

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Coach Tom Allen

### Press Conference



COACH ALLEN: That's a positive thing without question. And we saw that even last year. And even when he played even last week.

So bottom line is that he's started for us in one Big Ten team on the road, which was huge last year and has played many minutes beyond that.

I just think that his experience as well, and then just his leadership, I think he's a strong leader on our team and more verbal in that role and does a great job bringing great energy and keeping the guys -- his work ethic is tremendous in the weight room and conditioning workouts and everything that we do.

So all those things, to me, all are very, very positive things to help us win football games.

**Q. Last week when we got together you talked about sort of hitting the restart button and refresh after the bye week and such. When you look back at the first five weeks so far, what has bothered you or concerned you more: the fact you've lost the games or how you've lost them?**

COACH ALLEN: Well, losing them is probably, you know, that's the number one thing. And then you go back and you evaluate why and how. Yeah, it's frustrating in some ways. And you've just got to learn from it. We go through, we do a five-game analysis, first five games going through and break everything down in all three phases and looking at the production and different things.

So just the ability for us -- things that stick out for me offensively not being consistent, having to run the ball consistently, having to score touchdowns offensively. Those are obvious things. Execution hasn't been what it was expected to be. And the play of our quarterbacks. That to me hasn't been to the standard of what we know we have to have to win those kind of games.

You play those caliber teams, whether you play them early or play them late, you have to be able to score points when

you get down to the red zone and you have to be execute and throw and run the football and protect it.

Turning the ball over stuck out in a major way as a negative for us. Can't do that. When you do, you lose football games. To me that really frustrates me a lot is the turnovers on offense, and then the lack of creating takeaways on defense. It's frustrating. We know it goes in cycles. We know sometimes that's part of it.

But we've got some but not near enough. We've played good defense a lot of the time but not good enough, in my opinion. Still have got to get better. We have to continue to improve in the red zone and keep them out of the end zone and creating more takeaways and creating more field positions for the offense. Those are things that stick out for me.

Special teams have been solid. I think that one big long kickoff return that was just back-breaking in that game in Cincinnati.

So to me it's consistent execution in all three phases. Hasn't been there. It has to be. You play teams of that caliber, they'll make you pay for those mistakes. If you play maybe lesser teams, they don't show up as much, not cost you as much. But that's not been the case. We've had the opportunity to play some really good football teams, and therefore we had to be at our best, at our best right away out of the gate.

Definitely it's been frustrating and disappointing. But at the same time, like I say, you hit reset. You learn from those mistakes. We've got a football team that has a lot of character to it and toughness to it and a lot of fight. And I expect that to be the case this weekend.

**Q. I know it doesn't change for the coaching staff, but in terms of the mindset for the team, have you seen a change in the way guys are approaching things compared to where it was at the start of the season? And if so, how do you make sure you get back to that confident group that you had at the start of the year?**

COACH ALLEN: I think that watching our guys, even



watching them practice yesterday, and just the visual, the eye contact, the buy-in of their behavior and their attitude, how hard they practice, I've been encouraged by that. I thought yesterday the energy was excellent. It's what it's got to be. I think there was no question that the time away helped them get some energy back and refreshed.

But there's no doubt. I think you have to continue to talk to them through the rough start. And it is what it is. And so you are where you are and you have to address those things.

And it does affect your confidence in some ways. I don't think it's as extreme as it could have been if you had a younger team, but at the same time it definitely affects you. You don't feel the same way as if you were in a different situation. But at the same time we have a lot of strong leaders on our team.

You have to be able to flush that, 0-0 out of the break. It's a new fresh start for our guys. That's the way we have to look at it. That's the way we're going to look at it and be able to approach it in a way that we can't change the past, we can learn from the past.

We don't like where we are. But we'll tackle where we are. That to me is the focus. And that to me is the mindset we have. Like I said, we have a lot of strong leaders on this team. And they need to rise up to and I expect them to. There's a toughness and fight to this group that you have to have to be able to persevere through tough times.

Right now we're going through some disappointing tough times. That's part of life. If you can't respond to it or handle it, then things won't change. But if you can, then you can create change for yourself on a daily basis, consistent basis. That's what I would expect this team to do.

**Q. (Off microphone).**

COACH ALLEN: I think so. I think it was great timing. I don't get to control that. Don't pick those. They pick us. But it did -- for this set of circumstances, it was good timing for us to be able to get away a little bit. Get healthier and be able to reset.

**Q. Over the past two weeks, what meetings have been had between you and your offensive staff and kind of what have you guys discussed about maybe changing what we're going to see in the second half of the season compared to what we're seeing during the first five weeks here?**

COACH ALLEN: A lot of film, meetings. A lot of sit downs,

one-on-ones, a chance to go with me and the staff watching things and watching plays and talking things through, figuring things out, making adjustments so there's no question to try to do everything we can possibly do to create change on that side of the football, create more consistency in our education, to create more points at the end of the day. That's what it's about. It's about scoring points on offense and being able to protect the football and making good decisions with our offense and putting our guys in position.

