going to be a challenge for us.

**Q. And continuing on, their defense, they've been among the best in the Big10 in getting after the quarterback. At the same time, your offensive line has done a good job protecting Aidan this season. In what aspect do you feel like your offensive line might have an edge there in trying to give you guys an advantage offensively?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, when you say edge, I don't know if that probably is a good word. They're very, very talented, most talented defense we've faced to date, and definitely most talented front four/front seven.

We will have our hands full there, so we have to be able to negate that in different ways. That's having a balance, a mixture of getting it out quick, screen game, moving the pocket, you know, running the ball different ways, you

know, finding a way to throw it deep but take long enough.

Yes, we can't allow the sacks in the negative plays and interceptions, and that's going to be critical for us.

**Q. Going off the Michigan defense, obviously they're very good against the run. You guys have kind of used Devin Mockobee in those little swing routes out of the backfield. Are those kind of an extension of run game for you guys? Is that how you look at it?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, it probably is. We want to make sure -- I thought we did a better job in the second half, that we at least allow our playmakers the ability to touch the ball.

Of course, right now Charlie has played outstanding, Payne Durham, Devin Mockobee, and then the other have been complements off them. We've got use them all, so it's not like they need to get all the touches, but we definitely need to make sure that we find a lot of ways to get the ball in their hands.

That's the challenge, is making sure that those guys can touch it when they're covered, and when we need to do something different, the other guys need to step up and make plays for us.

So we are going to need all -- everybody who is on the field available trying to get open, get yards, but it is critical that we are strategic in how we do that.

**Q. You guys have played in a lot of big games over the last few years, but nothing to this level: Big10 Championship in Lucas Oil. Do you think this environment could impact the guys in any way?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, I don't think so. We have played in a lot of big games, a lot of great crowds, a lot of great venues. Now, I will say this: I took my son to the Big10 Championship last year as a fan, and even I was shocked that every seat was taken and it was loud. And I mean every seat was taken.

I then took him to the National Championship game with Georgia and Alabama and it was louder and more crowded than the Big10 Championship game.

So it will be a tremendous environment. It will be a lot of fun for our players and the teams, and it'll be a tremendous amount of fun for the fans I think to experience a game in that venue.

Of course we'll just have to relax and cut it loose and let it all hang out.

**Q. A lot of these seniors in particular, in 2019 and 2020 seasons you guys had a bit of a rough stretch. What does it say about them that they've been able to weather the storm and have great success over the last few years?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, we've got a great group of guys. It's their football team. They've earned the ability to get to this game by being able to handle adversity. That is what you got to do. Every football team has to do it, so it's not just us.

But we're going to have some ups and downs and we're going to have some gut checking moments every year. That's just part of it. But I just think when that happens, head coach, assistant coaches, and the players got to maintain their belief, but understand, hey, these are the things we have to tweak and figure out a way to get better at, and then see if we can get that done the next week.

Every week it's different. The thing is, even when you win, you better be figuring out some things as well, because you're not guaranteed to win the next week. So that's the challenge of this conference, and what makes it great for us is one week you can be feeling good and the next week or two you can be feeling real low.

That's just part of the every-year challenge during the season that we have to be able to handle and handle it in the best way we can with a workman attitude and the ability to have constructive criticism and find ways to get better.

**Q. Jeff, you talk about the offensive line, and I think when you got here, that was the group that was maybe behind the other position groups. You did some things with gadget plays and transfers and tried to patch holes, but how has the growth of that unit allowed you to get to the point where you're talking about opening up the playbook and being able to do some different things that maybe five years ago, six you didn't have that option because you couldn't hold the blocks long enough?**

JEFF BROHM: Well, that's always going to be the goal here, is to make gradual improvement up front. I think the great teams in college football, everybody can get really good skill player and do a good job. My opinion is how good are you going to be up front?

Those guys don't get a lot of credit, but that's where you win football games. And that's on the offensive side and the defensive side of the ball. I do think we have developed better depth. We have been able to handle three of our best offensive linemen not being able to play

for us and patch things up.

Now, we need to continue to build the depth still because it is getting thin and we need to continue to improve the guys we have and continue to adjust the roster, but I do think the defensive line, we have gained more depth. That has helped us. While we lost George and even Demarcus Mitchell who were two pro football players, we have a nucleus of a lot of guys that have played, and we're making strides there.

So that will always be the challenge.

Whether we play good one year or not, it's going to be the challenge the next year and the next year and the next year, so we've got to constantly work hard to make sure that we're evaluating that every year and making improvements.

**Q. You think you're going to get Branson Deen back this week?**

JEFF BROHM: Probably not, but I don't want to rule it out. But I'm not optimistic on that one.

**Q. Were you pleased with how Josh Kaltenberger played?**

JEFF BROHM: We were proud of Josh. He hasn't played a ton of football. Got in sparingly, and to come in a game where you got to make calls, got to make the snaps, and you got to block. And they did a lot of things on defense, a lot different looks, a lot of different dogs and blitzes and coverages and slants and angles up front, and he had to be able to adjust and handle that.

I think he played hard. He'll continue to get better. But he has worked really hard to get to this point. Fortunately, he came through for us, and he's got to continue to get better for us because we're going to need him to play well.

**Q. Sounds like Aidan is not on campus right now. Is that the case? If so, when will he be back and will he play Saturday?**

JEFF BROHM: Yeah, he'll play Saturday, I believe. He'll be back here in the next day or two I believe when he takes care of what he needs to take care of.

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