

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: ...very, very important to be able to have that. And we had one penalty on offense for illegal procedure, only one of those and we had one which you'd consider a cat on defense where we had the out of bounds where we slung the guy to the ground. That was a mistake on our part. But other than that, pretty clean game.

So those are positive things that to speak to the guys we brought here and their ability to function at a high level. Just want to really commend a couple guys on offense. Cam Camper, the first player here who had 156 yards receiving, which is the most ever in a debut for a wide receiver. And Connor Bazelak threw for 330 yards, and that was the most since Randall El at the quarterback position, those yards. So just really high level performance. And I talked about Cam Camper a lot throughout the spring and end of fall camp. And he didn't disappoint.

We also had a chance to recognize our captains, put those out before the game, but those guys went out for the coin toss. Cam Jones, AJ Barner, Jack Tuttle, Taiwan Mullen and Monster Matthews, just five high-quality young men that represent our program in a first-class way and been here many years. Just so proud of that group. Cam Jones is the -- only three in the history of our program that have ever been named as a three-time captain, and he's now one of those three. And that's pretty impressive as well. So you think about our history and everything in our program. And we're going to be recognizing the Rose Bowl team here this weekend, 55th anniversary of that team and just -- the team is just loaded full of really, really high quality people that have really shaped our tradition of our past. So just excited to have those guys with us this weekend. So you got the guys from the past coming and we got the guys here on the current team that are creating our own history of ourselves and being able to do great things together.

So proud of our team. We go through each week and give different awards for the game. I want to make sure recognize those games. On defensive scout, Ray Stewart and Cooper Jones were the defensive scouts of the week.

Kam Perry, offensive scout team player of the week. Drew Pearce was the special teams scout player of the week. Those guys do a tremendous job. I tell you what, Kam Perry is really, really fast and quick and a lot like Number 1 we played against. That's who he simulated all week long and did a phenomenal job. We're going to need that again this week. They've got a guy with the same jersey number that's probably faster than the Number 1. So just once again, we can't get ready to play without those guys.

And then in the game itself, offensive players of the game, Connor Bazelak and DJ Matthews. Just awesome to see DJ back. He's been through so much. Not just the physical recovery, just the mental strain of that whole long process of that injury a year ago. And just to see him out there playing again doing well and just so proud, a special, special young man. And defensively, Cam Jones and Lance Bryant. You know, Cam 12 tackles. Just -- I don't know if you can put a price tag on his leadership. And I texted him. It was probably about 3:00 in the morning. But I just said, Man, I tell you what, I couldn't be more proud of a young man. I said, You willed this team to victory during that game. And after I brought him up in the fourth quarter, he spoke to the team. He was that way the whole time. I can say that about several of the guys. Taiwan was the same way. J-Will same way. AJ Barner same way. Jack Tuttle was amazing on the sideline with our guys, just being a great leader. Monster when he went out, just there encouraging and challenging.

This group's got something special to them. I really do believe that. I think it showed. Lance Bryant, I've been complimenting him all fall camp. And he played like I expected him to. He got that huge -- caused a fumble and just pressures and tackles and very productive.

Special teams, we had three of them. Charles Campbell, 5 for 5 on his kicks. We saw last night how important the extra points are in every single game. It's taken for granted without question that you're going to get the extra point. Talk about field goals, and those are huge as well. But, man, every point matters. Charles was 5 for 5. Josh Sanguinetti played great on special teams. And then Noah Pierre, what can you say about that kid. We actually switched him to a new position when somebody went



down, and he goes down and covers a punt and gets a great tackle on a really, really talented athlete. So Noah Pierre's a phenomenal player for us and just got so much heart and grit and toughness and fight. So he kind of epitomizes are football team. So those are the guys we recognized from the game.

