

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Matt Guerrieri

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Just appreciate everybody being here today. Good morning. I'm excited to be able to introduce Matt Guerrieri to our staff.

Really excited about having Matt joining us. We've known each other for over ten years, and really in this profession you have a chance to meet a lot of awesome people and talk ball and share ideas, and he is one of those.

When he worked for Coach Cut there at Duke for many years. So had a chance to build that relationship and a lot of similarities in philosophy defensively. And he was a safeties coach there when we first met him and then as a GA. Moved up to that role and then became the defensive coordinator there, called the defense for Duke there and Coach Cut for four years. Most recently been with Ohio State.

So excited to have him with us. Going to be a -- the situation is the way that I would like for this to be organized. Really I want to follow the pattern we used in 2019.

I'm going to have -- Coach Guerrieri will be calling the defense, much like Coach Wommack did. And I will be heavily involved, but he will be the play-caller on game day. That way it will allow me to be a better head football coach to it this team.

With everything that we have and the dynamics of college football today, I really feel like that's the best direction to go, but had to have the right person for that particular role. Excited to have him here, and we'll have him make an opening statement at this time.

MATT GUERRIERI: Great to be here, guys. Matt Guerrieri is my name. The prayers call me Coach G. No one has to pronounce that long Italian last name, including you guys.

But really excited to be here with Coach Allen in

Bloomington at IU. Really appreciate this opportunity from Coach Allen.

Just to tell you a little bit about me. My dad was in the Navy, so born in Maryland, lived in Naples, Italy, for a couple of years, back to Maryland. Ohio is home to me. My mom is from Cleveland, east side of Cleveland. That's where I was raised. My dad is from Youngstown. Spent time in Ohio.

I played college football at Davidson College, a little IAA school down near Charlotte. Met my wife there. We've been married for four years, but dated for ten years. The greatest recruitment I've ever had is ten years of keeping her around. One son that's 2 years old, and another son on the way.

Started my coaching career at Lenoir-Rhyne University, a D2 school in Hickory, North Carolina. Was at Duke University after that as a GA. Then safeties and co-defensive coordinator. Called plays there for four years.

Then I was at Ohio State this past year and at Tulsa for about a month before coming here to IU for this opportunity. That's my path and who I am. I'm an open book. I look forward to building relationships with all of you.

Q. Obviously there's a relationship there with Coach Allen, but what was it that he said to you? What was it about the opportunity that kind of resonated with you that made you want to come here and join this staff?

MATT GUERRIERI: I think a number of things, but when you look at IU in the Big Ten as a coach, you want to be at the highest level, and that's what this opportunity is here, right? To compete at the absolute highest level from you have a high-level, prestigious institution and you're competing in the greatest conference in the country.

So that was obviously exciting for me. Then my relationship with Coach Allen. I'm a relationship guy, and who we work is important, and I've known him for a decade.



I've been at his meetings at Ole Miss when he was a special teams coordinator when he was down (indiscernible). I was recruiting in Tampa for Duke and recruiting Thomas, and we continued our relationship. That's been great.

It's also an opportunity for me to be close to home, too. My mom is in Cleveland. My wife is still in Columbus right now, going to have a been here soon. So these things together, it was kind of a perfect storm with the opportunity.

Q. Coach Allen, you said that you're relinquishing the play-calling duties to Coach G. What is it about his defensive philosophy that makes you comfortable with that decision?

TOM ALLEN: Well, you know, when you talk ball for many years, you get a chance to understand how people think. That's really big for me. That creates the buy-in of what you do.

And then when I can equate it to what we did in '19, that it's going to be our system and someone that really believes in it. And just from all that time together and then just obviously, you know, you watch people play and the things that they do and there's certain philosophical alignments that you have in, how you attack things, what are your answers in situations, and you have to have that core belief that that's how do you it.

If not, when it's really bullets are flying, you won't really trust in that or call that. So I want to make sure -- and even for us, you know, even with Kane, it was really kind of an ongoing process of meshing those together.

I think that that's really that alignment, and it's a very short list of guys that I have that I would feel this way about. He has always been on that short list. So just the timing of this with everything, it worked out for everybody, which was awesome.

