

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Head Coach Tom Allen

### Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Just start by saying just after watching everything, really our approach was, as I stated after the game, very disappointing performance. But just chose to -- we obviously watched it. We graded it and all that. But really chose to flush it and press on with our guys. That was the focus yesterday. And just really focused more on them and their mindset and where we're at physically and mentally getting our guys squared away in that regard. And just really -- that was the emphasis and that we want to be able to do and get our guys ready for the next one. And that's the focus.

Update with Jack. He'll be week to week. So don't know as of right now his status. Same with Michael. Michael is still week to week. Tiawan played a few snaps. He hopefully will get better this week. Did not play near as what we hoped he'd be able to play, but he is progressing. Same with Reese. Continue with those guys.

And just really focus now on getting our guys healthy. And we'll be practicing accordingly with that goal in mind to be able to do a great job of making sure our guys are fresh mentally and physically when we take the field on Saturday in College Park.

So three guys to mention from the game. Just want to make sure I always recognize our scouts. Eli Jochem is our offensive scout of the week, wide receiver. Chase Washington is our defensive scout of the week, corner back. And Patrick Finley is our special teams scout of the week, one of our safeties. So really appreciate their work, just awesome job preparing our guys and all the effort that they give us every single week is awesome. So continue to recognize those guys.

Excited about this week, chance to play on the road, Big 10 game against Maryland, a very talented football team and much respect for their staff and the quality of the skill that they have on offense and the physical and athleticism that they have on defense.

So just important week for us. Very, very -- every week is a big week. Every week is important. And our guys have

to understand, and they do. So excited to be able to get our guys back out there tomorrow and get back to work.

Questions.

**Q. Just kind of go back on Jack. What did you guys -- what can you tell us about what you learned from the MRI? And I guess how are you handling that going forward as far as getting Donaven ready, getting Grant ready? What do you look back and say maybe should have been prepared for better for the possible circumstances of Jack going down? What do you do with quarterback going forward from this week?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I would say what the MRI taught us or showed us was that it wasn't as bad as it could have been. I guess that was probably the first words I was given. I think with that -- but definitely was enough to where creates some unknowns for him to be able to know his status moving forward on a day-to-day basis. But hopefully be able to recover from that and as efficiently as possible.

And, you know, I would say with Donaven, you feel good about certain things that you wanted to be able to do, have him ready for per his skill set and the reps he's gotten at this point. And so -- but, obviously, he prepared and practiced and took those reps as the number two all week.

And then Grant actually took some reps as well, especially more of the third down situations, passing situations. But, yeah, you just go through and prepare the best that you can with your guys. And you have so many reps each week. And, obviously, he was the guy taking those and getting yourself ready for that.

But you just go through and then you get that in moment. And obviously it happened very early in the game. And then it's rained. So it's really tough for a kid being his first opportunity against such a high level opponent and tough weather conditions. Just created a tough situation for him without a doubt. But I thought he improved throughout the game. Glad he got all those reps. Definitely paid dividends moving forward, no matter how much he has to play in future. And I thought that he got more comfortable



doing some things and made some nice runs and took some big hits and popped back up and made some throws. And just has to continue to grow with that.

But it's really about just building things around what he feels comfortable and can function at a high level and be able to do things he needs to do to help us win a football game.

**Q. When you have an offense struggling like you do now, it's sort of incumbent on the defense and special teams especially to kind of pick them up a little bit. Your defense had been playing pretty well but in that first half got gashed pretty badly. Once you had a chance to watch everything that happened on film in that first half, what were the specific issues there? And do you think they can be resolved quickly?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think, first of all, you've got to go through and evaluate, like we did. And we go through and do things and watch it very closely and discuss as a staff. And there's definitely some things you go back and -- they obviously are a very good football team. And I've been here several years now and obviously played them every single year.

After playing them in person and seeing them, it's the best Ohio State offense that we've faced since I've been here. And offensive lines is impressive, big and physical and athletic. They keep getting better and better up front.

