

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Welcome, everybody, today. Excited to get the 2023 fall camp started. The '23 season is upon us. Exciting time.

Had picture day today. We'll start our first practice tomorrow. So a lot of hard work that's gone into this opportunity so our guys are chomping at the bit to get out there.

Some updates on our roster. We have David Baker has received a medical hardship. Cam Knight will be retiring from football. He just graduated here this past week.

Also really want to personally thank Jay Wilkinson for his generous gift to our football program to allow us to be able to create a football-specific area for weight training and conditioning. Just appreciate Jay so much and his continued support for Indiana University and for our football program.

Excited about the upcoming few weeks here, fall camp, which is always a great time for us to fundamentally improve and technically improve and to be able to come together as an offense, defense and special teams to continue to build our football team.

So ready for questions.

Q. There is a video on the Twitter account about the thing you did with the program recently, the group that came in. Your thoughts on obviously what you want to get out of it, how you thought it impacted your team and players, not just for this season but the future of the program?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, they do a tremendous job. When I first came here, something we were doing with those guys for several years. Brought them back.

The twofold purpose is for leadership training and for team building. Just feel like with the number of new faces on our team, especially in some prominent roles, guys that were added in January, guys that were added in June, just really

felt like it was a good next step for us to be able to continue to build our leadership, increase our communication skills, really just learn how to work together better.

At the end of the day the best team is who wins on game day. Being connected is a big part of that. That team building piece is important to me. I know they work with a lot of top programs in America, do a tremendous job, have for a long, long time.

A lot of feedback they give to us. They'll be continuing to follow up with our players, continue to build on their leadership skills and such. Really the focus of those two areas.

I just thought it helps us expose things you want to be able to continue to work on and just also reinforce the strengths of your unit.

I value their input, their feedback. We debrief with them at the end of each session, give our staff a lot of meaningful information to be able to help us moving forward, how to work with different guys, help to train them, how to lead in a more effective way. Really powerful stuff. That was awesome.

Q. With the announcement of the football-only weight room, what advantages does that give you either recruiting-wise, setup-wise, training-wise that you didn't have with the previous setup?

TOM ALLEN: I think a big area of focus has been to be able to have a concentrated area to eliminate distractions. I think that's where you want focused training. You want to be able to eliminate things. We have a phrase: a distracted man is a defeated man. Just trying to continue to enhance that part of it, to be able to brand it in a way that it's football-specific. I think that's really important in recruiting, those kind of things, just to show the importance of it.

To me, I think the biggest thing is the focused training. That's one variable. We want to do a tremendous job of developing our players from a nutrition perspective as well as physically, their strength and development, their speed,

to be able to grow as a player in those areas.

I think those things are what stick out to me.

Q. As much as there is one right now, do you have a sense for a timeline of when that will come online, when you can get everything together, start building it, where it's going to go? Are there renderings? Is it all in the very beginning conceptual stages?

TOM ALLEN: A lot of beginning stages at this point, so that will come in the future.

Q. Can you tell me the genesis of the weight room project? Also, can you give me a general overall of how you feel, what would set a successful tone for the first week of camp?

TOM ALLEN: Well, I mean, I think the genesis of it was just the idea of wanting to be able to continue to build our program and the emphasis on the football side of things here at IU, to be able to continue to invest in that as a program, continue to make things better. That's what we're trying to do in that regard.

For a successful first week of camp, I mean, there's a lot of variables that you have, a lot of goals and objectives.

Obviously we're trying to continue to build the depth of our football team. We're going to do some things different structurally in practice, increasing the length of some areas to focus on fundamentals and technique with our guys, and also be able to maximize reps, find a way to get more guys reps during our team periods, have a structural change to do that as well.

To me, at the end of the day, is to get as many guys prepared. You have your installation you go through each and every day on all three phases as you go through and try to mesh with each other, offense versus defense, those moment, but also you're installing your scheme.

Obviously with all the new guys that we have that we're counting on that need to be ready to play at a high level week one, to maximizing those reps, that time in both the film room, the walk-throughs, which are massive during the new structure of two days where we're in right now.

What used to be an afternoon practice is now an afternoon walk-through for the first six practices and then becomes a jog-through the rest of the way from there. Those are really, really critical reps that we have to have. Those practices are scripted and structured. You're just not running during that time. It's all mental reps to get their bodies a chance to recover.

Everything we do is just building the depth of our team, to be able to get to the point where we execute at a high level.

Obviously when you start, there's all the new things that are going into that. Obviously a lot of review from the summer, things we did in the spring. This is the first time you've had this entire group together. Got to build off of that, create momentum each and every week.