And, obviously, you know, as I've mentioned even in the postgame that, you know, a lot of things to clean up. Didn't run the football very good at all. Got to improve that. They loaded the box and were determined not to allow us to. There's no question, the film shows that quite a bit. We've got to improve up front in that area without question. Didn't tackle very good. Missed 23 tackles. That accounted for a lot of their yards. So that was really disappointing. Tackled really well at times. I think Number 2 is in the lead running back. He's really special. And I think Number 1 is an elite runner with a ball in his hand. And he had 99 yards after he first touched it. So we've got to work on that. We've got to do a better job of vice tackling an athlete line that. Three sacks. The take-aways were the difference in the game. We always say that, take-aways, tackling, and effort is what we've built our defense off of. We didn't stop the run good enough. Defensively that has to improve. And it will. But four take-aways, you know, changed the game.

And we had one at the end of the first half. I'm like, Guys, we've got to get another one. We got the second one, I said, Guys, to win this game, we've got to get three. Obviously got the fourth one there on the final play. But just thought our special teams coverage units were really on point. I didn't think our kick placement on punts was what it needs to be at the highest level. But specialists were really good. And just got to be -- you know how it is. Week one to week two, we expect a lot of improvement out of our team.

But I was very -- I knew what this game meant to our team and to this season. And so just to be able to find a way to win the way we did, to go 75 yards with no timeouts, the way we were able to get the clock down to give us that amount of time. There was that last sequence of events there where because we had an injury by one of our players, I had to choose to take a timeout because if I had not taken the timeout, we would have lost 40 seconds on the play clock. They would have drained it down. So I had to use our last timeout to save those 40 seconds. That gave us 2 minutes and 20 seconds to go to be able to go with no timeouts. You'd like to have at least one, but that's why that decision was made and based on the information I was given by the officials. But I thought we did a great job. We got guys in the press box in charge of all that. And Craig Johnson's in charge of communicating with me during the game. And he did a phenomenal job with that.

So just being able to maximize the clock, give our offense as much time -- as you noticed, we needed every second we got to be able to drive down the field and score. So just got to get better. But it's a whole lot more enjoyable correcting these issues after a big conference win to start the season. Questions.

Q. I know you said there's things you'd like to clean up understandably after week one. But after talking in the off season about feeling like you've gotten too far away from what you wanted to do defensively where you wanted that unit to kind of ground its identity, is that kind of, at least roughly speaking, kind of what you want it to look like? Not just the turnovers but the sacks, the fourth down, and stop in the goal line, et cetera?

TOM ALLEN: No question. So as I've always said, you know, it's really hard to limit yards in today's game. But it's the takeaway piece. It's key stops at critical times. It's the sacks. It's the pressures. Now we did give up 3 quarterback scrambles. It really still ticks me off. We can't let that happen, and we'll get that fixed. But just being able to get off the field on third downs, the goal line stand, the score zone, which that's in between the 12 and the goal line basically. That's where we've got to be great. And if you're great there and you force field goals or you force them stops when they're critical for us, so that's what I want to get back to and I want those things to continue, the takeaways, the pressures, the stop in the run game to me. And that's why I guess I'm frustrated but also I realize it's all very fixable the things that were going on there. So got some new faces there and some guys got to fit some things better. But overall it was I would say a good start to getting us back to where I know we need to be defensively. Because if you play great defense, you create takeaways, you give yourself a chance every week.

Q. Hey, Coach. I know one thing you guys really preach is next man up. You didn't have James Head. Beau Robbins steps up. I don't know how he did all game, but I would argue that his sack was one of the three or four biggest plays in the game --

TOM ALLEN: No question.

Q. -- because they had just gotten a 20-yard pass. Just talk about that play and how Beau has come along in his two years here.

TOM ALLEN: Glad you brought him up. Matter of fact, I mentioned him specifically in our team meeting this morning. So proud of Beau. What an amazing young person. Just a hard, hard worker. Smart, tough, dependable. He's gained a lot of on really good weight this

off season. He, man, came up huge for us. Wasn't just that play. It was rock solid in the run game doing his job.

