

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Just a couple of things here, and I'll get right to questions. We had a very good spring. Just really excited about the work we've got, even continuing to today. More individual technique, fundamentals, working on things we to do to get better.

We have two young quarterbacks that I believe tremendous high upside and just have to keep developing those guys. We have our weapons. We just have to keep getting better at every phase. These next several months are going to be huge. Really positive.

It's a big deal getting out of the spring healthy. Had zero long-term injuries. Had some guys that missed some days, but nothing that's going to be past probably the next month.

So that hasn't been the case the last several years, so that's a big deal to get through it, to be able to be healthy, and to come through and have a great, great summer.

So finish out academically strong here. Two weeks in the weight room. Then we have finals. Then we'll have the month of May and then June and July.

I feel like we made progress. I really wanted to develop our toughness as a team. That's a huge priority. Obviously, we'll watch this and gain some things off that. We have some situations to work through, but more than anything we wanted to get everybody involved today and have a good positive opportunity for our fans and be able to have some interaction there with them.

It's been a very, very positive spring. Excited about where we're at. Just have a lot of work ahead of us.

Questions.

Q. Are as far as the quarterback position, a couple of weeks ago you said back and forth. You guys still have a position. Are you naming a starter, or are you going to take it into fall camp?

TOM ALLEN: We aren't going to name a starter. But I think we'll sit down with them and talk with them and kind

of tell them where they are and in that part of it from exactly if we're going to play a game tomorrow kind of thing. We'll tell those guys that open and honestly. To name a guy, no, we're not ready to do that yet. I think they have a lot of work ahead of them.

I know the summer is going to be huge. Fall camp is massive. Any time you have two talented young quarterbacks, I think you can see out there they both have skills. They can both throw it, and they can both run it. It's going to be a big part of what we want to be able to do is take advantage of their skill sets and maximize our run game and our throw game.

I think that the bottom line is going to be who is able to do that to the highest level, protect the football, and move our team down the field.

Q. I recognize you don't want to talk too much Xs and Os, but it seemed like what we saw in the spring, there was some creativity with the run game, getting multiple guys on the field, using presnap motion, things like that. Do you feel like you have more flexibility, more options, maybe more ability to be different in the run game this year because of the guys you've got?

TOM ALLEN: I agree. That will be the whole objective. Obviously, it wasn't a nationally-televised game, but obviously open to the public. You never know who can be sitting in the stands watching us from our first week opponent. So that's understood as well how we did things today.

At the same time, yeah, I want to maximize that room. I think Jaylin gives you some unique skill sets there regarding to have at our disposal, and obviously he is going to be a very, very critical part of all of that.

Yeah, I'm encouraged by what we can do with our guys. I think we have talented receivers on the outside. We've got some good slots.

I think that you saw some glimpses today of some of those receivers, what they can do, and also we know what Jaylin



can do, and I think Josh is a special back. Christian Turner was one that didn't get to practice much. He did have an injury earlier in the spring, but it's nothing long-term. He probably could have gone later. We wanted to keep him healthy. He is a very, very talented player.

I like that room a lot and feel like we have more flexibility. We have to run the football. We have to run it effectively. Just with different levels from that for our defense, for our offense, for the team. For late in the game finishing out late fourth quarter games. Huge emphasis, no question.

Q. Coach, Andre Carter seemed to be in the back field all day. Had a handful of sacks. Just how has he developed? How do you judge him on a game where you can't tackle?

TOM ALLEN: I would say, as we recognize there, he was the MVP of the defense, he and Noah. It was that way about every day. He is 270 pounds. He is the biggest, most physical one we've had here since I've been here. Very, very disruptive. Got to get him in elite shape. He is not there yet.

Just really excited about him. He is a great kid. He has bought into everything we're all about here, and I believe that you're right. He has to tackle a guy live, but you can tell what he can do.

So it's about I think even just the details of his technique that he'll improve this summer as well. Yeah, he is a very good football player. Glad he is with us now. He has a chance to prove that he belongs in the Big Ten.

Q. Tom, pretty young tight end room with really Aaron Steinfeldt and Bomba kind of being the only guys. What do you like about some of the younger guys that are freshmen and sophomore, and what can you see from Aaron's development?

TOM ALLEN: As he was listed, Aaron is one of our most improved players. I will say this, though. Having to go against Andre Carter every single day, he would admit it, sometimes there were some long days for Aaron having to go against him physically, but it's helped him a lot.

He has grown a lot. He has gotten way more physical. His footwork, his hand placement. He has always had good ball skills. He had a good spring for us. He needs to continue to develop that over the summer.

As you mentioned, we have a young room. Sam West is a guy that's really been a pleasant surprise. Did a really good job this spring and was up potentially for most improved as well. Once we get Trey back and some of the

older guys back that are dinged up right now, it's going to be a group that's going to be by committee no question, and also look to add an older guy in the portal, which we have got opportunities to do that hopefully here in the near future.

