

Purdue University Football Media Conference

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West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

Head Coach Ryan Walters

Press Conference



Q. (Off microphone.)

RYAN WALTERS: There's a lot that can be corrected. I think the disappointing thing is you felt like the issues that we had were corrected before the game. Obviously that was not the case.

We need to take pride in the physicality of the game of football. You've got to give Notre Dame credit. They punched us in the mouth right from the opening kickoff, and we flinched.

As the head coach I can't allow that to happen. I have to do a better job in preparing our guys for what is to be expected from that type of opponent on a game day. I've got to do a better job of preparing us for opportunities in moments like that because we're going to have them all throughout the course of the year.

So, you know, there were obviously a couple of schematic issues, technique issues that are easily corrected. Just being disciplined with eyes, disciplined with pre-snap alignments, disciplined with ID'ing the right formation and set that is in front of you pre-snap. You'll get those every game, right?

To me the disappointing thing coming out of the game was that we physically got beat up, and I didn't see that coming. We'll make sure that never happens again.

Q. Two games in, Ryan. What do you think the team's identity is?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, that's what we had a very candid conversation about. I have always operated in truth to the team. Not sugar-coating or gassing anybody up. Just telling them what are the facts.

The fact right now is we are a 1-1 football team that has lost to a ranked nonconference opponent, but the fact also is that we lost 66-7, and we have to own the worst loss in program history. That falls on my shoulders.

That first game we executed at a high level. I don't care who you play against. We executed well. We played tough and physical. We tackled well. We made the right reads offensively. We ID'd the right fronts offensively, and we were excited and energized to play.

Then the second outing it was the opposite. So right now I told the team, You are both teams. It is our decision which team we want to be moving forward.

Like I said post-game, I also can't ignore what I have seen since January. I can't ignore what I saw in spring ball. I can't ignore what I have seen in fall camp and how I felt going into last Saturday, but we also can't turn a blind eye to what transpired for the last four quarters.

I am excited as heck to get back on the practice field. I can't wait for Saturday. I embrace struggle. I embrace adversity. This team will as well. So I'm excited to see how we respond and fully expect us to respond the right way.

Q. Are there benefits to taking a road trip, especially not just the way you lost, but any loss, to get away from the noise and the things that they're going to hear and setting the travel roster and going out and staying together in a hotel, a lot of guys who probably aren't familiar with each other to date?

RYAN WALTERS: Even at home games we travel and stay in a hotel together. Maybe there's benefits to getting out on the road. I just want to play again, and I know our guys want to play again.

I love being at Ross-Ade. I love playing in front of our fans. I get their frustration. I'm a Laker fan, and when the Lakers don't play well, I'm angry, right?

As far as the noise, it's easy to have an opinion that is without consequence on social media. You know what I mean? Our guys have to do a good job of blocking that type of noise out. The only way you fix that and quiet that is you've got to go perform well.

I'm excited to go do that, whether it be home or away. I want to go play again.



Q. I think last season you were competitive in pretty much every game. Maybe not the Ohio State game, but the losses it seemed like they responded well. I assume you expect that to be the case. Hudson said Saturday, We can't let this affect the Oregon State game. How do you quickly turn that and put that behind you and realize you're still a good football team?

RYAN WALTERS: I think Hudson is exactly right. You don't want the embarrassment and the disappointment hangover to affect how you play on Saturday. So, you know, I think the way you get over it -- and I don't know if you ever really get over it. I think you need to wrestle with it. You need to learn from it so that you're reminded of what will happen if you perform that way again.

But to me the way to positively move forward is you need to address it. You need to look at it through realistic lenses and confront it. You need to confront the adversity head-on. I thought we did that yesterday.

That tape was hard to watch, and it was hard for some of the guys to take accountability of their performance. You know, it's hard to watch all three phases as a head coach knowing that ultimately I'm responsible for everything that transpires on game day, but in order to move forward and to get this team where we need to go, that's what you have to do from top to bottom, from myself to the last guy on the roster.

So I feel like we did that yesterday. Seeing guys today, they are in a good place. They're excited and eager to get back on the practice field. I'm sure they're going to be excited to play on Saturday.

Q. I know Saturday you said there were no positives out of that game. This is probably a negative that you punted so much, but I thought your punter performed pretty well given the circumstances and how much pressure he was under.

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, he did.

Q. How big of a weapon can that be especially in the tighter ball games where you can flip the field and rely on your defense?

RYAN WALTERS: It can really be an asset. Like you said, you flip the field, and just from a percentage standpoint, it gets back into your favor on being able to keep points off the board from your opponent.

I do think if there was a silver lining positive from the game,

when you have a performance like that and you have a disappointment that is that big, usually there are issues in the locker room. If we would have had that type of performance a year ago, it would have took a lot to sort of galvanize the troops and regroup.

On purpose I paid attention to what was being said and how people were acting on the sideline. You know, I hung around the locker room a little bit longer than normal. This team is together. This team is tight-knit. This team, they believe in each other, and they're ready to move forward.

We've got a choice right now. On Saturday we can either be 2-1 or we can be 1-2. That's the reality of where we're at.

Q. You talked about getting punched in the mouth early and needing to fix it. Just how do you go about fixing that aspect at least?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, I think you draw back on lessons learned, right? We just saw what happens when you get punched in the mouth and you flinch. So moving forward if that happens, especially early, we have to punch back, and we have to embrace the challenge, embrace the physicality, and embrace the urgency with which we need to execute in order to climb back and get momentum back.

