

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Appreciate the opportunity here to talk. Really excited about Bob Bostad. I know you guys had a chance to talk to him a few minutes ago, but just the opportunity to bring someone of his caliber to his program in the area of offensive line, just an elite football coach, awesome person, one of the best in the country at what he does, and just really, really fortunate to be able to have him here with us.

Has already in the short time we've been together, just the ultimate pro in what he does and just a great recruiter, understanding his position and what he needs at that spot, and just going to be looking forward to working with him and what he brings to our program in an area that we needed to improve at for sure, and really excited for him to get with our players once we get off the road recruiting and get a chance to start developing those guys on a daily basis. Really excited about it.

Also really excited to have Steve join us here as our new director of recruiting, and just the experience he brings, the places he's been, just being able to bring new ideas and new leadership in that area, restructure our whole recruiting department in a lot of ways, just to be able to adapt to the new landscape that we're in in college sports.

So going to add a position, as well, in the process of being able to find that person and to be able to help us grow as we continue to maximize the evaluation process and the way that the players now are at our disposal to be able to evaluate. It's an expanded group beyond just high school players now, so being able to maximize that, so we're excited about his leadership there and being able to help us grow and continue to do a better job.

I just have never ceased to say that. We have got to be tremendous evaluators in this program and we have to be great developers, as well. The evaluation process, want to do a better job of that as we continue to expand and grow, and also the class we brought in of transfers, many, many young men that have played at a high level collegiately and have had opportunities to be able to be successful, and now they're going to be coming to Indiana and continuing

to help us build our program.

Really excited about the class and the ability to be able to develop those guys, get to know them at a more high level here real soon. Obviously the start of that process -- some of those guys have started before we ever brought them here by recruiting them the first time around out of high school, and then also being able to get guys here that can help us and help us grow.

I will be really, really diving into them here once we get off the road here this next week. Got to finish up this next phase of recruiting. It's now in phase 3, and I consider it a four-phase process, so phase 3 is up next here, and we've got one week to close out that and then be ready to assign, and probably just going to be a handful of guys on February 1st.

Excited to talk about any of these guys you'd like to talk about, and excited about the rest of our spring. Question?

Q. I imagine this could be a much longer answer, but what does that look like in terms of talking about restructuring sort of recruiting, maybe not philosophy but the process, especially in trying to evaluate maybe more quickly in some situations a guy out of the portal, trying to figure out the balance of high school versus transfer, that sort of thing? What is that going to look like on a day-to-day basis for you guys?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, it's a great question because it has really changed, I think. For me, I always kind of use the NFL as the model. This is what they do full-time in regards to they don't have the academic piece to handle like we do.

Just the way they've structured and how they evaluate their players, so going to follow that model and go through as we recreate and add a division of college scouting that we've not had in the past, and to me that's the ability for us to evaluate players that are in the portal and to be able to very efficiently -- you kind of think how this transpired this past year, I think you had the date of December 5th, where the portal opened, and you had 1,200 players go in the portal in that window of time, and you had to get them evaluated quickly. We were already on the road recruiting, and you had to get them evaluated and then be able to

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figure out who you wanted to target and then build those relationships to convince them to come to campus to visit.

So just trying to be able to get ahead of all that whole process and add a whole new division for that to me is what we're going to be able to do, and then to continue to do a great job evaluating our high school players. That part has not changed. That will be a staple for who we are and what we do here as a developmental program.

But this new dimension that we have to have is the ability to maximize that whole process, and so get those guys evaluated and to be able to do a great job of overseeing that, organizing that, and dividing our staff accordingly. Right now we just took the staff that we had and divvied it all up which made us pretty thin.

That to me is a big part of it, and also just continuing to maximize the NIL component to all of this, which is a big part of everything that we're working through. So there's just new complexities that make it more challenging without question, so bringing in a guy like Steve with his experience in this area, and to be able to help us grow in that part of our recruiting is going to be very, very important.

Q. Kind of a two-part question. Obviously big news at quarterback, you got Tayven Jackson in. I know you guys were recruiting him out of high school. What have you liked about him and how do you think he can impact? Second thing is he doesn't have a ton of experience. Are you still on the lookout for maybe a more experienced guy, an older guy to bring in, or are you guys done at quarterback going forward?

TOM ALLEN: Well, the first part of your question about him as a player out of high school, yeah, we've been recruiting him ever since he was young coming through there at center grove and had built that relationship with him and always enjoyed our conversations.