But a sack in that situation is a game changer. And as you mentioned, just after a good completion there that got them close to field goal range. So he really changed everything for them, how they called the last couple plays. Just the way he's come on, he's just been steady. He's never wavered. He doesn't just -- he hasn't always been a guy that's been starting. And I see that changing here soon. But just so proud of him. He comes here, he gets developed. His body's changed in the last year dramatically because of his work ethic and his diet. And I give Coach Wellman credit for -- the nutrition piece in our program has continued a lot. We've got to continue to develop it and get it even higher. But it's really night and day from when I first got here. That's part of it to be able to allow a guy like that to really grow and develop and physically be where he needs to be. But he's bought into that. And he plays with great technique and toughness. And he just used technique on that play. He wins a one on one. We're rushing three guys. Have some different things that we're trying to do with that. But he had a 1 on 1 on that particular call and he beat his man and got a sack. Just so proud of Beau. And it was huge. And that's how you win Big 10 football games is guys like that stepping up. In-state guy from Carmel High School that comes here and does a phenomenal job in the classroom and represents us the first-class way in everything possible. So couldn't be happier for Beau.

Q. Just want to sneak a couple in here. First, he mentioned James Head. I just want to see an injury update on him. Matthew Bedford, Trent Howland and I guess Cam Jones. And also now that it's official and we've seen him, what led to Connor being named your starting quarterback?

TOM ALLEN: Okay. So going through the injuries, you know, James Head is day to day. Hoping to get him back soon. It definitely will not be long term but couldn't go this weekend. Excited to get him back. He had a tremendous off season.

Cam Jones, he's going to be fine. The guys that were injured during the game with the exception of Matt Bedford -- Matt Bedford has torn his ACL, and he'll be out for the season. So tough blow for Matt. I feel for him and amazing young man. And -- but has got an unbelievable attitude about it. And in talking with him, he's going to have a great recovery and come back and play his final season a year from now.

But reality is is that it's part of this game, you know, and you hate it for him and for our team. But next man up, you

know. And that's what happens. And so all the other guys mentioned that -- there are some guys that will be day to day. Figure out if they can play again next week and hopefully we can and get us back to full strength as much as possible.

And then you asked about Connor. Okay. So, you know -- I know -- and I apologize in some ways that I couldn't talk about the quarterbacks much, but that was by design, you know. I did not -- I get it, you guys have got to write your stories. And I didn't give you much help with any of that. But at the same time, it was a very, very highly contested competition for this whole time.

But I think the things that showed up on Friday night, to me, those things were probably big factors. The poise that he shows in that moment when you have to just kind of have ice in your veins and just go make plays, you know. And things are happening. They're throwing stuff. You don't even know what they're going to run all the time. And you're trying to adjust and anticipate. It's early in the season, so you don't have a whole database of what they're going to give you schematically other than based off of one game from this year and last year's work. So he has to make quick decisions and his accuracy and getting the ball to the receivers, throwing the ball down the field with that accuracy is another thing. And just has a really good command of what we're doing. And, to me, even though it was a tough decision and we've got two really good quarterbacks that -- that was a decision we decided to go. And, obviously, he came up big for us, you know, and I wasn't surprised.

Q. Tom, something you've mentioned a couple times even before today that have stood out to me regards basically to game management, time management. And I think back on games like in the Gator Bowl and things like that. But even with all these new names and faces, do you think that you are at the absolute zenith of where you have been at your period at Indiana as far as time and game management because it seems and feels that way?

