

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: All right. Just want to start by saying thoughts and prayers continue with Mike Hart. It's good to hear he's doing better. But continue to pray for him. Special guy that means a lot to our program.

Proud of our guys' fight. Obviously didn't finish. Had some guys out, guys stepped up. But got to continue to focus and build off the things we did well, continue to improve the things we need to finish.

Appreciate our crowd. Thought they were awesome. Appreciate our student section. They've been great all year. (Indiscernible), didn't faze them. Appreciate that. It's huge for our team, means a lot. I really, really appreciate that.

Update on some injuries. Cam Jones will be out for several weeks. A.J. Barner week to week. Jaylin Williams, week to week. Javon Swinton is hopefully a game time decision this week. D.J. Matthews, as well, being a game time decision this week. Hope to get some guys back. Working really, really hard to be able to get as healthy as we possibly can each week.

Proud of our scouts. Don't ever want to forget to mention those guys each week. Venson Sneed was defensive scout player of the week. Freshman that is going to be a really good player for us here. Carter Smith, Declan McMahon, also scout team players of the week, giving great effort to us, helping us get prepared every time we take the field. Cam Jordan, the special teams scout team player of the week. Appreciate those guys, the effort they've given us, consistently give us.

Also want to congratulate the Hall of Fame class being inducted this weekend. Special congratulations to Don Fischer as part of that. Appreciate all that he represents about our program and IU athletics. Just been amazing.

Opportunity this week to play a very good football team in Maryland. Coach Locksley has done a great job there, continues to build that team. Very, very talented football team, will be coming here to Bloomington for a 3:30 kickoff.

They have a lot of play-makers on offense, throw the ball well, run the ball effectively. Defense plays hard, really good specialists.

Also, as we've put out a statement, have made a change at the offensive line position coaching. Rod Carey will be our new offensive line coach. You'll have a chance to talk to him here this afternoon.

I appreciate you guys being here. Ready for questions.

Q. What is Coach Carey's official title for now? What was the evaluation process that you went through that led you to determine that a change needed to be made and that Coach Carey was kind of the right person?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, as we've said, weekly evaluation. There's a standard that we play with, want to play with. I didn't think we were playing to that standard on the offensive line. Wanted to see improvement. Did not see it to the degree that we needed. I felt like a change was necessary.

Just going through, having Rod here with us, that wasn't the plan when he came here, for this to happen, to be honest with you. He knows that. We talked about that.

But to have a guy of his experience as an FBS head coach for 10 years. He's really an offensive line guy. That's the position he played here. That's where his eyes go.

He's been offensive coordinator, obviously as I mentioned head coach. The chance to have someone right here with us on a consistent basis in our staff meetings, around our players, to be able to utilize that was a very positive thing, without question.

He loves Indiana, believes in what we're doing. Excited to have him in that role. He'll be the offensive line coach and run game coordinator.

Q. Regarding Darren, when you had one of the one-on-one conversations with him in the off-season, were there things you asked for as far as process was concerned, how you wanted the offensive line to

operate, that he either didn't do or failed to meet, or was it just an issue of results?

TOM ALLEN: I think we've stated that we made a change. Obviously you have a performance-based assessment for our position groups. That's what we tell our coaches. Accountability for the way they perform. To me it wasn't meeting the standard we have to have to be able to be successful on game day in this conference.

When that doesn't happen and you don't get the results you want, then you make a change, and that's what we've done.

Q. This season you've talked about playing a lot more guys on defense to try to create that added depth. Now you're in a position without Cam and Jaylin, how do you feel about that depth? Are there any guys you think have stepped up that are ready?

TOM ALLEN: Well, it definitely was the focus. We've stated that. I'm glad we did.

I thought that Bradley Jennings played extremely well. Made some mistakes, but I thought he played extremely well. Took his game to another level. Even Aaron Casey. A year ago at this time he wasn't playing much. Got a chance to play later in the year, didn't play very well. The ability to fix that.

Matt Hohlt had some valuable reps, big stops for us on Saturday. I think that was huge. Chris Keys, chances for him to step up. He played extremely well for us, which is huge. Phillip Dunnam, by design, getting him more involved. Same with Josh Sanguinetti. Those guys playing a lot of reps. Even Brylon Lanier at corner.

Intentionally playing those guys in the first several weeks of the season to make sure they're ready. Obviously you don't know who's going to get injured. You don't want anybody to get injured, but when it happens you have to have that depth ready.

I think it definitely showed up on Saturday. It has to continue. Some guys were trying to be back, some guys will be back in a few more weeks. But at the same time you recruit guys, even Kaiden Turner, brought him up this past week with the ones and the twos, got him some reps there. Obviously a true freshman that needs to be ready when called upon.

I think about that linebacker room because that's been hit by the loss of Cam, the cornerback room with Jaylin's injury. Those guys having a chance to get valuable reps the last several weeks. It's got to continue.

Defensive line same thing, guys that rotate in there, continue to play a lot of guys. I think even Monster, we had the conversation. He's able not to play as many snaps. Helps him to be able to finish stronger and play better throughout the course of the game.

