

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Just follow-up from Saturday, obviously disappointing finish for our guys. Proud of the response in the second half.

Obviously did not start the way we needed to start in the first half, but really proud of our guys' ability to regroup, make adjustments and come out and play the way we expected us to play from the beginning.

Saw some progress with our young quarterback. Obviously continued to build off of his strengths and what he's able to do, and continue to grow and develop him and grow and develop our offense around him.

Excited to see our defense strong and get a strong performance in the second half. Still not enough takeaways. Got a goal of three every game. Only got one. Needed another one; and three, it would be ideal to get what we need to get to be able to set up our offense in a better way.

Special teams, eliminated the penalties, executed the onside kick there to perfection which helped us get jump-started in the second half but just continue with more consistency out of our punting unit that has been really strong, but still, was good but still not elite, which it needs to be elite every time we take the field.

So recognizing our scout team players of the week, Aden Cannon and Drew Pierce were our defensive scouts of the week. And offensively, Brody Foley and Sam West were selected by the staff, and then special teams was Aaron Stewart.

So continue to get strong after some of our guys in our practice which is necessary to get ourselves prepared each week. Go back, evaluate, adjust and get better.

And so we've got an important game coming up here at home against Akron to be able to continue to develop our team, build our team and then get better in all three units.

So an important week for us to be able to lock in and

welcome a team that's got a lot of good athletes on it. A lot of guys that are good enough to make it really challenging for us. They play really, really hard. Coach Moorhead does a great, great job there. Joe is a great football coach, and gone against him many times when he was at Penn State. They will be very good schematically on both sides of the ball.

So looking forward for the opportunity for us to continue to improve and continue to get better.

Q. As you were able to go back, watch film, evaluate, No. 1, when you have a second look at it, how important or how impressed are you with the rhythm that Walt and Tayven got into, play-caller/quarterback? And while not asking for bulletin board material on Akron, how important is it a weekend like this before you get back into Big Ten play to build on that and experiment a little bit more and put some different things on Tayven's plate to keep growing that relationship?

TOM ALLEN: It's an important next step. Obviously that was the first game that he's been, you know, where Tayven was the guy the whole game. So just to be able to, as you said, grow that chemistry and be able to get in a good flow; and that's the thing, too. You think about the first half, we just didn't finish our drives. We had two good starts to the drives but did not finish them, and had enough individualized mistakes, individual players that kind of collectively short circuited those.

But I think you can just kind of see what we can become from a scheme perspective, as well as the play calling itself and being able to distribute the football.

I think, you know, Tayven's ability to make reads in the throw game was impressive. He's obviously -- they are loading the box and trying to stop the run and make the young quarterback make plays, and he was able to do that. He created several out of nothing.

I always talk about, that's kind of like a key quality you're looking for in a quarterback is, hey, can he make something out of nothing. When something breaks down



can he extend the play long enough to get his eyes down the field, which he's able to do that, and either beat you with his legs or beat you with his arm.

I think just recognition of that part of his game was good. Just got to keep growing that and there's no question, he just needs to play football. The more he plays, the better he's going to get, I believe that, and just the mechanism necks of everything and working around the huddle and taking share of the shot clock, we are trying to maximize that through everything we do.

And so obviously a couple times that we had to burn some timeouts that you don't want to do in those situations, and so we have to do a better job both as a staff and execution as players.

But I think you just see that growth, and obviously we got one more game before we get back into Big Ten play. But they are all important. That's a team that is 14-3 late in the third quarter at Kentucky; a team that's got a lot of athletes, a lot of length. Kids play extremely hard.

Yeah, you've got to be on point without question and that's what it's supposed to be every time you take the field, and a lot of respect for the way this team is coached and how hard they are going to play. That's what sticks out to me is how hard they play, and so that's a tribute to their coaching staff and their players.