TOM ALLEN: Well, yeah, to me hopefully you just -- you learn and you get better, you know. And I've made mistakes early on, and you learn from that. And you learn how to do a better job of getting, you know, the right people in the right spots to get you that information, you know, in an efficient way, in a timely way and an accurate way. And then you've got to trust your gut. And I just think hopefully like anything in life, the more you do it, the better you get at it. And you work real hard at it. I really study hard for that. And with having all the -- calling the defense piece and having Chad in that role -- to make all the adjustments. And we're communicating the whole time, but we have a whole

systematic way how we handle that and the way we handle the timeouts and everything. To me it's important, it's a huge part of the game, it's a huge part of my responsibility. And I have to be able to multitask in a hurry. But that's where you trust the people around you. And I think that was evident in that moment, you know, on Friday night. It was evident in our team and how they performed in those moments on both sides of the football and with each other and that's LEO. It's not making it about you. It's giving other people responsibilities and trust them to do it and not trying to do their job for them because you think you're better than they are. You trust them and you hire good people and you let them do their job. But it's teamwork. It really is. I couldn't do it without an amazing staff and group of guys. So got to get better and keep working on it, but we've definitely seen growth in that area.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask you with Matt out how you graded Parker how he played on Friday night? And also is that competition open still this week? Or is that his spot right now?

TOM ALLEN: I would say it's his spot. He played 44 snaps. So, you know, I think back -- and as much of a gut shot as it was when I found out, you know, the news I think back to 2019. You know, we had -- we lost a really, really good player that I said going into the season it's like the one guy we can't afford to lose was that particular player at that same position. And that's when Matt got his first opportunity, you know.

And I promise you, we really didn't think he was remotely ready at all. When we knew -- matter of fact, he had to play against Michigan State that very next week in his first start. So it's -- I thought he did a lot of positive things without question. He's very smart. He's played a lot of football. Not at this level. But the good news is he got a chance to play 44 snaps against a really good defensive line and a good scheme.

So that makes you feel better. And then we've got to get other guys shuffled around a little bit. But we've got some good young players. It's amazing how sometimes guys when they're forced to really rise up, they do. And that's why you recruit guys. And a guy like Josh Sales. This is a challenge to him. He's got to step up and be ready to go. And other young guys. And Bray Lynch. I think of him. He played two straight seasons of undefeated football in the best program in America in a very college style offense, you know, in the state of Texas at Westlake High School and was their starting left tackle for two years in a row and played every single snap those two years and played football at a very high level. So those guys are going to have to be thrust into opportunities. And even a guy like Kahlil Benson who can play inside and outside, those

opportunities are going to be there.

So it's just a matter of our guys coming together and stepping up, getting better. And you hate it for one guy, and it's an opportunity for the next, you know. So that's why Parker came here was for this opportunity to be able to -- a chance to get on the field and compete and play in the Big 10 and prove to everybody that he can. So excited for those guys and excited for our football team.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the 23 missed tackles on Friday. And I think after the game, you said it was the least amount of live tackling that you did during fall camp. So I guess what are you doing to improve that? Is that something you hope that there's just natural progression with more games? Or are you tackling more in practice I guess this week? What's your approach?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. It's a great point. I think also to -- I think it was who we were tackling, you know. Number 2 and Number 1 I think are really talented players, you know. And so not going to take anything away from them. We will not tackle more live in practice. That's not going to happen. But we will definitely do some additional drills per the issues.

And we basically -- when we create drills, we take the film and simulate that -- whatever happened in the game that we didn't like the response, the result, and we recreate it in practice. So a lot of leg drive drills. We call it drive for five with our tackling technique and the way we do different things. So we're going to do more drills for that and just different things for wrapping up. We have a gator roll that we use most people call that anyways. But just trying to do specific drills against -- and we may even tackle our scout team running backs in drills like that but not going against each other ones versus ones kind of thing.

But I don't know if you can ever -- I don't know if I've ever had a game one where you say, man, we had awesome tackling in game one. I just think it's hard to do that. And, yes, it is true we did tackle less than we ever have live. But we also work on it a ton. And we had a lot of good tackles. I tell you that one tackle that Taiwan had at the end on that jet sweep was phenomenal. That kid, I tell you, he came to me, he grabbed me, he was like, Coach, we are winning this football -- this is like with 5 to 6 minutes to go in the game. He's like, Coach, we're winning this football game. I said, Just keep playing, bud, just keep on playing. But it was just that grit and toughness. I could go on and on about guys that were so determined. And it showed up at the end for a guy like that.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask about Bradley Jennings. I

guess when you're looking at guys in the transfer portal or when you're watching Bradley's film, when you're talking to him, what's the attitude as to like he's a guy that we have to get to IU?

