

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Head Coach Tom Allen

### Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Wanted to recognize some players from this past week, our scout team players of the week. We had Race Stewart, defensive scout player of the week. He's doing a great job for us here, local young man from Bloomington North. He's just working really hard and does an awesome job in practice. Offensive scouts of the week: Jack Greer, Reece Bellum. Special teams scout of the week, Reese Lazano. Also Bloomington North product. And all four of those guys just continue to give us great effort and allow us to prepare each week to be able to play on game day.

And then players of the game: Cam Camper, offensive player of the game. Louis Moore defensive player of the game. And Chris Freeman, the special teams player of the game.

Questions.

**Q. Yeah, Tom. Can you take us through the process after the game? You know, it gets done late. You said it was going to be a late night or early morning. What were those 12 to 24 hours like? Can you take us into the process a little? Was it any different? More film watching or more kind of self scout? Take us through that process, if you could.**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. Obviously, a late, late finish. When you finish a game, you're not like -- you can't just turn your brain off. So it takes a while to kind of unwind and then you watch a few clips. I watched the majority of it in the morning bright and early.

But just talked to some coaches. Talked about some things together. Obviously, they want to get a chance to watch everything. And for me, it's watching both sides of the football. We modified our schedule with our players, just felt like we kind of needed to give them a little more -- some time. We brought them in, met with them. Did recovery work with them, watched the film together, and then got them out.

So you kind of -- you go through and you've been going,

obviously, since fall camp. So just thought they needed a little bit of a break.

So but as a coaching staff, just really go through and you want to break down, okay, why did we not on each particular play. Was it scheme? Was it the technique that the player was using? Or was it just something that he's not good enough at right now or something that he needs to either improve at or, hey, this is not a good match for his skill set. So try to find out what caused the breakdowns as you go through on each side of the football and special teams.

So, obviously, you try to identify all those issues. And, without question, didn't play to our standard. Not acceptable at all in regards to us not finishing drives offensively. In those situations, would have changed the whole complexion of the game if you do. Dropped balls, to me, are just lack of focus and fundamentals of looking the ball in and then running after you catch it to create really momentum-shifting, game-changing plays that hurt you in those situations.

And so -- and then just talking about, hey, what do we got to do to make sure that we're not having -- two weeks in a row, we didn't play in the first half especially. I thought our defense played well the majority of the first half. But didn't play well offensively in the first half. So that's two weeks in a row of that.

So, okay, now you got a pattern of that happening. So how do you address that? And what changes do you make to be able to -- is it one of those three areas, you go through. So, obviously, a lot of discussions and adjustments and, obviously, in that -- still in that mode right now as we get ready for tomorrow's practice

**Q. You talked about just feeling like the team didn't have its whole focus last week. Maybe there was just -- whether it's an urgency, intensity, whatever word you want to use. And you talked about shaking up the schedule already. What's the balance for you as a coach in terms of maybe trying to inject that, trying to maybe get some of it organic from players in terms of their own leadership and their own sort of**

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**self-motivation and also not maybe wanting to, I guess, go over the top with it and maybe just have them a little bit too on edge?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. Sure. I do think there's a balance. I do think there's an understanding your team. But it goes back to kind of what I said as far as, okay, why, you know. And I know -- and I know I saw the thing on the Big 10 Network where it's been, like, 16 straight years where a MAC team has beaten a Big 10 team. So this would have been -- by us finding a way to win in a tough battle that we, you know, found ourselves in, that was the last game for this year. So this is the first time that they haven't beaten a Big 10 team in the last 16 years. So it's obviously something you have to battle against. I think there's a common misperception of your players sometimes about the different levels. And we fully know as a staff that you don't show up and play your best, you've got a chance to get beat. I don't care who you're going to play. Especially a team from that conference that has good enough players, good enough coaches to beat you if you don't play your best, especially if you make mistakes.

So I feel like getting them to understand that, that's the challenge. And you go through different things. And I gave a lot of different stats before the game starting on Tuesday to go through and gave how many -- in the last 20 years, there's been 187 group of five teams that have beaten Power Five teams. Okay? That's a lot of games that they've won. So just trying to show that. And then, you know, still felt like even during the week, you're not quite getting the focus that you want.

But players have got to understand that, and they've got to respond. And they've got to be ready to play, no matter who you play. And you've got opportunities you've got to take advantage of. So just disappointed that we didn't have the whole team ready to play at their very, very best. That's what I expected us to be at and worked to that end during the week. So now, okay, you address that. You talk about that. So you kind of -- everything you do on Sunday is about getting your minds right, because, obviously, we understand, you know, we're now back in Big 10 play. So those issues are no longer there in regards to getting yourself ready to play and understand who you're playing against. But, at the same time, you don't want to see a team not take advantage of an opportunity. And I felt like we kind of -- we didn't in that situation because you want to be able to keep growing and building in your preparation approach and how you do things each and every day.

