

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Press Conference



Indiana Hoosiers 56, Idaho Vandals 14

TOM ALLEN: Just proud of our guys. It was a tough loss last week and to be able to bounce back from that and regroup and address some things that you wanted to address early in the week, and I thought our guys responded by having a really good week of practice and I think that they showed that in their performance, and the way we started.

I did not like how we finished the half defensively. We let up. Obviously can't do that. But I thought special teams was really special, and just really Coach Kasey Teegardin as done a phenomenal job with that group, to have two blocked punts, one for a touchdown, punt return for touchdown, one kickoff return. Just overall, excellent job in special teams.

I thought all three areas did a lot of good things, and I thought it was great to get Michael out there and get him comfortable and playing the way he did, and just our whole offense, running the football. I thought they were really strong in the box and I knew running the football wasn't just going to be a given, for sure we have to execute.

But just thought our guys did a good job bouncing back. Positive momentum for the future.

Q. You've had your hands on special teams units in your career for a long, long time and I know how much you value that and what it means for a game but tonight to have so many big special teams plays early, not only to get points but to tip the field constantly, can you talk a little bit about how that all mattered so much tonight?

TOM ALLEN: Well, it really did and we make such a huge emphasis on special teams. I am in every single meeting, and that's on purpose. I want our guys to know how important they are. I interject a lot. Kasey does a tremendous job and Ryan McInerney, quality control guy, does a phenomenal job studying film and getting us in great position.

But the players know how important special teams are to us and we work on them so much. But the challenge was, hey, let's make those game-changing plays. We've always been really solid the last few years and now I said it's time to help us go win the game. We have 3 DNAs for each area and for -- providing the winning edge is No. 1; for special teams be at your best when it counts the most, and make game-changing plays and they lived those three out tonight and I thought it was awesome.

Q. Defensively, you guys get the strip sack that leads to a touchdown and at one point in time you were up 28-0 and they only had 29 total yards. Your thoughts on the defense and in your mind, how well did they perform tonight?

TOM ALLEN: Really good intensity in the beginning. Dominated them up front and I expected us to. I thought we needed to. I thought we should. That's nothing -- I just felt like our guys needed to play that way and they did.

And you know, the drive for the half is pretty much all they had in the whole first half. But just the ability to close everything, the windows off. They have done a good job. You watch some of their film, and Coach Petrino does a tremendous job moving the football and they have scored a lot of points and they have done a lot of good job against a lot of good people.

So I thought Coach Warren did a great job, good plan, very, very sound and made some good adjustments there to be able to keep our guys able to be in position because they are throwing a lot of quick stuff and getting the ball out fast when we got a lot of pressure on them early.

Those are hard, and I tell you No. 80, he's an All-American and you see why. Unbelievable ball skills and he does that every single game and so he made some great catches tonight and hats off to him.

But just felt like that our defense played well. They made it hard to get interceptions because of the balls they were throwing and they haven't really fumbled the ball hardly at all, so we got that early sack caused fumble which was



huge. Very good defensive performance I thought.

Q. To what extent do you look to that unit to set a tone for you, still getting Michael back comfortable, still figuring things out, Luke back on the offensive line, but with the experience on defense, do you challenge him to say, we start with you?

TOM ALLEN: That's it. And that was the challenge this week. When we had our time together, each side of the ball and then we have a coordinator's meeting on Thursday, and that's what I told Coach Warren and I told our team, defensive guys; that I expect them to set the tone for this whole team and for each game; and to create the takeaways and flip the field, the field position; and to be able to complement our offense and they tell set up. All offenses take a while to get going every single year it's timing and Michael's situation, coming back from his injury, and so just to help them with that.

I feel like, yeah that's the group -- that's the expectations. I didn't think we did that the week before. We obviously did not. And they made a difference.

And special teams, same thing. I challenged them. You guys flip the field position with returns and with a block punt, which you block a punt for a touchdown and your chance to win a game is 80, 90 percent. So that was huge.

And it's been -- what did they say, since 1969 that we have had two special teams touchdowns in a game? That's pretty awe awesome. Once again hats off to Coach Teegardin for that. Yeah, I thought the defense we got a lot of guys on that side of the football that have played a lot of football; and that is the challenge that we have given to them and I expect them to step up and set the stone and that's what they did tonight.