Q. Heading into fall camp, is there a position group you feel has maybe the most open competition for playing time?

TOM ALLEN: There's several positions with a lot of competition I think just in lieu of the new faces. I think the one that probably sticks out is the secondary, corner position as well as the safeties. I just think with the number of turnover, the guys that had played for several years here, those guys doing a great job for us, graduating, moving on to the NFL, it's really critical we find top guys. I would say that's probably the most.

You could go on. The defensive line has a lot of new faces. There is competing on the offensive line. Quarterback competition is very well-documented. Running back room receiver would be another thing that sticks out to me because of the number of guys we added, getting Cam back. Trying to get that room flushed out. Obviously the tight end room. We have a kicking battle going on as well to see who our field goal kicker is going to be.

Just know a lot of key spots, a lot of key competitions. I would say the one that would have the most new faces would be the secondary.

Q. Going into year seven for you of doing this, these fall camps, is there some sort of I guess kind of experience or similarities and dissimilarities that you can draw back to that helps evolve the overall experience of the fall camp for the guys?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, there's no doubt. You learn and grow. The structure has changed so dramatically since several years ago. You just think about the way we operated where it kind of went from the two-a-day model, every other practice was a two-a-day, then you went to one-a-day. Then you had the two-day schedule, one-day schedule. Then it came to where you did all single practices with the walk-throughs and jog-throughs. Now you have a fourth day as a regeneration day, which is think is excellent.

I think you kind of learn how do you best create a model where you stress your guys and you allow them to develop at the maximum level between the heat to all the time demands that they have, just focus on football, to be able to also keep them fresh. You want to be able to have a minimal amount of injuries. That's that constant balance of trying to figure that out.

I think the new structure helps a lot. From the studies they came up with in the NFL and college football where practices four, five and six were where a lot of those injuries would occur. That's where the three-practice model kind of came from. You get a regeneration day where you lift, watch film, but you don't practice, don't go out and do anything physical from that regard on the field.

I think getting a good flow with that, knowing how many night meetings they have can be too much, becomes a law of diminishing returns, a little negative. They need a mental break during those times. What do you do during those nightly meetings, making those productive for your guys. I feel we have a good rhythm from that.

You want to be able to come out of camp, play. Last year, had a big opener, had to play really good football right out of the gate. With another Big Ten opponent coming up to start the season, have to have that same outcome. Just feel good about the flow from that.

Obviously every year is a little bit different. Going to follow similar overall counter like we did a year ago from a flow perspective. Some of the practice parts will be different. The actual calendar piece will be similar.

I think you kind of learn how to manage the guys and feel best about getting their temperature for where they're at, where their bodies are at, where their minds are at, continue to press them when you need to pressure them, increase that, also knowing when to back off. A couple of guys experience growth at that time, as well.

Q. You've given us a good sense of where Matt Bedford, Cam Camper and Dexter Williams are at this point. Is there anyone else you're going cautious with going into fall camp from a health standpoint?

TOM ALLEN: We've very fortunate coming out of spring... Those guys that you mentioned all were injuries that occurred during the season. Like I said, feel good about what we've communicated with those guys and their development.

Fortunately we did not have any long-term injuries in spring or the summer. Just your typical soft tissue things here and there. Really don't have anybody else that is in that

mode kind of from a limited perspective where they have to be on a play count early on.

Really those three guys are the only ones that we have. Like I said, we have a few hamstrings, some soft tissue things that you usually get in the course of the summer. Even with those guys, feel pretty good about where they are. Want to stay that way.

Came from a meeting right now, talking about hydration, how critical that is for guys, eliminating those soft tissue injuries, the way we test for that and evaluate that each and every day. It's a daily thing to make sure they don't practice. They have certain levels they have to meet from a hydration perspective. Really appreciate our strength and medical staff. They do a great job.

Q. As you start camp, what position group do you feel the strongest about and what position group do you feel has improved the most with spring or summer additions?

TOM ALLEN: I would say I'm really excited about our running back room. I can say that probably about a couple different rooms. I really feel like there's some maturity there that we've added.

I think Josh has really honed in on being such a strong leader in that room, the way he handles his business as a pro. He's just such an attention-to-detail guy. Gotten bigger, stronger, faster. With Jaylin Lucas' development in that room. David Holloman is another young guy, Trent Howland, guys that have been here.

Expect them to all contribute. So it's a group that's got a lot of experience to it, but also some explosive guys in there, bigger, stronger, more powerful than they were a year ago. That group excites me.