When they get put in that position, they've got to make plays. That's really what it's going to come down to. There's no question, because everything, run game, throw game, the schematic and timing of it, tempo of it, all to continue to get better and we have to. Back's against the wall. Gotta come out swinging.

**Q. Obviously your offense is going to look a little bit different without Mike. You already talked about the strengths of Tuttle. But you're talking about having emerging leaders you'll need going into Michigan. Who are the leaders on the offensive side of the ball you'll be counting on for this week?**

COACH ALLEN: I think it starts up front. Caleb Jones, to me, has to be a guy that steps up in his leadership. Dylan Powell, guy that's played a lot of football, our center. And Matt Bedford, the same thing, guys who have been here and played. Steve Carr to me, and Peyton Hendershot. And Ty Fryfogle, guys we've counted on. Guys that have made plays in the past. Guys that need to rise up, elevate need to elevate their game, their preparation. All the things that they bring to this team to be able to help us to be able to execute in those critical moments and those critical plays.

Those guys have to make plays. They do. It's more than just the verbal leadership. That's part of it. It's the attitude and the effort you bring to practice. That's really a constant. But it's stepping up in the game and making plays and whatever your role is whatever position you play, being able to help us get first downs, sustain drives and get that ball in the end zone.

Those are guys that stick out to me. Others as well. But it's a collective group effort, without question. And obviously the quarterback room, whoever is under center, needs to be the guy leading the show.

**Q. One of the biggest questions I got during radio interviews during the bye week does Indiana need more creativity on offense. What are your thoughts? How do you answer that?**

COACH ALLEN: I think you always want to be as creative as you can be. At the end of the day you've got to execute.

So that to me is really what we've -- we've got to protect the football. You can't turn the ball over.

You turn the ball over as many times as we have in those big games, you're not going to get the results you want. I don't care who you are, how creative you, how many plays you run, there's no question I want to be able to do things that create in this direction and create hesitancy in the defense and make them not be able to sit and tee off on you and not be 100 percent sure in their reads.

You want them to question where the ball is or what we're going to be doing or tempo, to me definitely that's what you want to see. But at the end of the day, all that said, you have to execute. And it's about protecting the football, executing, and blocking the right way, blocking the right people and making sure that we catch the football, run, secure it, don't give it to them, and execute.

Execution would be probably more important than that, yes, but within that realm of executing and protecting the football, creativity always positive, yes.

**Q. Especially you think about bringing Jack into certain things, and you said you trust him to push the ball down the field but maybe doesn't quite have the explosiveness down field that Mike has. Do you think about things that maybe I guess elements of the offense that can widen the defense out a little bit, stretch things horizontally, things related to timing, maybe getting the ball into Jack's hands quickly, that kind of thing?**

COACH ALLEN: Yeah, I think those are also driven too by who you're playing, what they do schematically as well. No question. The whole objective is you want to be able to stress the defense. You want to stress them in different ways. And you talk about stressing them laterally, vertically. Both directions have to be stressed to be able to make them feel the strain of the scheme on them and then to be able to get the ball placed in the right spots based on the strength of your quarterback, what he can do, what his strengths are. Both arm talent and leg talent, everything he can bring to the table.

Those are all things part of it, for sure. Without getting into too many things, too specific about what we need to be able to do, we're looking at all those things for sure to be able to help our offense be effective.

At the end of the day we've got to score points. That's what it comes down to. That's what you're judged and based off. And it's a collective team effort. Offense,

defense, special teams working together to create those points. And we've got to continue to do it.

And we have to play better complementary football, offense, defense, special teams working together.

**Q. With Baldwin's transfer, or in portal, whatever, and with Ellis out for the year, your running back room has gotten a lot slimmer here in the last couple of weeks. Can you talk a little bit what you plan in that area, who might be stepping up to get more opportunities?**

COACH ALLEN: Yeah, definitely looks different than it did in the beginning. And not what we expected to look like this after five games.

But David Holloman to me is a guy that needs to step up. And here's a true freshman. He's been working with our 1s and 2s the last few practices. And Charlie Spegal, same thing, a guy that's been here, a guy that understands our system, can do a lot of different things in that part of it as well.

And Trent Howland. Trent's a guy that's been here, came off surgery a year ago, came in as a true freshman, big, physical guy. He's been there getting some reps. But those guys have to step up.

And we've got guys in that room and two other guys that have been playing. Davion has been playing quite a bit. Needs to take a step up and elevate. And Chris Childers, those two guys have to continue to grow, and their role will be expanded without question.

But that whole room, everybody will have to step up and do their part and help us find a way to move the football and create points.

**Q. Following up on Holloman there, you talked about how he's coming back from surgery last year. Is that what's more important, him being back on the field at this point, or what do you want to see from him, him on the field a little more, with him, and David Holloman to kind of get an opportunity now with Steve Carr out, who may not be here next year, so the guys will be seeing more prominent playing time?**

COACH ALLEN: I say first with Trent, he had surgery. When he came in to report, he was in a limited basis, didn't get into fall camp right out of the gate, because of that was being brought along as -- he had an ACL surgery as a high school player. So that happened during the wintertime when he was playing basketball.