I thought one of the reasons that it kept faltering is we weren't playing complementary football. Defensively we couldn't get a stop on third downs, and offensively we were off the field fast. That is not a recipe for success. So, you know, we'll address that and be better moving forward.

Q. Then just on the injury front, obviously CJ and De'Nylon aren't on the depth chart. Any early indication on those guys? Then any status update on George Burhenn, who was out on Saturday?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, so George is recovering. Obviously CJ and George are now recovering from some hamstring issues. De'Nylon is very close. He's running on the grass now. It's just a matter of when he can get back to moving like himself. So, you know, I wouldn't even rule this week out yet. So we're eager and excited to get him back.

CJ is feeling good. He's working his butt off. When he is ready, he'll be out there.

Q. You talked when you took this job about how you had been sort of accumulating a kind of head coaching playbook over the years. Is there anything in there about when you suffer a loss either in circumstance or magnitude like this how you respond to that, either



something you experienced as a player, something you saw another coach do to pull a team back together?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah. You know, in what I have seen throughout my career when you start to deviate from your plan or deviate from your beliefs as a program, then as a leader you start to falter, and that gets felt and permeates throughout the locker room, and it is not good.

The guys that I have seen be successful when they have performances like this or maybe a string of adverse moments, if they don't falter and they stay steady and even-keeled and stay convicted in what they believe in, then so do the people that follow them.

So I'm as confident as I have ever been. I have strong belief in what we're doing and how we're doing things. You can't have, like I said, an impulsive or knee-jerk reaction to a four-quarter instance.

You can't ignore it, like I said earlier. You have to address the issues and find reasons why it happened and attack those and make the struggle a strength, but I'm not deviating from what we're doing or what we believe in. We just have to get better.

Q. In terms of the physicality absence that you saw, you were mentioning a lot of things that I guess kind of come down to mindset. How much of that is on the coaches? You were a player. How much of that is on individuals that have to kind of step up and do that on their own?

RYAN WALTERS: I think it's both. You know, obviously as a player you want to embrace that challenge, but as a coach I also have to make sure that they're prepared to embrace that challenge and to expect that type of challenge. So I have to put them in situations throughout the course of the week where that is tested so that if we see that, then we can address it before the game instead of after.

Like I said, what happened happened. We can't ignore it, but we also can't let it affect how we are throughout the season.

Q. You made some depth chart changes at secondary backups and secondary. Was that injury-related? Is that related to what you were kind of talking about, how you were observing the response to this?

RYAN WALTERS: Which depth chart changes are you talking?

Q. Rogers and Salim Turner-Muhammad weren't listed.

RYAN WALTERS: Right. Rogers is an in-house issue, and Salim, he's got a soft tissue injury that I don't know if he'll be available or not yet, so...

Q. From a defensive perspective, what needed to be better on the edge, specifically with your rush ends? Was that discipline? Was that physicality assignments?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, I think for the most part it was pre-snap alignment and technique. You know, when you are responsible for the edge and the edge is lost, it's usually not good, right?

Like I said, you have to give Notre Dame credit. I thought going into it those would be two of the better backs we'll see all season, and they are. So I don't know if the speed or the quickness of the decision-making surprised us, but like I said, I think we can be better just from a pre-snap alignment to put ourselves in better position to be able to react.

Q. Managing the logistics of this trip West in-season, this is not going to be a one-off deal now in the Big Ten. What sort of challenges does this pose to do this in September as opposed to it being a postseason bowl game or something like that?

RYAN WALTERS: You only have a week of prep, right, before you head out there. Obviously the biggest challenge is just the three-hour time difference. Usually you travel on a Friday to an away game. We'll leave Thursday after our morning practice so that we can try to get as acclimated as possible.

Then the challenge will be the next week. We get back I think around 6:30 our time on Sunday morning. So that's a quick turnaround from an internal clock and from a recovery standpoint.

So, you know, it will be an interesting learning experience moving forward. I know this is our only trip out West this season, but next year we'll have to take another one, so...

Q. Ryan, just the penalties, 11 the first week and 7 the last week, 18. Someone said that's the most penalties for any team that just played two games. How do you address that?

RYAN WALTERS: Yeah, I think a lot of those penalties came later in the game. We addressed it yesterday with some accountability. When you look at them, it's guys

getting tired and playing with poor technique, and that can't happen.

You know, we had an emotional penalty late in the game. That definitely can't happen, which is why we've handled that internally. You're going to get a holding call on the offensive line every once in a while. We try to play aggressive out on the edge from a defensive back standpoint. Every once in a while you're going to get a pass interference.

But the pre-snap and the post-snap penalties, those will get you beat, and those will drive you crazy as a head coach. So we've addressed that.

Q. You have said and the players have said you don't want to make too much out of one loss, but how important do you think your team's response to what happened last week is on maybe what this looks like the rest of the season?

RYAN WALTERS: I think it's huge. I think it's hugely important. Obviously we still have ten games left. So you don't want to put a ton of stock in one or two games, but in order to accomplish what we have set out to accomplish this season, the urgency is right now.

What I've been pleased with is I've seen that urgency today. I saw the intent and the receptiveness and the eagerness to get it fixed yesterday. Like I said, we had a truthful meeting, a long meeting where everyone had to take some accountability, players and coaches alike. Nobody flinched in that meeting. Guys were locked in. They were honest as well.

I think when you have a group that can have uncomfortable conversations and be open and comfortable having those conversations, I think you have a chance. We'll see how we respond on Saturday.

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