

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



COACH ALLEN: Good afternoon. Just want to start in regards to the outcome, one goal on game day is to win, and we were not able to do that. Obviously had a chance to watch the film, much to teach off of and grow from in all three phases.

But just in our mind, now we had a chance to play and see a lot of new faces and see how they responded to the high-level opponent. And now we get a chance to evaluate that and going off the things we did well and correct the things we made mistakes on and continue to go forward.

Want to recognize some players that did a great job, giving us a great look. Our scout team players of the week from this past week preparing for Ohio State.

Connor Hole on defense and Jeff Utzinger and Broc Lowry and Jack Greer on offense, and Declan McMahon on special teams. Appreciate those guys and their effort. Got a lot of guys each week that allow us to get ready each week and it's critical in our process.

Excited about welcoming Indiana State to Memorial Stadium Saturday night, 7:00 kickoff. A special relationship with Curt Mallory and obviously his entire family. Just a lot of respect for him and I think we'll have some former players from Coach Mallory's era be here for reunion and Ellie will be back. Jokingly saying didn't know what colors to wear, and obviously she needs to wear blue to support her son; blood is thicker than water.

Appreciate that family. Obviously very important to our program and just a lot of respect for them. Appreciate that. I look forward to having them here. Obviously they're going to come here hungry, ready to compete and play and play their very best.

Obviously they're going to come here hungry, ready to compete and play and play their very, very best. Very important week of preparation. Shorter week. Already had our Tuesday practice today on a Monday and be able to accelerate the week and get ready for an early kickoff.

Q. The topic of Friday games. You've played a couple of them. You've always made your feelings clear. I recognize there's an extent to which this stuff is just marching orders, media rights, things like that. I guess do you ever give the feedback back to the conference of basically, just your opinion, your position on playing on Fridays?

COACH ALLEN: I've been pretty consistent from the very beginning. And there's no question that I'm going to keep saying it over and over again. But we can't have any recruits at the game. They're all playing. And their families are all at their son's games, like they should be, and all that.

I am about 15-year high school coach and have a lot of respect for what they do and how that night is special.

So whenever I'm asked -- I don't sit bring it up there every meeting -- but I know everybody has different opinions and there's different reasons. I don't sit in their seat. I don't make those decisions.

But I do feel like I've been consistent. I'm not trying to just keep bringing it up. I just think it's important. And I understand the whole dynamics of it all with different variables with media and everything. But there's certain things that if anybody wants to know my opinion, they know what it is.

Q. With Aaron Casey, when you watched the film, what impressed you the most about his game? Seemed to be playing the run well. Did you feel he was the best defender on the field on Saturday?

COACH ALLEN: Yeah, I think he was. He just played with a lot of confidence. He's very decisive in his run fits. And just played fast, played physical. Got guys on the ground, two elite running backs that are very, very talented players.

So just, like I said, the biggest thing was just the decisiveness in his fits. And I thought Jacob, JMF played really well too, right next to him. It's encouraging.

I've always said if you want to have a great defense have



to have great linebacker play. So he definitely was our best player on that day, and I expect him to continue to grow and keep improving and getting better.

But he's the leader of our defense, and as we tell with our linebackers, that leadership is full in both verbal leadership and production. That's how you play linebacker. He did both, which is great.

Q. Sitting up in the press box, the offensive line looked markedly improved from our vantage point. I'm curious from a coach's viewpoint, especially after watching the film, breaking it down, what did you see and what was your opinion of their play?

COACH ALLEN: I've been asked about that a lot leading up to the first game, and I felt like that we were a lot better up front from, when you go through spring football and obviously everything you do in fall camp when you have pads on.

The next task was to see how you do in the game, but obviously against Ohio State, a team that's strong on both lines of scrimmages, traditionally.

I felt like we got movement. I felt like the guys were targeting their guys accurately throughout the game, and I thought they did a lot of positive things. We had two hits on the quarterback. We gave up one sack.