And so basically just recovering from that. So that's why



put him behind, come into fall camp. Further behind than the rest because of that. He's fully released, fully practicing. But just didn't get the reps with our first, second, third groups during fall camp. He would be a little bit further behind in that regard.

But David has been here the whole time. Obviously he's young. Just learning everything. He's been with the scout team the first few weeks of the season, and the same with Trent. We've had guys come in here before that were young, had to play at that position, and he plays as a true freshman. That's not that unusual for that to happen.

Obviously circumstances are not what anyone expected. But opportunity presents itself and when it does you've got to seize it and be ready for it.

**Q. It's safe to describe you as an excitable guy. What excites you for the second half of the season for this team that you haven't seen yet that you're still looking forward to seeing?**

COACH ALLEN: Just play our best football. We haven't played our best football. We haven't played together. We haven't played all three phases working together. That's been challenging for guys. When you ask them as a group, they know, they know we haven't. They know we can, and they expect us to. And that's what excites me.

We have a great opportunity ahead of us and very schedule, awesome schedule to play against the best in the country each and every week. And guys to be able to step up here. And that's why they came here. That's what excites me. It's a great opportunity for this football team to come together to face adversity in the eye, to not back down from it, to grow together, get stronger together and learn to fight together and finish together. Play our best.

To me, the biggest thing is for us to play our best football together. Complementary offense, defense, special teams, working together, creating opportunities for the other sides of the ball. When those opportunities come, they seize them; we take advantage of it. And we continue to feed off of that and feed off of each other.

To me, we haven't done that collectively as a whole group for a full game, done it in spurts. But we've got to do it together and do it for four quarters.

**Q. I know you don't like to talk about injuries and availability during the week. But so we're clear, this week you're not going to talk about whether Michael is practicing or not, or whether he's available until noon on Saturday?**

COACH ALLEN: Correct. You'll find at kickoff.

**Q. Secondly, Michigan State's running game has been very good. You've obviously handled them pretty well the last couple of years. But what in particular about their running game have you seen that really has you concerned?**

COACH ALLEN: No. 9. He's really good. Great balance. Great vision. Makes guys miss. Patient. Strong. Tough. Runs hard. He's right now the leading rusher in the Big Ten, top in the country. Makes them different. Similar schemes in some ways.

But the guy carrying the ball makes a big difference. And they have other guys as well that carry the football. But he sticks out, without question, for all those reasons I just said and he makes them really, really special. And they are big up front. They're strong up front. O line is playing well. They play together. Have a good complementary system.

Play-action off of that. Quarterback throws the ball way. Protects the ball. Taking shots down the field. Last week they got several big explosive plays, especially the first half, game-changing plays, and they've got several talented receivers that do a great job.

But that to me is the run game is what makes them go, gives them their identity, for sure. And they stick with that, play with that, they'll be true with that for sure.

Gotta gang tackle them. But the challenge with that is you gang tackle, play-action off of that. Be very disciplined with your eyes and read your keys. Fit your gaps. Make them miss.

His first run of the whole season was 75-yard touchdown run against Northwestern, first time he touched the football. Just bounce the ball outside and nobody caught him.

He's a special player. We have a lot of respect for him. In this league, we have several really good running backs we'll be defending here in the next several weeks. He's one of many.

**Q. Can you just expand on that a little bit? What is it that makes Michigan State so good? Why do you think they're a top ten team in the country with how they're playing?**

COACH ALLEN: First of all, they run the football. And they don't turn the ball over. Creating takeaways on defense. Their defense bends a little bit. They give up some yards. Don't give up points.

When you don't give up points, don't give up a lot of explosive plays; you're protecting on offense running on offense, scoring points, averaging almost 40 points a game on offense and not giving up a lot on defense.

And special teams are really solid. They've had two returns for touchdowns. Big ones and really game-defining ones. Starting one game with a punt return for touchdown really kind of allowing them to tie the game up against Nebraska, send it to overtime. Won the game in overtime. So just playing good, solid, sound football and not beating themselves.

They don't have a lot of penalties. Don't make a lot of mistakes. That's big. They're playing winning football. When you talk about how you want to do it as a football team.

But it starts up front for them. Running the football, stopping the run on defense. And like you said, the turnovers, you know, protecting on offense, create takeaways on defense. That to me really -- look at the Miami game, it was a really close fourth quarter. Three-point game in the fourth quarter.

And takeaways. Opened it up. They went down scored both times off those two takeaways. And it becomes a completely different finish than -- it was close the whole way up until you get to the fourth quarter.

And that's what you want to be able to do to a football team. So they're doing a good job of playing complementary football and winning football. Therefore, they're undefeated, ranked tenth in the country.

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