I think our D-line is the one we've changed the most by the guys we've added. Added six guys to that room this off-season. A lot of guys graduated. Really physically looks different, bigger. Guys have a lot more mass that we needed. Guys that have played Division I football at a high level. Power Five guys. A guy like Andre is coming from the MAC level where he has an opportunity to prove himself in the Big Ten. I really like that room.

I include the bowls in that as well, adding two additional guys at that position group. A third one just joined us this summer.

We know up front is a big deal, added a couple offensive linemen as well that I'm excited about that we know need to step up and help us with Max Longman, guys that came

to this program that are 300-pound guys that have played Division I football.

Up front is huge. We know that. It's a priority for us. Running backs really excite me. The D-line to me is the biggest change we probably made in the roster.

Q. In terms of the quarterback battle, you've been around a lot of them, have you found anything unique about this one? Could you detail what structural change are you making that you mentioned to get more reps for guys?

TOM ALLEN: Sure, yeah. I think you're right, I've been around several quarterback battles at a lot of different schools over the years, several here since I've been here.

I think one unique thing about this one, there's probably two unique things, first of all is that you got two younger guys, redshirt freshmen. I have two guys that are in the same age, they're younger, competing. I think that's a unique thing about it.

Also just how well they get along. Sometimes there's just a natural tension, it's competition. Obviously they're competitive guys by nature by playing that position already.

But, man, they spend a lot of time together in the off-season doing things together away from football. Just have really developed a strong relationship, which I think is really important.

It's not always that way. Sometimes it's cordial, it's what it needs to be in front of everybody else. I think there's two guys that enjoy being around each other, two different personalities. That part of it is unique without question. Anxious to see these guys compete every day. That's what they've been doing all spring and summer. Now the fall camp setting.

To answer the second part of your question, the things we're doing structurally, just a way to be able to maximize team reps. We call it a two-spot method. Other places have used this. It's a way to be able to get more guys involved where you have your staff kind of working in the middle, then one group goes, then you have your ones and your threes in one group, twos and fours in the other groups. They're rapidly rotating.

But your coaching staff gets eyes on both group. So one focus on the other group. So one group will go, then you turn your staff around and they will focus on the other group.

Not to be in a rush, we're going to do a great job of coaching those reps and getting things corrected, but you

get kind of really double the reps for guys, which is really what we're trying to do. Double the amount of people I guess is the best way to say it.

You're not necessarily going to have more reps for an individual player, but you're going to have more guys getting reps. I think that's really critical when you have a lot of new faces, competition at several of these spots, some four deep, which we have not had very often since I've been here. Some positions have three guys working for a spot. Some up to as many as four.

Really want to give those guys a lot of opportunities for them to get those reps to develop and our staff to be able to evaluate as best we can. I am excited about that.

Q. You haven't done that previously then?

TOM ALLEN: No.

Q. You have a lot of new faces on your coaching staff coming into this season. How do you feel this staff handled the off-season in terms of recruiting and in terms of building relationships with the players? Do you feel like you guys are all on the same page?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, there's no question, I feel good about where we are. Obviously you have a chance, the month of June you get a lot of time around here with our guys, with the new OTA structures that we have, the things we can do with them during that period, then a couple in the month of July when the coaches got back from being away.

Yeah, I think recruiting is a massive part of their job. To be able to evaluate I think all three guys that we've added with Bob and Matt and Coach Tuck, I think all three of them, if you look back at their history, they've done a really good job of evaluating and locating guys that you can develop, guys that have certain traits that you're looking for. They have a track record of doing that.

That's something that really appealed to me in hiring them because obviously you want to be able to do a great job of evaluating here and bringing guys that can come here and be developed.

It's definitely an inexact science. Sometimes you just don't know until you get a young man in this setting and work with him every day. But one of the guys that came in I feel good where we are with that.

Also just how they teach, what kind of a teacher are they on a consistent basis to your current players, building that relationship. That's part of teaching, as well, build the trust, get to know guys. There's different ways to do that. You

have to be treated who you are within your personality so you can be consistent each and every day. You have to do a great job of how can you articulate the techniques and the scheme things we're trying to teach, how can you make it understandable for our guys so they can apply it, learn it, and guys have an ability to do that.

Feel like they've done a really good job of that entering spring, the time we've had with our players in summer. Now is the most intense time we've had with our new staff, players being together. Springtime you practice every other day. Obviously in the fall it's every single day, lots of meetings from daylight to dark. These next three weeks will be critical. The three new guys that we've added are just going to make us better.

Q. Wanted to ask about things you've done in the past. You have had a lot of success in 2019 and '20 on the field. Not as much the last two years. Anything in training camp you're preparing to do for the '23 season that you found success with ahead of the 2020 and 2019 season?