So just want our guys to understand the brevity of every situation. You better be ready to play every time you take the field because a lot of good football teams out there that

if you're not at your best, you're going to be disappointed.

**Q. Hey, Coach. You talked in the past about how you want your offense to look, kind of its identity. Where do you feel the identity of the offense is right now? And is it anywhere close to what you want it to look like? And, if it's not, what needs to change for it to get there?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I just think that -- you know, as we talked about before, the way that we played in the second half of Louisville, to me, is what you see is what you want. And I feel like we've got to be able to run the football. Did not do a good job of that at all. Didn't stay on blocks. We got to the right people and didn't finish them. That has to change. That's a big area of focus this week. And feel like that -- want to be able to throw the football effectively. Know we have to. Didn't do as good a job protecting our quarterback. That was kind of multiple groups, wasn't just up front. It was our running backs. It was our tight ends as well. Didn't do a good job. Did have guys targeted correctly but didn't finish some of those as well, especially with our backfield blocking, wasn't near to the standard it needs to be. But that, to me, is -- we still made some explosive plays in the throw game but not nearly what we should have.

So, to me, you ought to be able to be a team that they can't key on certain things, whether it's formational, personnel, run-pass formations as far as you've got to be able to have them having to react to what you're doing in the moment instead of presnap and the things that you have. So, to me, we've got to be able to be -- we just didn't have our rhythm. We didn't play. It just was obvious. We've got to, obviously, get that back. And, to me, that's on us as coaches. We've got to do a better job getting our guys ready to play and the play calling itself just in terms of matching the strengths of our guys. That's what I'm saying. Because, obviously, what we did wasn't effective and wasn't good enough, especially down there in the score zone. So, to me, that's about being able to score points. And that, right now, is something we're not doing at a high enough level. And that's what we have to do to win in the Big 10.

**Q. Morning, Coach. I'm going to do you a favor and just asking this directly. No nonsense. Walt Bell's play calling has been a very hot topic in the fan base, obviously. Do you feel the play calling has maximized the potential of this offense through four games, and are adjustments needed moving forward?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, obviously, on Saturday, it was not. We did not score points offensively. We did not take advantage of situations offensively. And you can look at

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different reasons for that. But the bottom line is at the end of the day, it's the job of the offense to score. It's the job of the defense to keep them out of the end zone. And part of that is protecting the football on both sides of the ball, create take-aways on defense.

We did have one that we gave away on offense which hurt us for sure. Defense held them to a field goal. But at the same time, we're not scoring the points we need to score, without question. So, to me, we've got to do a better job of that. That's everything. It's play calling. It's technique. It's the scheme adjustments. It's everything we need to do to be able to maximize our guys and help us get the ball in the end zone. At the end of the day, we're performance based assessment, and we've got to perform as players and as coaches. So the goal is to get the ball in the end zone offensively so we can win football games. So got to get better.

**Q. Hey, Tom, when you look at Maryland, what challenges do you see from them offensively and defensively?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, really good football team. Coach Locksley is doing a great job there. They've recruited a lot of good players. Got a really good quarterback, one of the best quarterbacks in the Big 10, obviously, as a returning multi-year starter. They're experienced. A lot of talent at the receiver position. The tight end position, very productive. Their leading receiver is a tight end. Three good running backs, two that we faced last year extensively. And defensively big and physical. They've always been athletic every year. Played them here for eight years now. And always one of the most athletic teams we play. That's no different this year. They're creating a lot of take-aways on defense. They've scored a lot of points off take-aways from their offense. So they're playing really complementary football. They're 4 and 0 right now, their first Big 10 win this past weekend and played really well in East Lansing. So a really good football team. And they play hard, physical, athletic on both sides of the ball and on special teams as well. So definitely a very, very important game for us, big week for us, as we get back into Big 10 play and playing a really, really good football team on the road.

**Q. Tom, you talked about your film study and the scheme versus the individual execution component to it. Was there a percentage that leaned one way or the other when you studied the film? And, regardless, what's the diagnosis for both issues as you go forward?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think the biggest, you know, clearing thing to me was technique and execution as far as

being able to finish out the plays. We had some good things called at times. We didn't execute. Even presnap, you look at this play, okay, it should end up good for us. And we didn't execute the play, whether it was poor footwork or finishing the block or being able to make the proper read.

And then, obviously, there were times where we feel we could have called a better call here, we could have done this better there. There's a combination of some of those things as well. But to me, I just feel like we've got to be locked in. We've got to execute. That, to me, is the focus of -- we have to be able to do better. And also just being able to continue to maximize your quarterback's skills and what he does and help him be able to make the best decisions possible.

So I think just sometimes even limiting some of those things for him can help him as well. The thing is as the season progresses and you get multiple things that you have to see and adjust to each week as teams begin to game plan against a certain quarterback, it's important for him to be able to do those things. But we, as coaches, have to do a great job of helping him.