And I we did not sustain our blocks to the level that we know we have to moving forward. So this strain to finish, to me, is the next component to that. But step one is targeting the right guy, getting on the right people and creating movement.

To me, definitely much to build off of. Yes, I was encouraged by that, trying to get even more guys ready to play. You know, the course of the season guys get dinged up. To be able to mix and match and put our best five out there.

We made some adjustments and we have flexibility to move guys in and out a little bit, which is good. But you know, Coach Bostad's done a really good job with the group. And expectations just keep getting better every week.

Q. Looked like Jamier Johnson got a little bit banged up in the second half. I guess what is he dealing with and how is he doing injury-wise? I know overall you said some of it was just cramping, but how do you feel you got out of week one in terms of health?

COACH ALLEN: We had a couple of guys cramping,

which is a weekly situation. As the weather unfolds this week it's going to be a high of 76 game day. So about 10 degrees cooler than it was this past Saturday, so I don't expect that to be a variable for our guys moving forward.

The way we have the availability report now so guys will be listed on that each week. So really probably not going to discuss a lot about injuries. We'll have it put out two hours before kickoff and let that handle that situation.

Q. With the defensive line being so impactful on Saturday, how would you kind of evaluate their performances, especially against Ohio State's offensive line?

COACH ALLEN: You know, I'll tell you, I was encouraged. I expected them to play well, but you don't know. And I thought Andre Carter was extremely disruptive. He'll only get better as he learns our system more and continues to trust playing within it and the different things we have him do.

And thought Philip Blidi was really disruptive as well. Although he went the wrong direction a few times on some movements, and that jacks you up, leaves the gap.

And I think even LD Cox played his best football since he's been here. And you've got Marcus Burris who is another guy that's new that I expect to just keep getting better and better.

I thought Nick James, one of our young redshirt freshmen, shows tremendous promise, extremely explosive. A little undersized but what he lacks in size he makes up for in quickness and athleticism.

And P.J. as well. There's a lot more competition in there. A lot of guys that rotate in. You know I want to get Venson Sneed more involved. He's a guy that I know can help us give us a chance there. That will be the case moving forward.

Then you take Lanell Carr, I thought he played real physical. Not a big guy but very athletic.

And Myles Jackson was just, as he always is, he's just steady. And you've got also mix in there Anthony Jones at the bull spot, and he also plays the outside backer as heavier personnel.

So I was encouraged by our D line. I thought we had a couple mistakes and in some key situations defensively. That was frustrating because I felt we should have held them to even less points. Had we done a couple things that, a couple picks that we had a chance to get our hands

on that we didn't, we ended up getting two field goals, so that's six points there.

You have to make those plays. You play a team like this, every time you get two hands on the ball you've got to pick it off.

I just thought the D line set the tone and it was a big area of focus for us to go out and get guys that could help us right away. And those six guys that we brought here, they all played, and I thought they played well.

Q. You mentioned after the game that you felt that you were a little bit conservative offensively in the second half. When you're seeing that on the sidelines in real time, what's that conversation with Walt like? Do you say, hey, come on, we've got to start pressing the gas? Or how does that play out?

COACH ALLEN: It's like anything else. You see what you see, and I feel free to make my comments. But there's also a lot of layers to it.

The one frustrating thing that kind of stuck out to me that really put our offense in a bad spot, we had four crucial penalties that caused us to -- we started four drives inside the 20, three inside the 10, which is tough. It affects play calling. It affects psyche.

All you have to do is look at the stats. When you start that far down inside your own territory, it's difficult against anybody to move the ball and score points, let alone against this team. So I think that put us in negative spot. It does affect you.

You try not to put your young quarterbacks in a bad situation to make a big mistake, a catastrophic mistake. You throw a pick-6 in that situation or you turn the ball over and it can snowball on you.

And so I also felt like -- this is just statistically it's true; we did not do well on first downs, which put us in too many third-and-longs, which, once again, that's the negative. That's the one thing you don't want.

