

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Head Coach Tom Allen

### Press Conference



Indiana 23, Illinois 20

TOM ALLEN: I just want to congratulate our football team on a really gritty performance. Just so proud of them, finding a way to win. I knew it was going to be a tough physical game. They were a tough physical football team. I have respect for Coach Bielema, the job he's done there. They're long and athletic.

Got a lot of things to work on, there's no doubt about it. But there's a lot of power in finding a way to win a game like that. There's a lot of -- so many positives that it creates in your team, the belief. And what we've been through the whole past year, trying to get a Big 10 win and our first one. It's just massive. I can't put enough words to how important this game was and how important it was to find a way to win, to go 80 yards with no timeouts. Connor Bazelak was awesome. Threw for 330 I guess the numbers shown. It's only going to get better, going to get a lot, lot better.

So proud of the grit of our defense. That goal line stand was special. Cam Jones, I can't say enough things about that young man. He's the heart and soul of this team. I knew it going into the game, and it showed during the game. He got injured. I still don't even know the severity of it yet, but he just -- he gritted right through it. He wasn't going to come off that field. He didn't just go out there, he went out there and made plays after he got injured. So much respect for him as a person and as a player. And I could go on and on about this team. This team's got character, this team's got toughness, this team's got grit. We've got to get a whole lot better one week at a time.

Questions.

**Q. You mentioned that last drive. Obviously, Connor had some inconsistencies but really pretty good all night. Cam Camper was fantastic. DJ Matthews came up big. Just the play of those guys. What did you see from Connor on the sideline? Seemed like he wasn't rattled at all.**

TOM ALLEN: (Indicating.) That's the way he always is. That's one of the variables that stuck out to me since he's been here. He's extremely poised. And, like I said, it showed in that moment when you have to be under complete composure and find those open receivers and be accurate. And I thought he was accurate most of the night.

I haven't watched the film obviously, but that one pick should have been a catch; it was a tipped ball. Just thought he just slid in the pocket a little bit, used his legs a little bit, get some key first downs, extend some plays a little bit and did what he needed to do. Bottom line is last time I checked -- yeah, we got more points than they do. So that's the most important stat. There we go.

**Q. I know that generally you've always talked about being sort of day to day hands off of the offense, letting the coordinators and position coaches sort of manage things. But in that moment before that drive, did you step in and say anything to them? Did you want to step in and say anything to them before that last drive? Or was that something where you still want to step back and let whether it's a coordinator a coach or maybe Connor Bazelak kind of lead that -- I guess that huddle?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I just told them one thing, go score. You know, I didn't tell them how to go do it. They know what we need to do. I said, guys, we've got to get a touchdown. We've got 80 yards to go, no timeouts. What we did talk about though at the end, based on how many times -- I was on the headsets with the offensive staff talking about based on when we scored the point differential there about whether we'd go for 2 or go for an extra point because of the whole threat of getting it blocked, just all those dynamics you go through. So we talked about that.

But, no, I'm not a micromanager as a coach. I never have been; I never will be. You hire coordinators, you let them coach. And obviously with myself involved in the defense like I am now, that's going to be even more so. But at the same time, I didn't do it in the past. Obviously, I know what they're doing. But especially in those moments, you've got to be able to think. You can't have somebody in your ear

telling you what to do. And you hire somebody and you trust them. It's what you got to do. I don't like somebody telling me, hey, run this, run this, do this, do that. So you have a flow. You have a reason for doing things.

No. I was not in there. I am on the offensive side of the headsets when they're on the field majority of the time, yes. And we're talking about clock management, use of timeouts. But we've got a guy in the box that's telling me when to call timeout and those different things and when we've got to make certain decisions. So we're pretty systematic about that. But the bottom line is, I hire coordinators to call plays. And they have that role. And that's what they're assigned to do and that's what they do. And I'm going to give them that authority and that power to do so.