As you may or may not know, early in the process we can't reach out to them. They have to be able to reach out to us. So we had a scheduled time. He called me every Sunday afternoon, and loved those talks we had together. But he would have to initiate that in terms of he would have to call me. So he was always awesome with that when he was only a sophomore in high school and just coming through the ranks.

Just built that with his family, and obviously made a decision, but we recruited him hard. You felt like -- it happened pretty quickly when he made the decision to go in the portal and then reached out to us, but bottom line was we already had that relationship built.

What we liked about him was his athleticism. He's a long athlete, multisport guy, basketball, track, all three of those, and just felt like that he could create with his legs, with his arm. He's a tremendous leader. Have a lot of close ties to their staff and know them well, which allows us to know him even better, the behind the scenes leadership piece that he brought and the confidence and the swagger that he brings to a room when he walks in there.

Those are things you're looking for in a quarterback, the ability to throw the football and run the football, has had dual effectiveness in high school and then you saw that even this past year playing the time that he played at Tennessee.

To be able to bring a young man of that caliber is very, very important, but you're right, he is young, so right now we have four scholarship quarterbacks on the team. Dexter's situation creates a little bit different dynamic trying to figure out how that's going to play itself out, obviously the serious injury he's had and how that would affect him moving forward.

Have had discussions about that, but that's one of those things that is a little challenging to do. Sounds great, being able to bring an older guy in to do all of that, but not sure how that's going to play itself out. Don't have plans to do that right now. We're going to go through spring football right now and then reevaluate at that point, but we will not be adding anybody else to our team before spring football at any position.

But right now we're excited about the whole class of guys that we have, both high school guys as well as the transfers, and they've all come into our team, and now our job is to build the best team, and that process is a daily basis, and our strength staff is heavily involved in that right now, and they do a phenomenal job. So excited about what the spring has to offer us.

Q. When it comes to adding players between now and the final recruiting period, what are the positions that you are focused on making additions here late?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I would say some more depth on the defensive line would be a focus. Probably a guy or two in the secondary, probably going to go younger with that group, as well, potentially young wide receiver, as well.

I would say I feel good about where we're at on the offensive line, could add an additional spot there. We have some flexibility with that. Then also tight end gives us a little flexibility. We've got one potential piece there to figure out. Feel good where we're at at receiver. Then as you

said, adding a young one I think would be a good goal to have.

Now, those things can -- when you say that, you look at you could have a possibility of having guys that have three or four years left to play. They may choose to make themselves available after spring football. Those are all things -- we kind of categorize based on each room, do you need an older guy, younger guy, so sometimes that younger guy could be a high school player or could be a transfer with three or four years left to play.

Just definitely a whole new world of opportunities that we have now for us to pick from that have not had in the past, and the ability to have that movement.

But I would say the defensive line would probably be the biggest focus at this point.

Q. In sticking to that defensive line, in particular Andre Carter and Philip, maybe Collins, as well, what attributes do they bring?

TOM ALLEN: I'll tell you what, I'm really excited about all those guys. Big, physical athletes is the way I would describe them, a lot of length. Andre has played a lot of football. Phil has played a lot of football. They both are very athletic. Already seen them at our workouts since they've been here. Marcus Burris, same thing, very athletic young man out of Texas A&M, and then Lanell Carr, another one that's played a lot of football in the Big 12.

That just gives you a mature guy ready to step in there and play right away. That's the expectation, and we've obviously got guys already here that are going to have to compete.

That's one thing I challenge all of our guys. We had this talk at our last team meeting here this past Sunday night about embracing and being excited about the guys we've added to your room to be able to push you, to motivate you, to sharpen you as a player when you bring in other guys that you're going to compete against. That's the kind of room we want, and I want guys that are here that want that, that embrace that, that are excited about us adding new guys that might be older. It's different when you bring an older guy in and then you bring a younger guy in, they kind of have a different mindset about that, but at the same time I want a team that embraces that.

Those guys give us physicality, a lot of experience, and just some mass on the defensive line, which we know we have to have in the Big Ten.

Q. Tom, you mentioned the vastly altered recruiting

landscape. What does Steve bring to the table? What trait did you like about him that gets your recruiting where you want it to be?

TOM ALLEN: Well, there's several things. First of all, I like the fact that he's been at some places a lot like us, some places not as much like us in regards to how we approach things, so you get a broad spectrum of different ways of doing things across the country from different conferences and some places where you have to do a really great job of being a tremendous evaluator and finding those guys.