There's about three teams in this league where you say, you know what, we've got to stay out of third-and-long as much as possible or you'll have a tough day. They're are one of those three, just because of what they can bring, their speed, their size, their mass over the edge. And they have two of the best defensive ends in the country and some inside guys are extremely explosive.

That puts a lot of pressure on your offense. That definitely probably played a role as well. But we're just going to grow

with our guys. We've got to keep growing with them each week. You'll see that. We'll see that.

And I think there's no doubt. We didn't play good enough on offense to win. You have to score touchdowns. We all know that.

I know, when you think about up front, which is where it starts, and we have the skill around them, we've just got to keep growing it and get these young quarterbacks developed. And the best way to do it is to play and that's what they got a chance to do. And we didn't have play calling on either one of them, but it ended up being pretty balanced, not necessarily by design but just by the way it worked out.

We wanted them both to play, and they did. Like I said after the game, Tayven is going to start this week. And they'll both play this week and we'll have a chance to evaluate it and make a decision moving forward.

Q. Beyond the defensive line, how would you assess the way the other transfers played?

COACH ALLEN: I was encouraged by our secondary. Nic Toomer stuck out to me, No. 15. And just a guy that, man, I wanted him so bad the first time. We recruited him so hard. He comes from a great family and just great people. And so glad he's here.

Such an awesome person. He's long, athletic. He can tackle. I thought he did a really good job. I think that anytime you had that kind of length at corner -- Jamier Johnson did some good things. I liked his ability.

Kobee Minor, same thing. He had missed a little bit the last couple of weeks so he's kind of getting back into the flow. I think he can continue to grow and get better. But I think he stuck out to me as well.

And I know from a transfer perspective, Christian Turner shows burst. We know he had that and then we just have to continue to fine tune our offense in that regard.

I thought E.J. Williams as a transfer, DQ (phonetic), those guys can make plays for us. I just like the guys that we have.

I think that we've added some playmakers to our team. And just gotta keep growing together each and every week. But those are the additional guys besides the D line to me that stuck out.

Q. I know you mentioned the quarterbacks and you were talking about the offense before, but just now that

you've had a chance to kind of look over the film -- and I know it's an ongoing kind of decision that's extending into this week and beyond that -- but just from what you've seen on the film from Saturday, just what do you see from Brendan? What do you see from Tayven? Things that you liked that they were doing, things that they need to work on going forward?

COACH ALLEN: I think you have, in that setting, they have to make decisions. And sometimes they make good decisions in both the run game and throw game. I can say it about each one of them. And sometimes they didn't.

There were times where receivers didn't. It may look like the quarterback misses, but the receiver runs the wrong route, makes the wrong read. Just a couple of those that were broken up. If they were run, the routes were run a little different, different type of cuts and angles and things, it's a completion.

But I felt like that overall, I don't think either one of them just separated from the other. Just my opinion, just looking at it. You guys all saw the same thing I saw. Looking for that to continue this week. That's what we're looking for, someone just to separate and become the guy.

But I think that they showed their youth in some situations, but I thought they both showed poise. I think they both showed that the moment wasn't too big for them. But that was their first time playing that amount of snaps and at this level.

So you just gotta continue to evaluate, which we will. And obviously they can both throw and both run it. And you just gotta be able to figure out who's the one who's going to give us the best opportunity to win on game day.

Q. Obviously you already said that some of the play calling was dictated by game script and starting so deep in your own territory. But we saw you coming out running the ball a lot, quite a few option looks. Is the idea that as you guys get more comfortable with some of the option running and as your two quarterbacks get more comfortable throughout the season to use that option, use that run attack to kind of open up more pass down field, you can try it later in the season?

COACH ALLEN: I think anytime -- I would think, this is another thing, whatever style we wanted to play, you gotta run the football in this league. You've got to stop it on defense, and you've gotta be able to run it on offense. And your throw game comes off of that. To me that's, without question, what we want to be able to do.