Q. What did you like that your team did against Michigan and in the first half of the season that you have to expand on if you're going to have a more successful second half?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think bottom line is that even today we go show clips from the game. You see the defense flying around, getting some big stops, huge takeaway in the red zone, score zone area.

I feel like the execution has continued to improve, but it's not where it needs to be. I think you kind of go through and say you play a team like Michigan, you have one 50-yard run that was early in the game, you have four guys around him, don't get him on the ground. It should be a minimal gain. Give him credit for his ability. But to finish those situations.

Rest of the game you play good run defense the rest of the way. It's that consistency we have to have. Playing a lot of guys, a challenge to get all those guys on the same page. When you see when the guys do it, we showed a whole bunch of clips with our guys, when we do things the correct way, this is the result. We don't communicate, we don't execute, you give up big plays. You're playing against teams and athletes that can make you pay in a hurry.

You build off of the effort, which has been consistent. You build off defensively the tackling. Offensively when we're in rhythm, our guys are moving the football, we scored two touchdowns, one of them got called back controversially. You get a chance to get down there, score another field goal, you have a chance to get 17 points in the first half, you feel different about how those drives finish.

You know it's played out. We played a really good Illinois defense week one. They're number one in the nation right now in scoring defense. Did some really good things against them, especially when we needed to.

You build off of what you see on film, you see your guys do. You fight through the injuries, you fight through the issues you have with all that, keep developing your players.

It's a long season. We're at the halfway point. We're not where we want to be right now, the way we finished the last two games. At the same time you have to continue to

build off the positives from the first half of the season and you take those into the second half because obviously the second half of the season is going to define how everything is determined.

A lot to build off of. I'm one that chooses to focus on the things that we've done well, build the confidence in that, then correct the mistakes. Obviously that's going to be in multiple layers, a lot of things to all that, but that's the objective right now.

Q. With Cam Jones, obviously he can't play, but the leadership he's showing on the sidelines, seems animated there, can you talk about that.

TOM ALLEN: Well, he and I met. We found out he's going to be out for a little bit. That was really what our talk was about. First of all, making sure he was okay. I know how hard he's worked, how devastated he was.

But then the next conversation was, Okay, Cam, you're now in a different role, all right? As you're rehabbing, getting yourself healthy, you got to lead this team from the sideline. I know that's harder to do than it is when you're playing. But you've earned the right to continue to speak.

Basically in practice, same thing. He still brings the guys up. He gives them a charge before practice. A couple guys have stepped up, Noah Pierre and Bryant Fitzgerald would be two guys that have verbally stepped up during the week to kind of fill that void on the field for Cam.

He understands that he's the captain of this football team. He is our leader. So that leadership does not stop just because he's not able to play right now.

I was really not surprised, but encouraged by his leadership that he showed on the sideline. When they come off the field... As a matter of fact, he's taking notes during meetings. He knows the game plan. He's making sure that the guys are making the checks and adjustments. It's because he cares. He's a special, special player. He's a special person. So I'm proud of him for that.

I've seen a lot of guys handle these injuries different ways, a lot of great players that can get a little bit disconnected because they're not out there. That's not been the case with him.

He knows the game plan, he's involved, engaged. We took him to the hotel with us. You can only take so many guys for even a home game because it's a conference game. We feel like he's that valuable, you take him in those numbers. Why? Because he affects the outcome of the game even though he can't physically play, since he's the

captain.

Just been very, very proud of that. Obviously his first opportunity this past weekend. I expect that to continue.

Q. Back to the coaching change. How did you break this news to your players and how have you seen them process it over the last couple days? As the dust settles on this, what are you looking for from those guys this week?

TOM ALLEN: I told the offensive line in person on Sunday afternoon, early afternoon. I wanted to tell them face to face. Yeah, there was a lot of emotions. They love Coach Hiller. I love Coach Hiller. Relationships with people matter. People matter. It's families. I know everybody just throws stuff around, says things. I get that, understand that's probably what we do. But there's people below this.

Our players were emotional. There's connections. They took it personal in a good way. You know what, they know it's about accountability, those guys stepping up, challenging them to be able to rise up as a group, to be able to play for each other. To me it's accountability of the whole offense, it's the whole team that embraces who we are and what we're all about and the standards we have, the people we have as part of the staff.

Yeah, you go through. Told the whole team. Today everything gets put out there publicly. But talked about it as a whole group today, this morning in our team meeting.

But it's something that the decision has been made. Coach Carey is now in that role and we're going to move forward. The expectation is those guys to play the standard that we have to play at to win Big Ten football games.

That is what the objective is. That is the expectation. I am for excited for Coach Carey to be in this role.

Q. We spoke to Connor. He said the offense is on the cusp of breaking out, said they're due. What are you seeing from the offense that's preventing them from getting over that hump, what do they need to do?

TOM ALLEN: I don't disagree. I see the evidence as well. But I also see that we got to be able to play at a higher level in the second half, be able to finish those drives.

To me, our kids practiced hard last week, they responded to the changes we made with our structure. Will have some modifications this week as well.