**Q. Tom, obviously talked about things that have to be worked on. I imagine offensive line has got to be high up there. 32 yards on 26 carries. Connor was only sacked once but had some pressure. What did you see there, what concerned you there?**

TOM ALLEN: I think they have a really good front. And they played a lot of bear type defense. It's really just stacked to stop the run. And they play man behind it, try to make it hard to do those kind of things.

But, obviously, we made them pay for that with our passing game. We've got to work on that. There's no doubt about it. We'll get a lot better. We've got to get Matt Bedford healthy, find out what his status is. Not good enough to win games consistently. But you know what? We won this game. So that's what we tried to do is win the first one and then we get better every week.

**Q. Tom, you already used words like massive and huge on this win and coming off of last year and being in your sixth year here and what lies after this, winning this game, the importance of winning or losing of what happens if you lose it or what you can do now by winning it, where does this rank? I know you've beaten Michigan State and you had some big wins. But where does this rank as far as importance of wins?**

TOM ALLEN: Very high. I knew that. I never said it to our team. We have a phrase here, and our kids know this. I say, hey, this is the most important game of the season. Why? They'll say because it's the next one. Okay. But I knew. I knew. I knew what we've been through. I knew what this game meant. And, yeah, I mean, it's just -- it's huge.

And it's not -- I get it, you know, it's not a top 25 team. But you guys know wins last year. We haven't sung that

stinking fight song for a long time after a win. And this team's been through so much. And they've continued to fight and battle and battle and battle and battle. And they did it tonight.

So I couldn't be more proud. It's a huge win for us. And like I said, comment all they want but I could freaking careless. I know this team. I know how much this meant to this football team. And this is a big deal. Yeah, we've got to get a whole lot better, and we will. But you know what? I'm proud of them. They fought and they found a way to win. That's what we've got to find a way to do every single week.

**Q. Coach, Connor Bazelak said they came -- you guys came into the game believing that you could win. After going through last year and then falling behind and having the second half you did, was there somebody who stepped up and a player who had a message? I know it looked like Cam Jones spoke to the whole team between the third and fourth quarters. Is there somebody who stepped up and kind of said, hey, we're not losing tonight?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. It's Cam Jones. So at the end of the fourth quarter -- as you know, you saw the sequence. So come out of halftime. We got a 6 point lead. We get the ball. You want to drive down, go score and really put the control on the game. And the opposite happens. We throw the pick. They end up scoring. And now they're up by a point and it obviously stayed that way until the last few seconds of the game.

So at the end of the third quarter, Cam Jones -- so we brought the team up. I spoke to them first and tag teamed to him, and he finished it off. And the whole message was find a way to finish and win this game. And he believed we were going to find a way. And that's all we talked about. Even when there was not much time left and we were on the goal line, we had to get a goal line stand. Who made the play on the goal line? Cam Jones.

So it just -- those are special things. And, you know, Big 10 wins are hard. Every win is hard. I've learned this being here long enough. You get excited about every win. I don't care who you play. They're a hard win, it's tough to win. And it's even tougher to get Big 10 wins because of all of the resources everybody puts into this thing. Just really proud of them. And if I had to single out anybody, it would be Cam.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned the struggles that you had during the game. But your guys were able to make plays on that last drive. Why? Why were they able to come up with a game winning drive there in the last 2**

minutes?

TOM ALLEN: I think when you -- Fish asked me this question I think it was on the press conference on Monday about how do you know about the character of your team or just what your team is about. You know, in the off -- do you really know yet. And you don't really know for sure. I think the games reveal all that stuff.

But I had a gut feel that this is who we are just from the workouts. Just from the Sunday morning meeting after the Purdue game a year ago. And those guys were the ones that were in my room in my office meeting with me face to face and saying things are going to change. They're the guys out there today making plays at the end. And that's what makes it special.

And so I think that that -- that, to me -- so we had a guest speaker a few weeks ago, and he made this statement. He said, Greatness leaves clues. And I wrote that down when he was speaking. And I actually re-said it to our guys. Started talking about the clues I think this team has left to me and why I felt like we have a chance to be special as a team.