So I just think that this is someone I've always had an eye on. Like he said, he recruited Thomas. He went to their camp. That's probably when I first met him. So that opportunity to see him coach in that camp setting is kind of when I first thought this guy is pretty sharp now, and even as a young GA.

But I just think that was the beginning of it. Then, you know, I know Coach Cutcliffe so well. His son actually, Coach Cut's son, was Thomas's offensive coordinator in high school. Most of you may not know that. At Oxford High School, way, way back. He would come back, and he obviously was the former head coach at Ole Miss. Had some ties there because of that and also because of his

son being there.

That even just to be able to be around their staff over the years was a connection there, without doubt. He was the first person I called just about this opportunity for Matt. I called Coach Cut.

Just to be able to have that individual that knows him well, has worked with him. He was his defensive coordinator, called his plays for that staff. So that really gave me a tremendous amount of confidence in that regard. And they did a lot of good things there as well in similar type of situations in terms of recruiting and type of university, and you have the basketball history.

Just all the alignments of the two universities I think created a similar dynamic that you are trying to recruit to and trying to build a top-level defense in that setting. So I think there are other things that created the strong desire for me to feel like this is a good fit.

Q. Coach, can you talk a little bit about your defensive philosophy, how you approach, how you like to attack offenses?

MATT GUERRIERI: Yeah, it's a great question. It aligns directly with Coach Allen's. We've been a base 4-2-5 for a number of years. I've played in numerous different -- I played in the 3-4 defense. I've been in a 4-3 and a 3-3-5 and 4-2-5. I think it goes to from a philosophy standpoint, Coach Allen would say tackling, take-aways, and effort. Those are the three pillars of who we are. That's not going to change from that standpoint.

From a coaching standpoint it's, first, what does your personnel do best? So our players, how do they function best? What do they do from a coverage, from a rush, from defending the run? How do they function best?

I think then it goes to what do we coach best as a staff? What do we feel best about in implementing schematically, and then the third is how do people attack you?

You say, okay, we're taking these plays away and forcing an offense to play what we would consider left-handed, and you put those three pieces together and put the guys in the best position to go be successful.

But it still comes back to the fundamentals, right... how we tackle, how we take the football away, and the effort that we have.

Q. Matt, it says your role with Ohio State was senior advisor and analyst. I guess more specifically, what were some of your responsibilities there, and how do

you think that impacted you, or what did you learn in that role?

MATT GUERRIERI: Jim Knowles and I have had a long-lasting relationship. We were together for six years at Duke. That's really how I got to Ohio State was the opportunity to be with him.

I was an extra -- I know his system well, so I helped from an implementation to the staff of his defensive system and then was an extra set of eyes for him of a guy that had coordinated a similar philosophy defense as far as advance on the next opponent that we would play or ideas or things that are going well or not going well. That type of stuff.

So I was kind of a behind-the-scenes extra set of coordinator eyes for him and was able to help any way that I could with his responsibilities.

Q. Can you just kind of take us through the logistics, like how it's going to work, who is going to be responsible for what and the details on -- you said the play-calling is going to be not you, and just take us through how that's going to work.

TOM ALLEN: For me, obviously, we have Coach Wilt, who has done a tremendous job for us coaching the backers, and they're going to be co-DCs. Obviously, I met with Chad about this prior to this decision.

So, basically, he will be responsible for really kind of the -- as I told him, I said just the toughness of our defense, to help organizationally like he has in the past. His responsibilities aren't really going to change.

But in terms of scripting, you know, and organizing the team components, that will be under Coach Guerrieri's responsibility and really just the direction of our defense on a daily basis and be able to -- I want to be able to walk out of the room and be able to have just literally no drop-off in what's going on in that meeting. That happens more and more.

So I just think to be able to go through I think structurally as we function, there will be a lot of similarities. But I would say the difference will be on game day. Instead of me calling, he will be calling them. That would be a very strong difference.

But from a practice perspective, I want to have the ability to be able to go to both sides of the football. I was on defense this whole last season during practice time and into the season. Obviously during spring ball and fall camp I was just kind of overseeing everything, but I want to be

able to have that ability to be on both and be on both sides of the football.

So that would allow him to be able to be over those responsibilities of scripting practice from the team perspective and Coach Wilt will probably do what we call the inside run or the run game portion of that. But be able to work together, those guys.