To me it's about core confidence in what we're doing. Still

execution is paramount. You can't get away from that. You can't be jumping off-sides, making mistakes. You get a drive killer against the team of the caliber of Michigan. You play a road game, you can't make mistakes on the road with all the adversity that creates.

To me, it's about consistent execution. I keep saying it because it doesn't change. You can't go through and be effective on either side of the ball without doing the little things correctly. It's the whole group, everybody doing their job.

Pass protection is not just the offensive line, it's a big part of it, no doubt, but there are other things involved as well. It's our staff, it's our players, our quarterback, it's our receivers, it's our running backs, a part of all that, everybody taking ownership of that as a group.

To me they've shown what they can be, they've shown what they can do. The ability for us to get the ball in the end zone, stay on the field as an offense. We see what happens when we don't.

You know what you need to do, and you make the adjustments you need to make. At the end of the day you have to stay the course and continue to fight, demand the little things when it matters the most. We're going to be at our best, like we were early in the season, the finish of those two critical drives we had to have.

To me that's what the expectation is, what we have to get to. I know our coaches feel that. We're not going to be dissuaded by anything that this is the goal, objective. We have to stay together, fight together, get this thing fixed.

Q. Maryland lost their last two ball games, but they're an improved football team. Where do you see the biggest improvement on them and why are they such a good football team?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I would say we've obviously played them every year I've been here. I think every single time we've played them it's come down to the final possession, whether it's here or there.

Always have had a lot of athletes, always have had a lot of speed. One of the most athletic teams we play every year. That's never changed. That's still the case this year.

I think the thing that sticks out to me is quarterback play. I think that he's continued to get better and better. He's a special quarterback. He played well last year in our game. He's played well this year. That to me is the key. That's a big part of it.

Like you said, the athleticism in the backfield, receivers, has always been elite every time we played them. Guys we're very conscious of, where they were on the field, how they were trying to get them the ball. Defensively they've always played hard. They're big, athletic, can run.

If I had to pick one thing, it would be that, is the play of their quarterback. That's allowed them I think to be able to elevate their game and win some of those close games. I know they had a close one here this past weekend.

You play in this conference, that's what's going to happen. Games are going to come down to the final possession. That's how games are decided.

Coach, as I said before, has done a really good job there. Recruited. A lot of talent in that area where they're at, know that. They've tried to keep those guys at home, and that's made an impact.

Q. Chris Keys tore his ACL last season. How did you see him deal with that, how he's developed?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, he's a guy that we identified that felt like he's tall, very athletic, he's one of the most athletic players on our team in terms of just jumping and running, change of direction, special for his length.

So disappointed he did have that injury a year ago. Really set him back. Those injuries are really hard. The recovery process is very long, demanding, very, very trying mentally and physically. There were ups and downs during that process.

Even the start of this year, always wanted more urgency out of Chris. I tell you what, he's responded. It's not like it just flips the switch, all of a sudden... He started practicing better several weeks ago. You could kind of see the growth.

I even commented about it, Chris is really starting to play the way I expected him to. The way he played Saturday... As a matter of fact I mentioned it to him in front of our whole team this morning. Chris, I believe you're playing the way I believed you could play when we recruited you to come here. But there is a confidence that creates.

It's doing the little things daily. He's had to really learn to be very consistent in his life, consistent in how he takes care of himself, consistent in how he mentally approaches everything. He's a great kid.

But the urgency, I'm starting to see it. It's showing up. Like anything else, everybody wants to play, but are you willing to do the little things it takes to play. Are you ready

to be called upon when somebody in front of you goes down.

He was ready. He performed really, really well against a lot of quality receivers. I thought it's a huge boost for our program. Has to keep building off of that this week, continue to give us great depth there.

Q. Going back to Coach Carey, did you know him before he came here? What is the relationship you two have developed?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, actually we did not. We've talked about that even recently. I knew who he was. We actually almost crossed paths coaching-wise when Northern Illinois played Arkansas State in the bowl game back in it would have been after the 2011 season. I was at Arkansas State. But we had just gotten the job at Ole Miss. I went on with that staff to take that job. We didn't coach in the bowl game. We went and watched the bowl game. He was coaching on that staff.

We never got a chance to coach against each other, but I knew who he was. One of our alumni more than anything knows some of his former teammates. One of them reached out to me about the opportunity for us to consider bringing him here as a QC after he was at Temple. That was really our first conversation, was when I picked up the phone and called him and talked about coming here.

So just really more from his former teammates from here that I know well. They're the ones that got us connected. But knew of him, always respected him. He's done a great job. Did an awesome job there at Northern Illinois, then got the opportunity at Temple. Good ball coach, tough, Mallory guy. Played offensive line, center, smart, tough, dependable. The kind of guy we're looking for.

I've enjoyed having him on our staff. He's actually been working with the defensive line predominantly. He would do things for the offensive line from a QC perspective. He would be with our staff a lot defensively, giving us a perspective from the offensive side of the football, from a blocking scheme perspective, how we attack protections. Really enjoyed being with him.

That was the really connection and it was more about the fact that he was from here was really the strong tie. He did want to come back, spend some time here. It kind of all just worked out.

Awesome, appreciate you guys, have an awesome day.
LEO.

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