That's definitely important for us, without question, but I think you see some young guys here. Brody Foley is the one that hasn't gotten nearly as many reps. He is back. He is in a blue jersey do everything from skelly on down. He didn't do anything more than that physically. He is 250-plus pounds. He can move. He has good ball skills. So he is a guy we need to bring along in the summer and this spring. He will be a key for our success up front. Being able to have a guy like him that can do both things.

So I love that room as far as just the way these guys work. Coach Wright does a great job developing them, and they need more development. That's part of being wrong.

Bomba, James, is going to do a great job for us. He was out and had his postseason summer. He will be back full bore for us here this summer. He also provides tremendous leadership for us as a member of our team.

Q. Coming out of the first full spring with Coach Bostad and the offensive line, what impact do you feel like he has made on that group? How much progress have those players made, and which individuals have stood out most?

TOM ALLEN: It's always hard when you don't go full bore. We did some live ghosts throughout the spring. Didn't do it today on purpose, but I love what I see.

I think it's the cumulative effect of just all of the pod work and all of the reps over and over again, the physicality just over and over and over.

I think Kahlil Benson has probably made the most growth seeing him. Zach was having a great spring. He had a lower leg injury. It's not going to be long-term, but we sat him out his last couple of weeks. He was practicing at a high level.

Getting Matt back will be huge for us obviously. I would say Max Longman is going to be the one that has a chance to help him. I really like him.

I think Michael Katic coming in and adapting to a new coach and just being able to elevate his game and continue to get better is going to be huge.

Josh Sales, we're going to keep challenging him. He has to step up. I want him to and believe he can. Carter Smith

is another one that we expect to be competing to start and going to be battling for those spots.

Those are all young guys that need to keep developing that I figure responded well to Coach. I love his approach. He is a no-nonsense guy. Doesn't smile a whole lot, and that's okay. He never cracks too many jokes, and it's all ball. It's all business. Our guys understand that. So I really appreciate his approach. I think we're going to be a lot better because of it.

Q. Tom, you mentioned the importance of this summer. What specifically are you looking to get achieved this summer?

TOM ALLEN: Well, first of all, you know, we talk about fourth quarter mindset. It's been our focus all spring long. It's part of the mental toughness piece, physical toughness piece.

There's three things we focused on. One was the word focus. Presnap keys, post-snap technique and execution. Then there's the up with in the middle, which is trusting your preparation. That's the key.

To get in elite shape, to be able to -- it's all going to be fourth quarter driven. It's all going to be how we're going to finish in the fourth quarter from a physical perspective. To be able to dominate your opponent in that situation. Win those third downs, win those critical downs. And you have to have an expectation that I don't get tired. They're the ones that get tired. That has to be built, and that's over the summertime.

That's to be able to maximize our conditioning. We're going to bring in some other groups to get to build our team and do some things whereas team-building and toughness-building and shared adversity over the summertime, creating that with our guys through our strength staff and some groups we're going to bring in will from the outside.

To me it's just about building the toughness to be able to finish the conditioning that you trust. They've given us OTAs now that we're able to do. That continues to kind of expand in our roles with those, and so there's going to be six of those in the month of June with our full staff, which is unprecedented in the past.

So that allows you to be able to really prepare them in the month of June more than we ever have in the past. So that to me is a big, big deal.

So it's not just the lifting and the conditioning. It's also the timing of the receivers. Two young quarterbacks. All those

timings have to happen together. They have to do that alone. Where he can't throw the ball with our coaches there, but guys have both been here in the spring. We have all these receivers here right now. We have one more coming that was with us today that's going to be here in June. Dequece Carter, who is a very, very talented player.

I really like that room, but they have to come together and get the timing down. That happens during the summertime. To me summer is massive. It's going to be big for us. The guys understand that. We make a big deal for it.

We talk about May mattering even though it's a time away for them. They have to still continue to train and work like a professional because that's what the pros have to do when their time is away. Be able to have a great plan and to come back to work on June 1st. It's a big part of our next step, and that all will be the focus right now.

Now this chapter is done, and now moving into the best summer we've had since I've been here.

Q. With the spring over, what group on the field are you the most comfortable with right now? And going into the summer, which group are you expecting to maybe up the intensity a little bit?

TOM ALLEN: I want them all to up their intensity. They're never going to let up in any way whatsoever. I think the running back room offensively that sticks out to me. I love the way they come to work every day. They have a lot of group. Trent Howland didn't finish out. He had a minor injury, but that's five guys there that I really believe are really good football players and give us a lot of weapons.

Then I think defensively I like the depth of our safeties, even though there's some young guys there. There's a lot of guys there. We've had some issues in the past where you get one guy goes out, and it's a major drop-off. So you have a chance to have our whole secondary, even though there's some new faces, there's more length there and more volume there. I like that group of guys.