So we will have to be offensively at our best and we have to continue to move forward. That's the whole point, it's an obsession with getting better. That's our focus this week just to be able to improve as a football team and continue to progress on both sides of the ball and special teams.

Q. The onside kick was really the first big pressure spot that you've had to put Chris in this season. It's a big call to make obviously and really in the heat of the game like that, trying to give your team a jolt. How did you see him handle that moment? Obviously he had a lot of time to think about it at halftime leading up to that, how did you see that moment?

TOM ALLEN: I think that was a really huge step for him. It's one thing to do it in practice. Those are hard to get. You have to -- the placement has to be perfect. The spacing is pretty compressed, and there's a little window that we took advantage of, and -- but if the ball doesn't hit just right, sometimes you overthink it and you don't hit it quite hard enough or whatever.

And so matter of fact, of the three that we did, like I said, we were two-for-two during practice and that might have been the best one of the three, the way it just popped up

perfect right there for Lucas (ph) to recover.

Just to be able do in that moment, yeah, that gives him confidence. There's nothing like doing it in the game and practice is great, that's where it all begins. But executing it in that moment in that setting at a critical time was very important.

So he's a guy that's growing in his confidence each time he takes the field. Obviously he's been our kickoff specialist a year ago, and now he's grown into being our field goal guy now, as well as just being able to have the ability -- that's always one thing I felt like Chris because of his soccer background, his ability to have a multiple skill set of different kinds of kicks that he can bring to our arsenal.

And because of his ability to -- being such a talented soccer player and understanding ball placement and different things like that, guys with big legs like he had, they can just crush the ball, and that's pretty much what you're going to get. But he has got the ability to place the ball, and felt that way coming out of high school, too.

So great to see him do that, and just proud of him because he's worked really, really hard and he's earned a scholarship here. We put him on a year ago, and just really proud of him for coming here and earning it the way that he has, and an excellent student, awesome young man and just a great representation of our program in every way.

Q. When you watched Louisville's last drive when they were able to run at the clock, anything that you took away from that?

TOM ALLEN: Two things. No. 1. Didn't contain the quarterback that. To me jumps out the first, the first play, gave them a chance to get off the hook and get out of inside the five area, obviously tighter than that initially.

And then the third down one, that's what sticks out to me, the third and nine. We had a great call on the call that we made. We've just got to be disciplined.

To me, I think it was kind of the theme. Did some good things defensively. Held a very explosive offense to 21 points but obviously too many points, we didn't win.

But you know, we had breakdowns, just some individual breakdowns where a guy that's supposed to be the edge, we brought pressure from one side obviously, and then you've got to understand that to know that he's going to get flushed out away from the pressure most of the time where he's going to step up.

And so just to not have that executed properly was kind of telling for some other things that happened, even earlier in the game, especially in the first half when we weren't getting off the field on third down. It just takes one person to not be able to do your job.

There was so much emphasis about this phrase: Do your job, and I felt like that kind of broke down. Those last few plays were kind of a microcosm of the whole game, especially the first half, for our defense. Because to me, we had a chance. There was two minutes and 12 seconds to go in the game when we had third and nine, and you get that stop there, and you either get an incomplete pass; if you get a sack, call a timeout, get the ball back with two minutes to go and you go try and win the game.

Just really disappointed our defense didn't give us a chance there at that very, very end to have another shot. So just got to stop the run. We didn't stop the run effectively enough and several of those were quarterback scrambles, which has got to be eliminated. Just got to tighter on our run fits and do some things better, and it's really about execution for to me.

Those last few plays summarize that, so we've got to continue to work. We're not where we need to be yet but we've got to continue to get better.

Q. Can you talk about the way Sharpe and Dunnam bounced back and the way they handled that kind of speed?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, you've got two young players that had bad eyes. And so you think about Jamari, very talented player, but that was really his first -- a game I would say of that magnitude where you've got two teams that are very, very equal and we're trying to have -- every play is going to be a variable in the outcome of the game.