I think to me the biggest difference will be that the actual play-calling. That's really -- and just the motivation of the defense will be between Coach Wilt and Coach Greg together and to be able to use their skills, and they both have tremendous skills and talents and qualities that they're going to allow our defense to continue to build off of what we have built here.

For me, too. Last year wasn't what we wanted. We've got to make some adjustments. You don't just sit here and do the same old thing all over again. Go make some changes.

I think Matt is a creative guy. We've already had great times together talking and want to be able to have some wrinkle adjustments. People can't sit on the whole offseason and expect you to go in and do things a certain way. Want to be able to keep growing our system in that regard. That's part of it as well.

I think you have as many sharp guys on your side of the football that can come together and help us have a great defense and get back to where we know we need to be and want to be. So I just believe that this is a great next step for our team, and I'm just trying to go through and make the best decision.

Obviously, these last two years of college football has really, really changed. I don't think it's going back to the way it used to be in those areas, and so things are going to continue to be a big part of the environment that we're in as a staff and things we have to do on a daily basis.

So having Coach Guerrieri with us I think will free me up to be able to do a better job of those and be able to allow our defense to be able to get back to where I know we need to be.

Q. Coach, just kind of following up on that, relinquishing play-calling duties, is there a, you talked about it, specific aspect on either side of the ball that you yourself want to have more of a vested interest in to kind of turn around what didn't work last season?

TOM ALLEN: I mean just running the ball and stopping the run. Those two things kind of stick out. I just feel like our

toughness is a word that we're emphasizing this year, which is the physical and emotional ability to persevere.

I just think as the game has transpired and obviously we want to be able to do a great job in both phases. We have to throw the football and defend the pass. There's no doubt about that.

Just the toughness piece of our team and just being able to, as you kind of have the ever-growing changing roster movements of guys, you know, I think those relationship pieces are huge for me. I know last year that was really challenging to do in the season because you're in there behind closed doors studying tons of film from as soon as the game is over pretty much, you are grading that one and going on to the next opponent all the way until late to the wee hours of the night on Thursday night.

I just feel like I want to be able to -- in '19 and '20 I was able to even meet with players during that time during the season. I was not able to do that. That's one of my strengths. That's one of the strengths of what we built here.

I think with the transiency of the game and the way it's become with the portal and the movement of players now that I don't think is going to change in the future. I know that I talked it over with our staff. I think that's, without question, one of my strengths and something that I really -- I love doing. I think it helps a lot with our players, and I feel like I lost that a little bit. So I need the time to do that.

So I think that's probably at the core of this is for me to be able to continue to build those strong relationships and connect with our guys at a deeper level to help make sure that they're able to be at their best and be able to help them and guide them and develop them in that area.

So as we continue to schematically be at our best and allow us to be able to do those things we need to do. So to me I think that's probably at the core of it, you know, and I'm just trying to play to my strengths, and there's no doubt that I love -- I love calling defense. I do. I enjoy that part of it, but it's just a reality of the demands of what we're doing.

But to be able to have a person like this that we can bring here that can take that on and I have total confidence in was huge, and without that, I would have probably stayed in the same role.

Q. Matt, there's a little bit of turnover on the defensive side that will be kind of in this team. What's your approach to play development and teaching the game?

MATT GUERRIERI: It starts with relationships. I'm a firm

believer if you do not have a true authentic relationship in any field that you are in, no one is the best version of themselves. So that's something that I'm starting to do is one-on-one player meetings. Tell me with your family. Tell me about your upbringing. What motivates you? What do you want to be one day? Do you want to have a family? Do you want to do this from a work standpoint? Tell me about your classes, you know, your girlfriend, everything.

I know that's be not exactly what you were asking, but that's where it starts for me. What is the relationship, right, how do you really build trust? To me trust is built through, first, caring. Does someone really know that you love them and care about them?

The next part is the competency. Does a player know that I'm going to help them get better? If not, then they're not going to work hard. The third thing is consistency. So am I the same person every single day for those guys?

That goes both ways. That's my expectation from a player is that we're able to build those things, and the expectation from player to coach is to be able to build those three things. I know it doesn't happen just like that, right?