I rely on that person to be able to be a guy that can help us as a staff. While we're busy in there getting ourselves schematically ready each week, he's sitting there looking for players across the country that know that fit with us, that has enough connections in the areas where we have had success recruiting and has those relationships already built, which is important to me.

Also just the creativity, kind of the forward thinking, marketing mindset in recruiting, the maximization of technology, graphics, just the whole -- where the players live, which is social media, connecting with them there. I think just taking us to another level in that regard, and he brings that, as well, and his experience, places he's been, and just being able to help us, even to add some more staff that have had those experiences.

To me, it's just about we've got to keep getting better. We've done some good things. We've had some really good recruiting classes here, but we've got to continue to grow in that. We've got to find a more creative way.

We've got to maximize the transfer portal in the best most efficient way. I don't want it to be to where we rely on that, but there's good players out there that you can take advantage of but in the right way, and I think he has a good understanding of that, and coming straight from the SEC where football is king, and it's the focus, and everything you do there is built around that.

I love that mindset, and he's just also a great communicator, and he works well with others, because you've got all different personalities, coaches, support staff, everybody in between there that works with our team and works with our recruiting department, so he has the ability to bring all those people together and to help us with that one mission of finding the best players that fit with us.

Q. You added a couple wide receivers to the transfer portal. Can you talk about what those guys bring to the offense? And I don't think we've asked you about Cam Camper and his recovery, where he's at with that, and what's the timetable with him?

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TOM ALLEN: Okay, so first of all, EJ Williams, Dequece Carter, two guys we've added, two experienced players. EJ, long and athletic. He can run, and great ball skills. Very, very elite player out of high school. To me, I expect him to come here and play his best football, and really excited about having a chance to connect with him and develop him as a man, as a player, and just excited about what he brings to us athletically.

Quece - he goes by Quece - Dequece Carter is super, super productive, over 30 touchdowns, lots of yards, lots of catches. That's one thing you go, you take a guy, okay, let's go find a guy that has been highly, highly productive maybe at a smaller level but has that chip on his shoulder because he wants to prove he belongs with the big boys, and that's what he brings. He wants to come here and prove that he's a Big Ten guy and can make those same amount of plays.

I've learned this, that guys to make plays at those levels, they're usually transfers because it's all relative. He knows how to get open, and he's got tremendous ball skills to be able to make plays. He's got that swagger, that confidence that he believes that when he steps on the field he's going to make plays.

I love both those guys. I think they made that room a lot better, and I'm really excited to have them.

Also in regards to Cam, he's doing awesome. He's ahead of schedule. Doesn't surprise me at all. He's a worker. He's disciplined. He's mentally and physically tough. He does everything you ask him to do, which I knew adds to your qualities before the injury then that's going to be how you're going to attack your rehab, similar to some guys in the past that have done a really, really good job with that, and I'm really, really proud of him for it. I expect him to be able to do some things during the spring. He won't be full bore, but he'll be progressing, but he'll be 100 percent by the season without question.

Q. William Larkins has been super vocal, super active on social media, especially throughout the season, just doubling down on his commitment to Indiana through the ups and downs. Do you generally look for leadership from obviously incoming freshmen, and have you seen that especially from this incoming class? I know last year you saw a lot of guys who were coming, making sure that class stuck together?

TOM ALLEN: There's no question, and it takes special guys like that. There's no doubt that things didn't go the way we wanted them to during the season, and guys have a chance to make decisions off of that, and he chose to

stay with us and be committed.

He's a driven guy and works extremely hard. He's here right now with us as a mid-year enrollee. He's our only offensive lineman out of high school that's here now, and just love the way he works. He knows he's got to do it every single day, and he was part of one of the top high school programs in the country down there in Florida.

Just expect him to bring that when he gets here. Have had more time to be around him now, and he's got -- like every offensive lineman you bring in here out of high school, they always have to develop, and they have to develop at a high level in order to be able to be Big Ten guys. I think he has the right mindset for that, and he's going to come here and he's going to work.

But he's also, as you've said, he's not bashful to talk about how much he feels blessed and excited to be a part of our program.

Yeah, you want guys that want to be here, that love this place and feel like this is going to be their new home, and that's what you're looking for. Some guys are a little more vocal about it. He does a great job with that from a social media perspective. But we don't necessarily tell him to do that. I think it's more their personality.

But I also know that he has a really, really good work ethic. I'm all about guys that work and that let their play prove who they are on the field.