And then I thought their quarterback obviously had shown some youth early in the season, but that's in the past. Extremely talented quarterback. We already talked about the receivers. They're three of the best in the country. As a group, I don't know if there's any group better. Can't imagine that.

And then you've got a running back that gives them a home run gear that they haven't always had that in that spot, definitely not last year. And so, yeah, it's a really special offense. So creates a lot of problems for you. So I think you go through.

And we obviously had some injuries in the secondary and try to do a good job of protecting those guys and helping them out. Kept things in front of us. But too soft in that regard I thought. Gave them too much underneath. And a lot of yards there. And then didn't do a good job -- the tempo gives you some trouble. But that's -- they didn't do that new.

But it just still creates issues just because of all the other variables you're talking about. So I just think that -- love our defensive guys and wasn't for a lack of effort. They

played hard. Didn't tackle as well as we need to.

But I think just -- there was a little hesitancy I thought at some times in our guys that I hadn't seen out of them before in this season. Definitely haven't seen it recently. So I guess that was another reason for the -- throw it in the trash. So we're not going to overly beat ourselves up in that regard. We obviously made corrections and press on. That was the challenge to our guys. We did not play at our standard without question.

But we can't let that last one affect the next one. That's what it comes down to for me. That's absolutely not going to happen. Talked to our guys, meeting more guys even today and a lot yesterday and just being able to make them understand that. So got a lot of really good players on defense. And we're going to just -- certain things we need to learn from that one and press on.

**Q. Facing a quarterback Taulia that you saw last year obviously here. What have you seen on film in terms of his growth and improvement and just the challenge of seeing him again and facing him a second time?**

TOM ALLEN: He's a very talented player. Very quick release. Just big-time arm and can run. That's probably the -- the things that really sticks out to me with him is just his ability to get rid of the ball so quickly and efficiently. And then the way he moves athletically. He's a true dual guy that you have to account for that and has talent around him. Really good running backs and another group of talented -- which they've always had. Every time we've played Maryland, their speed and athleticism is near the top of this league, which affects special teams play. You see it on defense. It shows up in the skill positions on offense. And that's the same this year.

He's another year older. And just got to continue to do a tremendous job of affecting him. We know that as what you have to do with really good quarterbacks. And he does a really good job. Completion percentage for him is very high. And it's because he's really good. And so we've just got to do a great job defensively. And that's going to be on us as a staff and our players to respond and to be able to put together great play.

**Q. Offensively, Coach, the offensive line was thought to be one of the more comprehensive units coming back this year. But it's been one of the most problematic. What have you seen that has led to that with the experience there that it's not getting the results that you were hoping for?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. So I would say lack of consistency continues to be an issue. And just going through -- I felt

like even just watching it again -- we're going to go through and look at even just some -- making some -- if we have to make some movements there to get some other guys involved and just to be able to address -- as guys continue to develop throughout the season.

But I think it's been isolated breakdowns. You know, you've got certain things happening the way they're supposed to on certain plays and then the next one not. And then -- but it can happen. It was just isolated situations where one guy got beat one on one. Happened several times. And it can't happen in those games, those situations, key third downs or creates a tackle for loss and get penetration and just disrupts everything.

So communication at times wasn't what it was supposed to be. It's been frustrating and disappointing without question up front. But they've got to just keep battling and got to get better. And we've got to coach them better, got to improve those guys. Like I said, we'll make some adjustments if we need to here this week to get the result we want. But, yeah, it's an area that we need to have step up.

Obviously with injuries we've had at quarterback and the ability for our guys to be able to effectively move down the field like we did that first drive and get in the end zone. So obviously it shows you what we can do when you do things the right way and you communicate effectively, block, and we ran the ball, we threw the ball. And that's what you have to do consistently throughout the game. So, to me, that's going to be the focus and that's a constant thing.