I want to see our D-line to continue to have a domination mindset, to be able to take a game over. I like the way Lanell Carr can give us a pass rush. He has a twitch to him that's different.

Myles, we sat him out during the team drills today, but he has had a great, great spring. He is a tremendous leader. You add Phillip and you add Marcus to that crew as well, and then you add Andre Carter, that's some big men there. 300-pound guys. We already know how big Marcus is.

Bottom line is that I believe that you're only as good as your guys up front. You want to see your O-line to continue to grow from here to the next step this summer in their strength and their mindset and their toughness.

I could probably mention all the groups, but as far as the two that stick out to me. Everybody has to elevate and continue to work, and that's what we do as a staff, our strength staff, who do a tremendous job of taking the baton now and finishing strong during the spring.

Q. We talked to Donovan, and he had basically said how he changed his diet and wanted to get faster. Did he come to you and kind talk to you about him wanting to do that, and how have you seen him kind of developing from a nutrition and getting in better shape standpoint?

TOM ALLEN: When we met postseason, I said you have no idea how good you can be. You have no idea.

So when he we want away and came back from the break, we sat down again. We mapped out specifically what he was going to do. But he came to me and said, Coach, I want to play a little lighter. I said, I'm good with that. We'll get you to Coach Wellman and get your exact diet down because he knows what he wants to be able to do. To me that's a huge part of this.

So it's about core confidence. It's about dominating the guy across from you and the fact that that ball is in the area anywhere close to me, I'm going to catch it.

You saw him make a phenomenal catch today. He does that throughout practice. Two hands. Nobody should be able to guard him. He is 6'5" and is a 200-pound guy that can run and jump. I feel that he has tremendous skill. I'm not going to quit saying it. He are can be as good as he want to be.

I do think that he has now figured out this isn't just a show up and practice hard. This is a 24/7, 365. That's my sleep habits, my diet, what I put in my body so I can be more explosive, run faster, getting to my brakes better and allowing him to be a better receiver. So I think Coach Tucker, we've had some really good receiver coaches here, and we have another one. I think he is excellent as well.

He is responding to him really, really well, and I'm excited about what he has decided he wants to do. Another guy that is going to have a great summer. I believe he will because it started to click on the inside, and I think that's a big part of the extent for him.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the different summer calendar and how it changes. Either maybe you feel like you can do different stuff in spring to set up the summer, or you feel like we don't need to worry about doing this in the spring because we have the summer where we didn't a few years ago. What's different about the way you can approach the spring season knowing the summer calendar and what you can do with your guys as well?

TOM ALLEN: I'll just give you a specific example. Usually the last couple of practices during the springtime we have to set the stage for all the drills we want the players to do during the summertime because we can't be there. It takes some time to get that taught. You go through all those different things.

Well, now we didn't do any of that. We actually did individual. We did fundamentals all the way up until today.

So we have so much more work on that because now we're going to be with them in June to be able to be during those individual periods where we don't have a -- we're not throwing the ball. We're doing conditioning, but it's technique and fundamentals. That's it. To me it's a bit, big difference.

Just the ability to do some things holistically where you can even have install. The install is way more aggressive. Here's the thing, everything in the past that we did was player-led practice. You know how that goes.

Sometimes you get nervous because you can get bad habits. You're just doing pass skelly. Well, we couldn't be out there. You can't watch it. You can't correct it. Players have to correct themselves. You have to rely on them to tell you the mistakes that were made and work them through it.

That's a little bit -- always made me nervous because then you have to undo some of that when you get into fall camp. Now I don't feel like that's the case with them anymore.

Now we can't do skelly with them, but we can do no ball and teaching those concepts. I feel like it's definitely more you are trying not to make it where it's burdensome. You don't want them to come into fall camp burned out and feel like they're not excited about the start of the season. We don't want to do that. I feel like we have to maximize.

So that's why we've actually done more in June, actually a little bit less in May. Even though they're going to do some things in May, we want them to get away in May as much as they can because I think that's important.

Because if not, it's year-round, and they never get a break. It's kind of been an adaptation for us what you do in May, what sets up what you do in June. June is way more active than it used to be. That sets us up for a good July.

Coaches need to get a chance to get themselves away a little bit so they can come back refreshed because June is camps, it's recruiting. We have official visits. We have OTAs and a lot of things going on.

June is really, really intense for the coaches, but that's just part of it. So they get their time to get away a little bit in July, if that makes sense. You have to mesh all of those together to get it to where everybody is getting a chance to maximize the calendar, come back refreshed and be ready to start on July 31st.

This year we report back to fall camp. First practice will be August 2nd. That's how it works. That's how it looks. That's a great question. We've had to adapt, and I feel good about where we are.

Appreciate you guys so much. Have an awesome day.

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