And so I think it's important to be able to have those experiences. You don't want them to have a negative like that and give up such a huge play but he's going to learn a very valuable lesson from that. In our coverage he was the high defender, so he should not be triggering on the run, and he did. So he bit on the run because of poor eyes.

And same with Philip, getting his eyes off his man on that particular call and giving up a double move. And so but once again, Philip, he's played more football for us than Jamari has but still he's young, and so those are critical opportunities to learn from.

So I think to be able to come back from that is important. You've got to flush it and press on and have a really bad memory in playing the secondary at this level. They are

going to make some plays. But we knew we couldn't give up explosive pass plays and both of those were ones we ended up getting a stop and a missed field goal but obviously the other one was a touchdown, an 85-yard touchdown which is a killer. You can't do that. You have to make them earn that and we did not.

But going to learn from that. Obviously much to teach off of. That's one thing it goes back to, hey, ten guys can do your job. If one guy doesn't, then it's a negative play for us. So we've got to do our job. We've got to trust the guys around to do theirs; you've got to trust the fitters on the run to do theirs, so you can stay back and play things top-down per the coverage.

So that's a growth opportunity for some young guys and expect them to be better because of it.

Q. You talked about after the game, the adjustments you guys made on offense. One thing that I noticed, seemed like you were doing a lot of two tight end stuff in the first half, and then in the second half, seemed like you spread them out a little bit more offensively, a little bit more four and five wide receivers. Not trying to get you to give away trade secrets, but do you think going forward that's something Tayven is more comfortable than what you guys were doing earlier, just kind of spread the ball out, let him read the field and make plays?

TOM ALLEN: I think a lot of it has to do with how they are defending us each week.

So that will be an adjustment whether it's as it starts the game or something that we go to just having that flexibility to do both is important and I think that's a critical piece to what we want to be able to do.

There's no question based on how the opponent decides to defend us and they will all have their obvious ways of doing that each week. Based on that, we want to do a great job of either having the initial plan that takes advantage of it or if it's different than we might have expected, we make an adjustments and do what we think is best.

But there's no question that I think you can see that Tayven is comfortable in either setting, but obviously has the ability to get, you know, clear -- whatever we can do to simplify the read is the key, and based -- like you said, based on how they are defending us at, we'll be able to adjust accordingly.

Q. With regards to the time out management, there was a drive in the first half where you guys used two timeouts within two plays, and also in the second half,

you guys only had one time out left for the final Louisville drive. Looking back through the film, is there something that sticks out as to why you guys were in that situation?

TOM ALLEN: In the first half, I would say one once, would have been on our staff to be able to get the call in sooner, and that would be an issue that we have to get corrected.

Then the second one was the ability for us to -- quarterback has to be able to manage that as well. But once again, being young, that will improve each and every week.

But yeah, you don't want to burn those. Obviously you like to have two going into the final situation. I know for us in the final drive, we obviously took that last one there, second-to-last one prior to the fourth down. So it's kind of a good time just to be able to make sure you talk things through.

But at the same time, you would like to have two going into a final drive if at all possible and for sure one. Second half, for sure you want to save those timeouts and got to do a better job, both the staff and our execution offensively.

Q. You said before the season, just how important it was for whoever you named at quarterback, just their leadership and how that was kind of a challenge since they were young guys and had not played much football. How would you evaluate how Tayven has grown in those ways and maybe some of the ways that players around him have responded?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think one thing that is hard, one of the negatives of having a quarterback competition in the off-season is, you know, who do they look to. And so you're really looking to both of them and it's always kind of a little bit of a balancing act of who takes over, even hey, let's get together and let's throw, who initiates that.

But they have done a great job of managing that and working together for that and so now when you make a decision, it becomes the focus on, okay, this is your role now.

So I think Tayven, very naturally does that. I think he knew, and we even talked when he first got here, you come in brand new to a place, you have to earn the right to speak, per se.