And for a lot of different areas of that, different components that can keep the secondary and to try and create some looks that makes it easier on the quarterbacks, which is kind of big picture objective.

At the end of the day, you're trying to help him be at his very, very best, whoever that person is in there. So, there's no question, we have talented receivers on the perimeter to get the ball to. We've got good length, good athleticism. Gotta get those guys the football, we know that.

But to me when they can't just lay their ears back and just come after you and give you all these exotic looks. That's what really makes it hard on most quarterbacks, I don't care who you are. To try to eliminate some of those and be able to create those explosive shots down the field in early downs.

When they have to stop the run, they're worried about the run, that puts you in a lot of conflict, is the whole objective without question. That's the part of it. We've just got to keep going forward and keep moving in the right direction.

Obviously, this is opportunity number two to do that and thought today was another good step for that in our practice today. And we'll have a normal Wednesday tomorrow and be back in pads and ready to go. So that's just all part of, yes, building our system.

Q. This isn't your first year with a QB competition, obviously. With the two that you have this year, I'm curious how you've seen their off-field relationship kind of expand and evolve throughout the summer?

COACH ALLEN: Yeah, I think it's been one of the better ones that I've been a part of in regards to the two guys getting along and they've spent time together. They've golfed together in the summer. They both love to golf. Actually, both pretty good too. Much better than I am, that's for sure.

But they're competitive. They both want to be the guy. That's where that natural tension creates and that's part of it. I don't care what position you play, when you're trying to compete for somebody else and only one guy gets to play.

But at the same time, how they handle that is important. It really is. Especially when you come off the field and you've got to be helping, talking through things. Coach Bell is in the press box and those guys can communicate. And they're seeing things and helping each other.

Because at the end of the day it's about this team being successful. That's encouraging because that shows their

character. But, once again, I know they both want to play. I get that.

But I think when you have these quality of young men that they're going to be able to handle it the right way and help you continue to build your team because that locker room is very important.

Q. You talked about the role changes with the timing last week after actually going through a game and going through it. How did you see that change the way you went through the game? And what were your overall thoughts?

COACH ALLEN: From a football perspective, I know I've seen some things and some coaches' comments about the commercial -- I don't know about all that stuff -- but I know when the clock's moving, after first downs, it's going to shorten it a little bit.

When it was first introduced, it was like, the way it was explained to me, it's going to be seven to ten plays a game. I don't know the number yet of what it does. I think it definitely depends on the style of offense that you're running. You think about, in the past when we've played against an academy, they would run the true triple option under center and they're trying to shrink the game and keep the ball, it can definitely limit -- the way the clock is now, it can really limit your possessions.

So I think we'll see moving forward. Like every week we'll have more data. Now we're into week zero. Now week one already in the books. They'll start getting numbers. I'm sure they'll be putting it out. So definitely does shorten the number of reps that you have in a game.

That was initially introduced as a player safety issue, to be able to put guys in a better position to not play too many snaps. Because with a lot of tempo offenses, a lot of teams were getting a lot of snaps. I think that was it. But you can debate it for the motives and all.

But at the end of the day, to respond to your question, it definitely is going to make you have less plays for each team, without question, just because the clock's moving, when you get a first down rather than stopping. So to what extent it affects it, I think we'll know more as it unfolds.

Q. Following up, you kind of talked about this with the defensive line, and I know you've seemed optimistic about the flexibility, I guess, that you have at some of those positions, but it felt like you were able to use a lot of different personnel groupings Saturday. Did that group maybe just not performed well, but did you see the flexibility, versatility that you wanted to?

COACH ALLEN: I think that's a good point. That's a good observation. We definitely did that. We're trying to maximize the roster, skill sets, get best matchups with your opponent. And I do feel like we've got some versatile guys and guys that give us a chance to do certain things, and we want to put those guys in the best position possible. And a guy like Anthony Jones, he gives us a lot of flexibility. A lot of times you watch him play in space, he plays like a linebacker. But he has the ability, you know, 260 pounds, rush the pass or stop the run in the box and take on offensive tackles and big tight ends.