Q. Javon Swinton didn't make the trip last week and gets two touchdowns in about a minute. What did he do to get himself into trouble, and what did he do to get him set out of trouble, and how nice was it to see him contribute the way he did?

TOM ALLEN: Just a situation where he violated team rules and we hold our guys accountable for that. He learned a valuable lesson, and I feel like that he is a guy that it didn't surprise me, the plays that he made today. He makes them every day. He's been one of our better receivers since he got here and just really, really love his ball skills, his route running ability, his toughness, his competitive spirit about him.

But to me, the way he got out of it, accepted accountability, responsibility for his actions and serving out the

suspension and then being able to come back and do what he did tonight, big part of special teams and obviously got a touchdown catch. He's a young man that I'm really excited for his future.

Q. Your thoughts about Mike today in terms of steps from Week 1 to Week 2 coming off the Week 1 performance, and that first drive, also, being able to get 18 plays and generate that drive?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I thought that it was a really good next step. If I just kind of go through it and you say, you look at it, evaluate it. Obviously last week was really rough, and to be able to come back from that; and I understand that it wasn't the same opponent.

But at the same time, a lot of respect for them and how hard their kids play and how well-coached they are. Bottom line is that I thought it was a really good, positive step in the right direction for him, and I feel like he got more comfortable seeing him in there making plays and throws and just got to continue to grow and develop.

Obviously the opponent will intensify here real fast next week, but the bottom line is we were able to make positive steps in the direction that we needed to make to help this team continue to move forward and get better.

Q. If I'm not misunderstood, this is the largest sporting event Indiana has actually hosted since before the beginning of the pandemic. Curious what you felt of the atmosphere tonight, having students back?

TOM ALLEN: I'm going to tell you what, our student section was unbelievable. They were there an hour before kickoff, loud. Man, I just want to thank them. I tried to go over there and thank them at the end. I know a lot of them had left and I understand why, but man just what an unbelievable atmosphere that they create and just all of our fans, people coming.

Attendance was really, really good tonight and I know next week is already sold out. It's awesome and I just appreciate it so much. It means so much to our players. They noticed it immediately when they came out during warmups and they were engaged. They weren't just sitting there. They were into it.

And I just really appreciate our students and that student section was awesome, and I know it's got to continue and I know it will. Just our fans and everybody coming and supporting us and it means the world to me and it's just great to have the fans back.

I wish they could have been here a year ago for last year's season, but at the same time, this is where we are, and I really appreciate everything that they did tonight to make it special, and just continue to grow that as well because that gives us a home-field advantage and that's what we need in the games we got coming up.

Q. You had Matthew Bedford moved over to guard and Luke Haggard back. Was this the offensive line you wanted to start the year with? And what did you see from them, that group.

TOM ALLEN: I thought -- yes, to answer your question, it was the offensive line that we expected to start the season with, and it really was how we moved through the majority of fall camp through the week before the Iowa game when Luke got hurt.

But I thought they were very solid. I'll go back and watch the film. It's hard to see everything in that as it's happening but just talking to the coaches throughout the game. Still got things to work on, even just because I think a lot of times O-Line play especially when you have guys that work together, Matt Bedford is beside Caleb Jones, those two guys working together; Michael Penix working beside Luke Haggard and those two guys working together.

That was completely flipped when Luke wasn't in there because we had to move Matt all the way out to tackle and you create two sides of the ball that have a new combination working together. That is no doubt that's the combination we want. Feel like it puts our best five guys on the field, and that to me, they just have to keep working together.

It's about communication. All of the combos, all the movements, all the twists that you guys get, sometimes we got a couple of those we gave up tonight that we'll keep getting better at. I thought they had a good D-Line, I really did. I noticed that on film and knew they were going to be a challenge to us. And two really good inside guys that I thought were as big and as good; the one weighs 360 and he's strong and tough and he's a good player. I found him after the player and shook his hand, and number 0 -- same thing, he was 305, he was really good. Respect those guys.

Working together, I thought they did a good, solid job for sure, but we have to continue to improve.

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