Like I said, I know we've got a lot of work to do. But when I mean special, I mean a team that has unbelievable grit and fight to find a way to finish, because that's what it takes to be great in this life is to have perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal.

So to me that's what this team displayed to me. And you rely on your leaders for that. And you train them for these moments. And we have an amazing strength staff. And we talk about our conditioning and winning the fourth quarter. We made a huge deal about that and how we're going to play on offense and how we're going to play on defense. We're going to play a whole bunch of guys on defense, which we did. And we still -- we didn't do a good enough job stopping the run consistently. But we got three takeaways and we had a huge goal line stop. And we got our offense the football. We kept giving our offense a chance -- our team a chance to win.

And then our offense, just like a couple years ago, it might have not been pretty in between, but, boy, we found a way to finish the game off a couple years ago here on this field. And this time we did it with the fans watching in person, which is pretty cool. But -- so that, to me, is a great thing to have those qualities. And like I said, I can talk about it, they've got to go experience it. And they just did tonight, which is pretty awesome.

**Q. Coach, you talk about the defense getting back to what they did in 2020 and I guess more specifically**

**with the takeaways. I guess was what the defense did today what you envision and what you want the defense to look like?**

TOM ALLEN: Partly. The takeaways -- we actually dropped one we should have had. And then there was a fumble that I can't believe -- I could have got it, you know, from the sideline I thought but -- just laying there forever. And so we should have had more takeaways.

But in this game, the way it's played today, they're going to get yards. Okay. You've got to limit them from scoring touchdowns. You've got to get takeaways. That's what we did tonight. You hold a team to 20 points or less in this day and age of football, that's pretty good. You're going to be one of the top defenses in the country.

But, still, much to work on. But, you know, I'm proud of some things about it, saw some signs of it, not nearly close to being satisfied with it. But a good starting point because, once again -- this is the other thing too, you know, with all the injuries that we had a year ago, we were really, really careful in how we practiced to the point where I was a little concerned about going into a game and playing 80, 90 snaps of live tackle. We've never done that the whole time. We were trying to keep our guys healthy. We went live for sure and we did tackle. But we were just trying to find ways to do that both in the spring and in the fall. We tackled less live than I've ever in the history of my coaching career in the last -- during fall camp and during spring football. But at the same time, you know, we've just got to continue to build off of that and -- but I also think this. Chase Brown is a really good running back. He is put together, he is quick, he is explosive. And I think he's one of the top running backs in the Big 10, without question. So we didn't tackle him very good. And number one jitters we're going to see. He's a really talented receiver that's great guy. I thought we missed too many tackles. And I didn't like how we stopped the run from goal line to goal line. But we did it when we needed to.

**Q. Tom, you talked a lot this off season about the need to add explosive play makers on offense. Cam Camper, obviously, a big game tonight. Just how impressive is that for you for a guy to make the jump from junior college to now big time football making big plays on that final drive? And then also getting DJ back?**

TOM ALLEN: It's impressive. We had two guys over 100 yards for the first time in a while. What's the stat on that? We don't have that yet. Figure that out there, bugaboo.

But, you know, Cam Camper to me is a great story. Came out of high school and was really small. He had a huge

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

growth spurt both in weight and in his height and kind of became a different kid. Was not highly recruited. But when I put his film in from the junior college, I was like how is this kid not a guy that everybody's trying to get?

So we got to know him, loved him as a person, thought he was a great fit for us. I know I've talked about him. I'm not shocked by tonight. I thought he was special in practice. And I just -- I know DJ -- we had to get him healthy and get him back. But we've got several others too that have a chance to be really, really good.

So that is just going to take some time. But that time will come. You can see, we've got a talented quarterback that can get them the football. Just got to keep getting better in the run game and better up front. We will. Proud of Cam and proud of DJ. What a story. That guy's been through a lot. And, you know, was close to kind of deciding it wasn't worth it anymore. But he and I spent a lot of time together. So I love that kid. Awesome. Have a great night. LEO.

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