But he did a great job of building that trust with his teammates, and so now, he's in a position where he needs to take over and that's where he does a lot of that. He's a verbal guy. I would say since I've been here, he has the

potential to be the best verbal leader we've had at that position in all my years here, and I expect him to be that way.

I think it comes to him in a very natural way and so that's a good thing. I want that guy to be verbal. To me, you have to have a guy that's going to speak with confidence and clarity and articulate the vision of what we want to be able to do, and to be able to motivate and to confront and to encourage and to challenge in that role. We really haven't had that to the extent I think you need it.

And I say the same thing for our linebackers. Everybody has different personalities and I get that, but at the same time you have to speak to lead and you have to speak to have the highest level of strong leadership at that position.

So I think that's something that he will do have very, very well and it's something that I will work with him on individually and when I see things to both encourage and challenge.

But like I said, certain guys have that and I think that's going to be one of his strengths without question. I think that will be to grow throughout the season. I think you can see the guys, they believe in him and his ability to make plays in those situations and that will continue to grow.

Q. Run game. Talk a little bit about what needs to be done to be more consistent in the running attack at this point and your thoughts on the offensive line play in this game.

TOM ALLEN: I would say, got to run the football better. We always go through and compare the two, each team, and we did not do a good enough job. Now, there's no question that schematically, they are loading the box trying to take it away, and we threw for a lot of yards. That's what you've got to do but at the end of the day you've got to be able to score points. You have to score more than 14 points.

But I would say the offensive line wasn't consistent enough in our execution and so we are going to continue to focus on that without question. Did a good job protecting our quarterback and giving him time to throw, which is very important. We're making progress, there's no question about it, but it's got to continue. It's got to continue to elevate each week. To me, it's finishing out. Once again, I said it last week, it's finishing those blocks. Getting on our man, staying on our man and finishing the blocks; giving our backs a chance. And to me to be able to finish out drives and to -- the ball where it was on the last play, to get that yard, to be able to score a touchdown to get it to

where it needs to be.

Starts up front and we are making progress, but it's got to continue, no question about it. I think just for us as a staff, to be able to continue to stay with the fundamentals and the techniques that we are working through and getting better at it, and our guys are continuing to grow and develop as a unit.

Definitely not good enough at this point, but progress is being made.

Q. You mentioned consistency Watt offensive line a couple minutes ago. Defensively, first half, give up 300-plus yards, second half only 120, even the offense was better in the second half than it was in the first half. What can you do to teach consistency, just from a technique standpoint, how do you get the team to make sure that you are playing 60 minutes of football, and not just compiling together 30?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, there's no question, that's a great focus for us is you have to play 60 minutes. We talk about it all the time, and obviously we didn't do it. Didn't start the game the way we needed to start it, and go back and evaluate why. Obviously you're encouraged by the response but you don't want to have to be down by 21 points.

And so to me, it's about I want to see us come out and play with the confidence that we played with in the second half from the get-go and so to me, it was a noticeable difference without question.

I think we've got a lot of new faces. I get all that. But to be able to make sure we are doing a good job of being simple enough to where our guys can play with that confidence from the get-go right from the opening kickoff, and that's going to be the focus for this week is to be able to come out.

And like I said, I feel like that it was individual breakdowns that really hindered us in the first half. It wasn't collective breakdowns, but it just takes one. And so offensively same thing. Defensively, same thing. To me it's making sure we are simple enough so we can execute because they are always going to do some things a little bit different. Especially when you think about offensively, they are going to have an opening script, everybody does. And so what that looks like compared to what you thought they were going to do, and now you can adapt that so that our guys are playing fast and playing with confidence, and playing reactionary and not having to over-process things.

To me, that's going to be what the emphasis is. We have

to to make sure we are very confident in our reads and our keys and our execution of those reads and keys, both offensively and defensively; and make whatever adjustments we have to make this week, both schematically, as well as in process of getting ready for a game to make sure that that happens.