**Q. Michael Pennix was hurt three weeks ago. Jack was your guy. Knowing that Donaven was one hit away from being your quarterback, how is it possible that there were just small packages? He wasn't fully I guess prepared or better prepared by the coaching staff to run more of the offense in the event that Jack got hurt?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, I would just say when I talked about certain packages, I mean there's a lot within those packages to be able to do. And the bottom line is that he was number two. He took every single number two rep throughout the week. And bottom line is that he took those practice reps. And we went to the things he felt he was comfortable doing where he was at in his development.

To me, you've got to be able to execute those. And we didn't execute those at the highest level possible, in my opinion. Obviously, the results speak for themselves. But, you know, obviously it's a challenging situation for us to be in at this point in that room. And we have those guys that are there, and they've got to be ready to play. But he was obviously the guy that took those reps as we went through

each day in practice and then being able to take that from the practice field to the game field is what has to happen.

But obviously he was thrown into a tough situation after the first drive of the game. But that's why Grant played because he had certain things we thought he could do well as well. So didn't make a big deal about it leading up to it, but if it was necessary for him to be in there, then he was ready to do that. And that's why he played.

**Q. Just following up on that. Donaven I guess has the chance to be making a lot more of number one reps I'd imagine. How do you get him ready? Obviously, you can't comment on what's going to happen this weekend because obviously Jack's health is in question. But how do you get him ready for a potential first collegiate start this week?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think that with the unknowns that you have with Jack, you have to just fully prepare him in that regard mentally and physically and from a reps perspective. And we'll see how the week plays itself out as far as how much that happens with Jack.

But the bottom line is is you know Jack's obviously played and gotten a lot of reps in the past, where Donaven needs to get as many reps as possible. So you have to have that mindset, he's going to be the guy, and then we'll see what happens. But bottom line is that would be the approach is to get him ready and get Grant ready as well. And those two guys have to be getting the majority of the reps and getting themselves in position to play. So that's going to be the approach.

**Q. I talked to a lot of fans after the game and they said that your pep talks and your speeches are IU's saving grace. They love hearing your speeches. So what were those conversations that you've had with your team about lifting up their spirits and preparing them for a road game against Maryland?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, I mean, those conversations we have -- we had an important one on Sunday -- are critical to this team and our psyche and where we're at just understanding your guys and where they are and the culture you have and your team and your locker room and the strength of your guys and just appealing to that and focus on the things that we can control, which is our attitude and our mindset and the way we approach every day.

And, to me, that's really the focus is the way that we think and the way that we approach certain things. It's not how we feel. It's the reality of our mindset and the way we approach life when life is hard and things don't go your way

and things get difficult and things don't turn out the way you expect them to or want them to. How are you going to respond, you know?

And, to me, that's the critical nature of life. That's the critical nature of sport and how it teaches you about those things.

So, to me, that's been the emphasis. I don't want to get into details. But without question, you know, we just have to -- it's about capturing the hearts and minds of your players and being able to help them handle the difficulties that they're facing right now, which is a microcosm of what they'll face later in life. And so that's really what this is all about is helping these men develop into those qualities and so they can lead their homes one day and lead their communities one day and whatever line of work they're in, they'll be leaders in those settings, through the good times and the bad times. That's what this teaches that.

Obviously, we do all of that to be able to help them come together and play their best football to be able to accomplish our objective of winning on game day. There's a dual purpose in all this. And it serves a great role for their future, but it's never more critical than right now when you're trying to allow a team to stay together and fight together and be able to learn to do the little things it takes to find a way to make things happen when things are going against you.

**Q. Coach, how do you evaluate quarterback durability over the last two or three years? Do you feel like you're snake bit? Is there anything at all with regard to keeping guys healthy? I know obviously you tried to put weight on Mike and obviously that didn't work out. Jack even last year during the Outback Bowl got banged up in the shoulder. Is it just one of those things?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. Like you said in the past, there's certain types of injury. I mean, if they're volume injuries, I mean, with the quarterback position, we all would agree there's certain things you don't do with them during the week. You don't hit them. You don't hit them in fall camp. You don't hit them in spring ball. You don't hit them leading up to the game.