TOM ALLEN: There's no question, you go back and evaluate. I've actually done that. You look at those two years, what was the difference between those two and the last two.

The two things that stick out the most was our ability to create takeaways defensively and to protect the football in offense so that the turnover ratio, which is obviously something we've always emphasized. We did a really good job of that in '19 and '20.

The second thing is we won close games, we finished those close games out. We did not do that the last two seasons, especially the last season. We had eight games decided in the fourth quarter. So really have addressed that.

I went back and watched the games from those two seasons, especially '19. '20 had some unique qualities to it, for sure. Just get back to playing team football. Complementary team football is what we have to be able to do. We did a good job of that in those two seasons. In both those years we had multiple quarterbacks. We definitely stayed a lot healthier, there's no question about that.

When you go back and look at it, I was reminded of that when we went back and evaluated those games, seeing the continuity at different positions for both of those seasons for both of those years.

Finding a way to stay healthy was a big emphasis this

spring. Obviously there's things you can't control. But making that an emphasis to the big study with the NFL about soft tissue injuries and dealing with the emphasis on hamstrings, trying to do a great job with that. We're just trying to maximize ways to stay healthy, number one.

Number two, really how do we get closer as a team. I just think we had the common denominator with them. I know with adding new faces, I get the challenge with all that, which is another reason we brought the program in to be able to develop leadership and team building. That was the purpose for that. Haven't done that the last several years. I thought we really had a tight group of guys in those two seasons. I think that's very, very critical.

Just being able to do some things in practice to be able to promote more team unity, doing things together. Even doing some drills and doing some activities that simulate game situations to finish out drives, to finish out two-minute situations, to finish out the fourth quarter.

Came up with a fourth quarter mindset. We challenged our guys since the beginning of the semester in January all the way up to this summer. Going to emphasize it here throughout fall camp. To be able to win those fourth quarters and be able to do a great job of playing with more consistency is really going to be the focus.

Q. You mentioned earlier that Josh has become a big leader. Could you talk about his growth from last season.

TOM ALLEN: Well, I think there's confidence just in being in a place for year two. He's such a steady guy, he's so consistent, so dependable in every way.

You just talk to the strength staff, the discipline in his diet, the way he's put on a lot of good, lean muscle mass to create more of a Big Ten body. He's always had a good frame on him, but he's taken it to another level.

He's a quiet guy, but there's also the ability to lead that room, to be able to be a great example. When you think about being a great teammate, it's doing your job, setting that example of being a consistent guy.

It's also have the courage to hold your teammates accountable. I think that's something he's grown in as well, being able within that group of guys to make sure things are right. You bring in guys, you bring in new players to a certain group, you bring in guys to that side of the ball, and he's able to be, Hey, this is how we do it here. Just really feel like he's just matured and grown in that area.

He's grown in his confidence, his ability to get out there. I

just think he's a guy that you can keep on the field. He's a three-down back. He can catch, he can block, he can run. He's able to just really do whatever he's got to do the team be successful and win.

Great teammate and great leader for us. Really proud of him and excited for his upcoming season.

Q. How have you changed as a head coach over the years that will kind of allow you to find answers quicker during camp than maybe earlier in your career? How are you basically a better coach going into this camp than a couple years ago?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I just think you know more what to look for when you're trying to go through and find certain guys in these competitions. I think that's a big deal 'cause identifying them as efficiently as you can without rushing it to allow to get the best guys in the best position.

I think modifying how you practice, to learn how to get you more ready for game situations, to be able to not be maybe as robotic about it, more of a flow for what your gut feeling is, what the team needs. I think experience creates that for you.

You learn to trust that. You trust your gut. What does the team need right now? Do they need more of that? Less of this? Tweaked a certain way? Practice longer? Shorter? Whatever you think is best to motivate them.

I've learned to really connect more with the guys over the years. I've always been a big relationships guy, but even as a head coach, how do you do that with 120 guys in the course of a year. A big part for me to do that. It doesn't really happen in fall camp. It's already done before that in a huge way.

You also add a couple key guys that may have just gotten here not long ago. Getting them up to speed, getting time with them.

I think more than anything it's trusting what you think you need to do to get your team ready, to get them ready to play. Football right out of the gate is what we have to do. That to me is the result of our schedule and who we are week one.

Just feel like that allows me to be able to draw back. I go back and look at different practice sequences and study different seasons, see how that created a certain outcome, to be able to draw from that as well. I think you just have that experience.

You also know more what to ask when you talk to other

coaches about certain things.

I feel good about where we are. I love the plan we have for this fall camp. Excited to be able to get in here with our guys every day and roll up our sleeves and get to work.

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