So that's my responsibility as a head coach. It gets to that point where we are playing with an edge about us and playing with some confidence and playing with some swagger.

Q. Ahead of Week 1, you mentioned playing Ohio State, you were hoping that it would accelerate your progress this year. Entering Week 4 now, would you say that has kind of played out the way you thought it would, and maybe where have you seen the most progress in the first three weeks?

TOM ALLEN: I would say with our inability to play 60 minutes of really good football on Saturday, disappointed in that. Felt like that we were on track to get to where we wanted to be from what we stated as our goal from playing a team like that in Week 1. Didn't feel like we fully maximized that.

I do think even though we do have a young quarterback, and I get there's a growth process, you go through that; I think we are seeing an acceleration of that in a positive way, which should really help our offense and help our whole team.

But I do want to see us, you know, I want to see us execute better. I mean, it's not a complicated part in regards to that. Obviously you play who you play and your schedule is what it is and we have to continue to grow as a football team. To me, the jury is still out to see if that's fully going to manifest itself.

But it's an important week for that to be the case and obviously every week is a big week to get better, and that's what we're going to emphasize at such a high level this week in how our guys respond. To be able to come back and prepare at the level that they have to prepare at to be their best.

I thought we had a good week of preparation last week. So I'm not going to sit here and say -- I talked it out with our players and say, well, what do we need to do now to be able to make sure that preparation translates and shows up on game day in the first quarter. And that's what I want to be able to do.

So to me, it's about executing and executing at a high level of confidence, and being able to play at the speed I want

us to play at from the opening quarter on.

That's going to be the emphasis, and like I said, we'll know more next weekend where we feel after the first few games.

Q. You've avoided injury talk, but did Max Longman avoid something serious, and with Matt Bedford, he came in for him, just trying to protect him a little bit? Is it not unrelated to his ACL?

TOM ALLEN: So Matt had missed a practice as far as wasn't able to go on one of them during the week; so just bringing him along. Feel like he's progressing without question and getting his body where he needs to be a hundred percent, which he's getting very, very close to that.

But we'll continue to use the availability report for our guys each week, and I would say that we would -- in a consistent way in a guy is out for the season we would say that. But we do use that availability report each week to show who is out for that game and who will be questionable for that game.

Q. You talked about this a minute ago. But I guess the question of sort of starting well versus adjusting well.

TOM ALLEN: Yeah.

Q. As a coach, philosophically, in your experience, which is harder to get better at in terms of being a team that starts well or adjusts well and learning as the game goes on? Would you rather be good at one early in the season and develop the other?

TOM ALLEN: I think both, and I think the adjusting well is definitely two parts. Starts with the coaches: Can they see things in the moment, in the heat of the battle, whether they are sideline adjustments or halftime adjustments. Those are very critical. I don't think you can be a really good football team without having those. So we showed we can be able to do that.

The starting fast and starting well is very, very important. So what you don't want is you don't want, I think as teams doing this long enough and you guys have covered football, you see teams develop a personality throughout the season and so you don't want to get in that kind of a, hey, this is -- we're a team that starts slow. That's not what you want.

To me, we've got to nip that right out of the gate here. Obviously happened this past game, doesn't necessarily feel that way the first two games, but again, we had a lull in

the second one but didn't start that way.

To me, you want to get out of whatever caused that. We've got to get that out of our system and get back to playing, football game good football right out of the gate. There's a feeling out process the first couple drives to see how both sides are playing each other but at the same time, you want to get off -- I will say this: You think about our offense, we were able to move the football, get it to midfield, get it past midfield, and it wasn't a three-and-out, but we've got to be able to finish and get points in those situations.

I think it goes back to being able to make sure that we are executing at a high level on both sides, and I think that's what you saw. That's where we're breaking down. The emphasis would be, I want us to be a team that plays well early and is able to make good adjustments and then finish strong.

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