But I just think that we've had some joint issues, you know. You've had ligament issues. When you have torn ACLs and now with Jack's foot, you know, it's tough. They're the kind of things that -- how do you prevent those? Don't have all the answers for that.

Obviously, there's a hit variable. When you take hits, you increase your chances of having guys injured. But

sometimes guys get hit a whole bunch and they never get injured. So I think -- if you look at their history and their past, neither one of those guys had -- they didn't come to us with a history of getting injured in high school. So I guess if -- had that been the case -- those are things you look at when you recruit guys. Do they have a history of injury. And sometimes it's predictive and sometimes it's not. But they did not. Neither one of them had that. Which is even more frustrating.

But at the same time, I mean, I don't know that any of us, any coach -- they are part of the game. We've always talked about it. Those are two things that everybody uses to evaluate predicting games is who's home and away and who's healthy. So it's obviously very critical to your team's performance.

But preventing them, we're trying to do everything we can to keep our team healthy throughout the week. And everything you do in the off season to be able to prepare their bodies, to be able to be an elite athlete that stays in the game and is able -- if you do have some setbacks you're able to get back.

The issue we had with our secondary, there's been things -- it's tough. I don't know how you prevent some of those. But we're doing everything we can to make sure we're not missing something and some self-evaluation on that. But, yeah, just trying to -- right now, this has been a tough year for injuries.

**Q. Big 10 teams, the games that you've lost, opponents are, I think, a combined 31 and 4. Going forward, this schedule isn't as packed with a bunch of Top 10 teams. I think there's one. So just in terms of the second half of the schedule, the fact that you're not facing this elite competition week after week after week, how does that help you kind of refocus your team? Does it give you a better chance to get a measuring stick on your team? Do you approach that any differently than you already have?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, I think we did talk to our guys. It's obvious. They know and it's been well documented how difficult our schedule has been and who we've played and where they're ranked. You can look at the schedule and see it.

But still the focus is the next one. That's been the priority yesterday and really nothing beyond that. Obviously, big picture wise, you do understand how that dynamic looks and how your season plays itself out and when you play which teams where on the schedule.

But in regards to your team right now, where we are, it is

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

solely focused on one opponent, and that's Maryland. And everything you do, all your energy, everything you have, what you do all focus is on getting yourself in the best position possible to play your best on the road and get a win at Maryland. That's the focus.

So that's where we're at. And take them one at a time and be able to build from there. There's no doubt that this team has been through a lot. And we're going to stay together, keep battling, keep fighting, and continue to stay focused on the task at hand, which is beating Maryland.

**Q. Forgive me for this because we're kind of asking you the same question over again but a different way. As far as you talked after the game about how Donaven hadn't been part of spring practice, he was basically taking the reps with the 3s. How far did he need to go in, I guess, the two or three weeks when he was really taking the reps at number two, how much progress do you think he made in that point? And how would you accelerate that?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think it does need to be accelerated. I think as soon as -- when he wasn't the number two, he was getting some reps without question but not a lot. And I think, too, being a guy that was a three-sport athlete guy that just didn't sit around and play football in his off season, he was playing other sports, which is fine, that's part of his past and that's part of who he is and makes him as athletic as he is, but also created a situation where he did not have a lot of the rep base that maybe other guys may have.

But at the same time, that's where he was. And right now, it needs to be accelerated. And that's where -- that's been the case here recently. And that's been why he's taken all those reps and got to continue to find out as we get a better feel for him -- he was at the time -- you know, early in the season, he was one of our scout team quarterbacks, which is the truth. So just to get him a chance to play and get more reps just to be able to go against our defense and be comfortable playing football and making those decisions of throwing to whoever in the secondary.

But I think that that's where -- right now, he's a talented athlete that hasn't played a lot of college football. So he's a big kid, tall and athletic. And we just have to build things around what he is best at and allows him to be successful. So that's the objective. That's the goal. And that's the charge for our guys. So been working hard on that these last couple days and that will continue.

Have a great day. LEO.

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