

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: All right. Good afternoon, appreciate you guys joining us. Just want to follow up from our game day with Jack Tuttle, had a shoulder injury during the game; and he's continuing to be evaluated with a shoulder specialist, and we'll know more about his status here in a few days.

And Connor Bazalak will be back with us and has come back from his time being injured and will be our starting quarterback.

And excited about this opportunity we have to go to Columbus to play against the No. 2-ranked Buckeyes. Coach Day continues to do a tremendous job with that program, and the way that they are playing right now, and at all three phases, obviously a lot of talented players, very good coaches and will be a tremendous challenge for us to play on the road against such a really good football team.

Want to recognize some guys that continue to do a great job for us on our scout teams: Carter Smith; Jackson Schott, Offensive Scout Team Players of the Week. We have Mitchell Evans as our Defensive Scout Teams Player of the Week, and Brady Simmons as our Special Teams Scout Player of the week. We appreciate their effort and all they do to get us ready each and every week.

Ready for questions.

Q. Forgive, I don't know how to ask this other than bluntly: You said Connor is kind of moving back into starting, he's healthy, he's going to start Saturday. Does anything you saw from Brendan or Dexter on Saturday, maybe their reaction to it, make you rethink the possibility of opening, I don't want to say the competition up to them, but giving them an opportunity to earn more snaps this season? Or is your mind -- are you of the mind to just say it's Connor, as long as he's healthy from now through the end of the year?

TOM ALLEN: I would say that I saw enough from Dexter that I was very encouraged by the way he responded and

the way he played. I like the way he threw the football. Obviously had one poor decision, but I thought that ran the football with something that we need, and can help us for sure.

So yeah, you try to maximize your entire roster. So yeah, I think that Dexter showed me that he's earned a right to be able to be out there. So that will definitely be a part of the moving forward equation, yes.

Q. On Saturday, Josh Sales got the start at right tackle and in the first half he was replaced by Parker Hanna. I remember seeing Josh come back on the field. Was that an injury or performance? What happened with Josh?

TOM ALLEN: It was an injury. We are hoping to get him back. He was held out the rest of the game.

So we don't know for sure on his status yet. It's ongoing. Met with the medical staff this morning. It's due to injury. He's definitely been playing better for us, and just need to continue to get him more reps and continue to develop him. So he's been doing a good job for us.

Q. Josh just seems to be successful when he touches the ball. He doesn't seem to get that many touches this past week, seven carries, 44 yards for a nice average, four catches. We've been told that this has been looked at but still he's averaging seven carries a game, and he seems to be the most productive running back on the offensive side. Just curious why there has not been a shift to get him more touches?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I agree with your assessment. The numbers support that.

Yes, I agree and I think that we have to continue to find ways to get him more involved. I think there's no question about it. I think Jay is a guy we have seen be productive as well, we talk about getting him the football as well as some other guys on the perimeter.

Yeah, I think Josh to me has turned out to be a very complete back. I felt like that was one of his strengths



going into the season, his ability to do multiple things well and that's continued to be true. I think his running ability is also something that's continued to impress.

So yeah, a guy like that, obviously got to have a chance to get him the football more so he can help this football team be successful.

Q. Connor, you said he was dinged up what was his injury, and when did that happen? I didn't think I saw him on the sideline during the game with the rest of the quarterbacks. Wondering where he was during the game. Was he practicing last week, and I guess when did you know he would not be able to go?

TOM ALLEN: He was in the press box communicating with our staff, helping us in that regard, as we have done with one of our quarterbacks each week. And so he did not practice, and he is healthy now and so he was just -- he was beat up pretty good.

So there's multiple things and just wasn't able to, I believe, play at the level he needed to play at to be what we needed him to be. So that was the reason for him not being there. But yeah, he was in the press box.

Q. Going back to Dexter, what all do you remember from his recruiting process and watching him develop as a recruit?

TOM ALLEN: He was a guy, under the radar recruit out of the State of Georgia. Small school. I do remember when I went there to make my in-person visit, and you only get so many of those as head coach.

Just the way the community there, the school community he was a part of just raved about him as a person, as a leader, his character. Just the way he treated people. Obviously his athleticism on the football field was noticeable at a high level but the character piece, that's what I love about him and really in that position as a quarterback.

Then he was one of those guys that we kind of had him on the list of priority, and we were very honest with him about that, and we were kind of waiting on another guy to make his decision if he was going to come or not. And when he chose to not come here and go somewhere else, we gave Dexter that spot to be here and he immediately accepted it and was so fired up to come. Just a guy that's extremely well-liked on our team, highly respected, had a tough injury since he was here losing the whole year with his ACL.