TOM ALLEN: The surge to the ball, the burst to the ball, the acceleration the violence he has. He's a powerful kid. He's a good tackler. But he's playing his first game with us in a new system, and I think it showed up a little bit some of his fits. But I tell you what, he's a really good kid that loves football. I mean, he loves it and studies it, cares a whole lot. And, you know, it was interesting. So we do book studies every year. So the book that we did with our team was *The Traveler's Gift* during fall camp. And there's a chapter in there about Abraham Lincoln, and he talks about why he picked General Grant at the end. He picked several different generals, and it didn't go real well. So he had to pick another one and another one.

But he was asked why he thought that he was going to be successful -- this is before the war was won -- and he said, Because he cares as much as I do and he's going to fight. And I shared that with our team. I said, I want to find a bunch of players and a bunch of coaches that care like I do and want to fight and they want to fight to find a way to get to the ball carrier on defense or stay on that block on offense or make that play as a receiver or make that throw as a quarterback. And so to me I think Bradley cares. And I think he plays his tail off.

And we want to find guys like that, you know, that -- and I get it. We've been asked a million times how do you bring in new guys and get them to buy into your culture? It's not easy. You don't know them as long, it's a shorter process and it's a tough judgment call. But those are the things we're looking for because, to me, that's what shows up out on that field when it matters. And there's a lot of kids across the country, but how do you get the right guys that want to come here and you want them and they want you and get that combination. So it's just -- but that, to me, is what it comes down to and guys that want to work. We've got a lot of guys down there in that hallway that are like that.

And that's important, you know, because it's tough. Every game you watch -- and we got a chance to watch a few games on Saturday because of not playing -- and, man, it's hard to win. It's tough. A lot of things have to go your way and things can go against you that -- they're just out of nowhere sometimes. But coming together, fighting together, stringing together, working together and finding players like Bradley that want to be here and want to play their tails off for the guys around them. And I think that's what he brings

Q. Tom, I'm just curious on your philosophy. 23 seconds on defense to stop them and then Florida State had a situation where, you know, 99 yards stop them. Do you like to still be aggressive? Do you like to keep your defense? Do you play more passively? What is your philosophy to that?

TOM ALLEN: It's a great question. You also have to know what do they need? They just needed a field goal for us. And so without giving away what we're going to do in those situations, I would definitely choose to be aggressive more. Now, if they have to have a touchdown, okay, and not a field goal, that changes things. You're going to be willing to give up the underneath -- because what you're trying to do at that point is get an inbounds tackle. If you get an inbounds tackle with that -- you've got 23 seconds to go in the game and they have to have a touchdown, well, then you're talking about a whole different animal. Now, if they've only got to get to the 35 yard line or 30 yard line to get a long field goal to tie it to send it to overtime, which is what the case was for us, you've got to be a little more aggressive. We tried to kind of do a little bit of both in some of that with the play, with some help over the top, but also we play some a little more aggressive man coverage on a couple of those calls. And so it's just a -- but it's a gut feel. It's film preparation. We go through and we study what they try to do in those situations and give us the best chance. But I think the biggest variable is what do they need. That's one thing we talk about all the time in practice. Do they need a field goal? Do they need a touchdown? Maybe they've got to have a touchdown and a two point conversion. So whatever the situation is. And I know in that situation last night, they needed to score a touchdown. But bottom line is that's the driving force. And then you get your scheme from there. But the big thing is execute. Play with technique in those moments and not try to freelance and do your own thing in that opportunity to be able to finish the game and get off the field. So great question.

Awesome. Have a great day. LEO

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