I'm the new guy. Everybody has a blank slate with me because I don't know them. That's the first thing I'm going to do is say, okay, hey, where are these guys at and help them get to where they need had to be.

One of my philosophies as a coach goes back to the stagecoach term. The stagecoach took someone from where we were to a desired destination. That's us as coaches. We take a player from where they are right now to a desired destination, and I take that role very seriously.

That's them as a young man. That's them as a player. They all have big dreams and goals. That's us as a football team. That's my job is to build that relationship individually and then collectively with the defense and help Coach Allen and our team achieve our goals.

Q. Matt, I'm curious about, kind of sticking on the theme with relationships, what's your first impression and how you have started to mend that relationship with Coach Wilt? Coach Allen just mentioned you guys will be co-DCs. How have you started to gel so far?

MATT GUERRIERI: I'm really impressed with who he is as a man. I think Coach Allen has built a tremendous staff with two things in mind: Obviously, great football coaches, but great men.

Chad Wilt to me has completely impressed me with open



arms, welcoming me here, who he is as a man, the conversations we've had one-on-one and collectively as a defense so far. So I'm really encouraged about the process.

I'm a continuous learner, so I want to learn from what Chad Wilt knows and can implement into what Coach Allen has already started defensively here for a long period of time. But, no, I'm excited about continuing to grow that relationship.

That's the same way, too. Everybody else on defense has been here for a little bit, right? I'm the new random outside guy coming in, so those relationships are critical, too.

I feel really confident in being able to build those relationships, and I think that's important as a staff, too. A staff has to be like that, right? If we're not united that way, then it won't function well.

No, relationships from a coach to coach, coach to player, back and forth, that's who I am. If you say, what's important to me as a coach, I want guys to know relationships are important.

Q. Coach Allen, I know this is the first of the month. It's come to a halt with it being a dead period. You guys have been able to be around the team in workouts. I know there's been some videos put up. What have you liked from what you have seen from your guys and the conditioning and stuff, and kind of what stands out about their effort since that time?

TOM ALLEN: I tell you what, you have a chance to be around them now, which has been huge. Coach was with them a couple of days here, which just get his outside perspective.

For me the thing that jumps out I think we have a hungry football team. I think, in fact, that's the word that Matt used when he watched our first workout. You know, just the effort.

I think we have a good mix of guys that want change here that have been here and want to get that back, and then the new guys have something to prove, you know, opportunity. They have a window of time to be able to come here and to be able to take their game to another level.

So I think it's a really good combination. There's obviously a lot of work ahead of us. Haven't started one practice yet officially for spring. That will be on March 4th here two weeks from today.

I love what I'm seeing. The work ethic has been tremendous. We've had record number of guys coming in extra doing things they don't have to do. That's really the key of what everybody in America is doing. The five days a week that you can do with your guys and the eight hours we have with them legally during this time of year, which is what we do and what we follow. Then they have to do things on their own to be able to be at a higher level of performance.

I think we've got a good core of guys back, but we also have a lot of new faces, especially on defense. As you go through and look at the secondary and the linebackers and some guys up front that have been here for a while, they've moved on and had a chance to help us here in a huge way. So now we have new guys.

There's young guys that are hungry to be able to have their shot, and you have some older guys that have been here that want to step up and elevate their game, and you have new guys that are fighting to be the guy as well. I think we have a lot of competition, and I like that a lot. A lot of competition. A lot of spots. We need that. That excites me.

So I'm really excited to get into spring football here real soon and find out exactly where we are.

Q. Matt, I'm just wondering your early impressions and feelings of the guys that you have on defense.

MATT GUERRIERI: I've been impressed with them. I watched workouts this week, and like Coach said, I think this is a hungry football team. I think that there's a good mix of veteran and youth on that side of the ball. There's a good mix of guys that have been here and some transfer portal additions.

My blink reaction is I've been impressed, and I think there's the pieces that we need, the raw material we need to be able to build a high-level defense. So I've been impressed from that standpoint.

Yeah, that's all I can really say right now. I don't know everybody yet. Obviously, I'll build relationships with every single one of those guys, but I've been really impressed with what Coach Allen and the staff has built.

TOM ALLEN: Have a great day.

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