But I just feel like that we need that flexibility in versatility. I think our defensive staff did a great job with those transitions and those substitutions and didn't have any situations, like sometimes you have early in the year when you get too many guys on the field after running guys off. And Coach Guerrieri and Coach Wilt do a great job with organization with our guys.

I feel like we have that kind of a defensive unit. But once again we didn't know until they play. I thought we tackled well as well. I think that's something that's very positive. A couple of missed ones.

But that position of flexibility, as well as playing as much guys as we can just to be able to keep guys fresh, we can finish the fourth quarter.

Q. Phillip Dunnam had the interception, but he also seemed to be in good position kind of throughout the game. Got a lot of snaps, I think 140. What did you see from him and how much growth has he made in the last six months or so?

COACH ALLEN: Yeah, it's been very important growth. We've challenged him. He's one of our most talented defensive players, I believe. He's still young. He did play for us last year as a true freshman in a limited role.

But he was a guy we knew we needed to have him take the next step. He has just has a great feel -- he made the exact same play in practice. We talked about it. It's amazing you play the way you practice and just reinforce that, be able to reaffirm to each player, hey, this is why it matters how you do things every day.

So he's been our biggest takeaway guy during fall camp, and it showed up on game day. So just a talented player, without question, but he's still young. Gotta be able to stay locked in, stay focused, and he and Josh have been holding down that rover spot for us.

It's great to have two guys you know who can play and

sharpen each other, hold each other accountable. I feel like he needs to continue to keep building off his performance from Saturday but definitely encouraged by his play.

Q. You touched on it a little bit in your open, but your relationship with the Mallory family then coming to Bloomington on Friday night. What do you expect that moment to be like when you guys meet at midfield, you and Curt, or just conversations with the Mallory family?

COACH ALLEN: Just a ton of respect, as a matter of fact. I've always talked with Curt a lot, but during the pandemic we talked a lot. He was just kind of had a lot of questions about what was next, this and that, what are we saying in our meetings with coaches in the Big Ten and knew that would kind of affect them, and how are we doing this, how are we doing that.

He and I have talked a lot. Just highly respect him. When I was a high school coach, he was a college coach way back then. He and I are the same age. So just obviously close with his dad before we lost him, and then just Ellie's relationship with this whole town and so many people here and our program.

It will be a very warm embrace, not your typical. It will be more than your typical just pregame bro hug that coaches give, kind of thing. But just so much respect.

I know his brothers well, and just so much -- just a football family, good people, and they're so respected in this entire profession at such a high level. Just really looking forward to it. Always cheering for him when we're not playing him. Obviously this is the first time we've played him since I've been here.

But I think I probably knew Doug better, until the last two years really got a lot closer with Curt, because of proximity and being here. But just really neat family for sure. Excited to have that opportunity. Bunch of former players coming back to be able to unite and see both of them.

The Mallory family, pretty special to this program, no question.

Q. You utilized three running backs in the game, and obviously Jaylin's skill set is a little different than the other two. How do you plan on using all three of them going forward? Do you feel like maybe you'll switch to two predominant running backs, or do you think you'll utilize all three through the rest of the season?

COACH ALLEN: We'll keep using all three. You're right,

they are all different. Just different ways, without question, as the offense grows and continues to get better -- but those are three guys that we felt like we want involved. They'll have a chance.

Position guys get dinged up through the course of the year. Never know how it's going to play itself out. But I feel like all three of them are talented players. And then Trent didn't get a lot of snaps, but he's another guy, as well as David, those five guys to me are the top running backs we believe in and have a chance to keep those guys fresh in there and they've got to do a lot of different things. And Coach Johnson does a great job with them. But managing that part of it is part of his responsibility as well. But definitely expect to use a lot of those guys throughout the course of the season, yes.

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