Just recruiting him, enjoyed the process. Such an appreciative, thankful -- so excited to be able to be given

this opportunity and kind of one of those little diamond-in-the-rough kind of guy that you find that didn't have a lot of high-level offers. But at the same time, we saw something in him, and he's come here, and as I've said even after the game, he's showed that he's got a lot. I just think he did a lot of good things during the game.

So just a growth process for him, without question. I just love the kid because he's just everything you want in a teammate, in a leader and a guy that's part of our program, represents us well.

Q. You had 2-10 last year, six straight losses this year. How do you keep guys from getting numb to the losing and keep their energy up as they struggle week-after-week?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, it's a challenge for sure. You know, when you have continuous setbacks that are tough. But you share with them from your heart to theirs. You motivate them. You encourage them, challenge them. You really, I think you appeal to the core of who you are and why you do what you do.

The conversation, the challenge I gave to our team this morning in our team meeting was really around that focus of the core of your individual character and what makes you persevere when things are hard, which is really one of the huge benefits of being an athlete is having this preparation process that we go through, as hard as it is and challenging as it is, which right now it's difficult on everybody that's part of this program.

So yeah, you just appeal to that and you continue to do the things that you believe in. You make some changes because you have to make, you know, whatever you need to do to try and create a different outcome. And we obviously play a lot of really good football teams and so that's part of the process we go through.

So yeah, it's really challenging without question, but we don't just sit here and act like nothing's going on. I don't think you get numb to it. When you care so much and you're passionate about what you do, I think just the fight and the toughness, and the grit just gets taken to another level and you have to be that way. I know it's hard and you try to find out who really truly has those qualities and who needs to be in a position to have them developed at a higher level.

So we will continue to fight and battle and that's what this team is going to do and that's what we are all about here. But that's part of being in the tough cycle we are going through right now, and we have to find a way to break through it.



Q. Do you feel there are a couple guys who losing maybe has gotten a little too easy for?

TOM ALLEN: I can't think of anybody that comes to mind that losing has become easy to them, no.

Q. Following up on that, you mentioned that you guys have to break the cycle of losing here. Two years ago, you were on an upward trajectory, kind of capturing the heart of America, and now you guys are kind of bombing out a little bit. What do you guys need to do to change that cycle, and what do you guys need to do different to get back on that upward trajectory?

TOM ALLEN: The obvious thing is that we have to find a way to win. I think it's also a byproduct of doing things the right way and that to me becomes a consistent focus of how do you make those corrections, and there's schematic corrections, there's fundamental questions.

And for us right now, it's back to basics of blocking and tackling and trying to make sure that we are emphasizing those in the proper way to create those opportunities in those games to be able to create a game-changing play that can create a game-changing momentum in that situation, and then win a big game, and then, you know, just win a game right now and be able to get momentum off of that.

So to me, it's like anything else when you go through a challenge, it's one step at a time, one day at a time. Focus on the process. That doesn't change. You don't get caught up in the circumstances and all the outside noise. You just stay the course, and you block everything else and you continue to develop the guys that we have here and continue to recruit the guys to here and continue to try to find a way.

It's a daily process of staying and sticking to what you believe in and trying to find a way to create a different product by doing the little things the right way, and then ultimately get that key win, and then build off of that.

Q. Can you talk about the way James Evans and Charles Campbell have played this year and what they have meant to the program?

TOM ALLEN: Well, you know, James has continued to perform at a high level. He had one punt we wish we had back.

But other than that, really did a great job in a really tough environment on Saturday wind-wise, and was excellent, and obviously with our offense struggling right now, that's

huge for us right now to have those opportunities and try to flip the field with his kicks rather than maybe with their offense, our offense moving the football the way they need to.

And Charles Campbell continues to be consistent. He's just a rock-solid guy that continues to be one of most accurate kickers in America, and the guys are just doing what we ask them to do when they came here, which was provide the winning edge to our team by making game-changing plays.

So you know, a punter is a big deal. I believe in that. That's what we have always emphasized, getting guys in those positions, and going out and recruiting the best that we can find that fit us and can do a great job for us.

So James has continued to punt at a high level, and it's been neat to see him develop into the kind of punter that I thought he would be when we recruited him.

And then Charles has just proven to be really clutch, which is a great quality for a kicker. You can have a strong leg but if you're not clutch in those pressure moments, it doesn't really matter. He continued to be a guy that when the pressure is on, he's at his best.

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