Q. Coach, you picked the word "toughness" as your word for this year. Why did you pick that word, and how do you expect the team to live that? What's the thing you're looking for to show you that they're living out that word this year?

TOM ALLEN: Well, the thing about it is that's a daily thing. We have three pillars in our program: Accountability, toughness and love. A chance to emphasize the thing that I thought we needed to emphasize. You get what you emphasize every year.

I just felt like mentally and physically I wanted us to be able to -- in order to close out these fourth quarter games, and that's really the driving factor for me was okay, you go back and evaluate our games, and we had four games where it could have gone either way, and it came down to fourth quarter maybe the final drive even in those games.

So how do you close that gap and create a different outcome. To me it's mental and physical toughness. It's the ability right now in January, who's coming in on Saturdays to do extra work when that's a discretionary day.

We have five days a week where we have required workouts with our guys. Well, everybody in America is doing that.

So I have a word that I challenge our guys with. I got it from a book I read this off-season, it's called a "gimper." What's a gimper? A gimper is someone who always does a little more than what's required or expected. I've challenged this team to be a team full of gimpers, coaches and players, just willing to do a little bit more.

To me that's the mental part of it, okay, because that sounds great, and when you start the off-season, everybody is willing to do a little extra. Well, who's doing that in February, who's doing that in March, who's doing that in April, who's doing that in May, who does that in July. It's just that continual mental toughness piece.

Then the physical part of it is just continuing to grow that. To me it's just about having a whole team that's just all in and bought in to allow us to be able to -- the margin for error is this. We play the schedule we're going to play. It is what it is every year. It's always the hardest or one of the hardest in the country, and that's okay, but you'd better be mentally and physically tough to embrace that challenge.

So just a new emphasis on that and the way we're going to do it with our guys, we have our accountability team that's working right now, and that's another way to mentally challenge our guys and hold them accountable for their behavior and the guys around them.

To me the toughness piece never goes away. I love it. I've always wanted this to be a really, really physically tough, mentally tough football team, and just gives us a chance to re-emphasize it, and that's what we're going to do this year in 2023.

Q. I was wondering if you could give us a little bit of an update on Dexter Williams and what's going on with him and how he's going to play next year in that quarterback spot and what you're looking for.

TOM ALLEN: So doing great. He's attacking his rehab. Still don't know what the future holds in regards to the season. Obviously initially it was the diagnosis was that he would be out for the whole year. It would be a 12-month recovery, so there is opportunities maybe for that to increase a little bit.

I just think time will tell. He's doing everything -- all I know is he's doing everything he's asked to do all day. Don't know, and he and I have already met, and he's like, Coach, whatever I can do I'm going to help this team win, whether

that's on the field, off the field, whatever. He's aware that he doesn't even know exactly what that might look like, either. But he's prepared for it to be an off-the-field role as he gets his body ready for whatever the future holds.

But he's that kind of guy, and this team is really important to him, and he wants to see us be great.

Whatever it looks like, he's going to be attacking it every single day, and I know that will be the case, and I believe he'll be -- when his body is ready, then he'll get a chance to get back out there.

Q. I know after the 2021 season you basically just went through a program evaluation of what you felt went right, what you felt went wrong, what needed to change. Did you do that again after this season, and is there anything new that you found that hey, we need to change this with practices or change this in areas that you feel like you can keep growing?

TOM ALLEN: Well, I would say yes, but not to the extent that it will be. We've been so full bore with recruiting right now, and that hasn't stopped. It's just been all-consuming, and that's great because that's what it should be.

As you're out recruiting and you have time, I've been evaluating a lot of film. I've been watching ourselves, been focused right now on our defense, things I want to be able to make changes with schematically. So we're going to do the same with our offense, and Coach Bell is doing that as he's out recruiting, and you get your opportunities, little windows with our laptops in our hotels at night, late at night after we've gotten done with everything recruiting-wise.

Working through that, and then also just going through just the scheduling piece, as well. Have our strength staff and our medical staff going through and just looking at -- once again we had several injuries to some key guys, so it's just a never-ending process trying to figure out how can we prevent those, how can we try to not have so many of those key guys out.

But at the same time, that's definitely ongoing. It'll get more intense here once we wrap up this next phase and get into -- because once you finish the February signing, then it's full bore focus and just get ready for spring football, which will start for us March 4, which will be here before you know it.

But just have to be able to continue that evaluation process and we're finishing up recruiting and then get to a high level once we get past here in about a week.

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