So it's a combination, without question. But I thought the biggest issue was not executing, you know, the calls and being able to, you know, play with the great technique we have to have and the effort we have to have to finish out the blocks, finish out the plays, and then just play good football, which, obviously, wasn't to our standard on offense.

**Q. Tom, with the types of focus issues that you've talked about -- and this is your first true road game of the season coming up, what sorts of challenges does that present in terms of getting your guys locked in? And could the change of scenery maybe benefit your guys in terms of getting them locked back in?**

TOM ALLEN: Well, you need to play well on the road, obviously, in order to have success for a reason. So I think, you know, we obviously had a chance to travel to Indianapolis. Wasn't a long trip. Did not get on a plane. Took a bus there. So we're going to fly to Maryland. But once you get there, I think it's a similar feel. So you have the hotel, the walk-throughs, the movements and that setting, so a chance to do that together, which is a positive thing.

Have a 3:30 kick, so that allows you to get in a good rhythm on game day. So, to me, it's just -- the road is the road. I think it can bring teams together. You have a chance to really bond on these trips and be able to continue to build your team and build the chemistry and the

connection of your guys.

So I look forward to road trips. I know it's obviously challenging to play on the road. You've got the noise level of different stadiums that becomes a variable and a factor for offenses, you know, on the road and to be able to communicate effectively. So just going to do a great job preparing for that and handling that.

And, obviously, with having a young quarterback, more specifically, to be able to have him ready for those environments, which is important. So definitely looking forward to this opportunity without question and excited for our guys to come back tomorrow to be really ready to have a great week of preparation.

So, to me, the focus is, you know, should not be an issue. Obviously, we're back into Big 10 play and playing against the Big 10 teams the rest of the way. So know that our guys understand where we're at, what we need to do, and just rely on your leadership for your guys to be able to help us travel well and be really, really good on the road.

**Q. Coming from your defensive background, I think Louis Moore said Saturday night that there were a lot of lessons that Indiana could take from that performance against Akron. How have you seen them respond in these next 48 hours with regards to the evaluation of that performance?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I just think there's -- first of all, you know, when you think about your team and how you build your team, you look for in those moments when things aren't going the way you expected them to go, especially that kind of a game. So you always know when you play a team like that that you're favored against, as the game progresses and they still hang around, you see their sideline energy increase. And then the energy of the team that's supposed to win, everybody's looking around at each other like what's going on here. So to be able to learn from how do you handle those situations, what are guys saying on the sideline.

We had a lot of strong, you know, verbal confirmation from our older guys, our experienced guys how to respond the right way, which I thought was very positive. And then you've got some younger guys still trying to figure that out. Even talking to one of our younger safeties as they were driving there at the end trying to get that last field goal about playing every snap to the final whistle, you know, ready to block the kick and all those different things.

So you learn how do you handle that. You learn to believe when you make it through a four overtime game that, you know, hey, you just stay the course. No matter how we got

here, we've got to find a way to finish. And you learn a lot of great things about your team and the ability to be resilient, the ability to stay locked in and to keep believing in what you're doing and find a way. Because you think about it in those overtime periods, you had all three phases made a big play. We had a huge kick by Chris Freeman that was -- you know, in order to keep the game going. That was huge for him. And then you had a huge, you know, two-point play that we executed correctly to be able to win the game. And then the defense had to go out there and get a stop in that situation.

So all three phases had to come together when you're fatigued, you've played for a long time, especially all the snaps we played on defense, for obvious reasons. And so how are you going to be able to -- so you learn from those things and be able to dig deep and have to execute in those moments. So you're just teaching all the time. You're teaching yesterday and you're teaching in those moments. Hey, when things aren't going your way offensively, how do you guys respond? When you get your chance to go out there and finish off a game, what are you going to do?

So, to me, much to learn, got to grow from it. We're still young in our season. We've got to get our guys and our leaders to be able to -- and I thought even on offense, especially up front guys are saying the right things, trying to keep the guys together, stay focused, stay locked in, just to kind of -- hey, we've got to come back and do it again and try to find a way to get this corrected, self-corrected during the game. So, obviously, didn't get what we needed, you know, for the majority of the game. But obviously made a play at the end to be able to help us win.

So you still have to find a way to win a football game, which isn't easy to do. We made it way harder than it needed to be. But also respect for them. And, at the same time, what do we need to do to keep growing and getting better as a football team?

**Q. DJ Irons had a lot of big scrambles against you guys. Obviously, he's a really talented quarterback. And there's no perfect defensive answer for a dual-threat quarterback who can create plays like that. But after two weeks in a row where QB scrambles have kind of really hurt you, what's the coaching point to try and make sure it doesn't happen?**

TOM ALLEN: There's no doubt. You bring up a great point. It's going to be a huge emphasis this week. We're playing the third one that's going to be very, very elusive. He hasn't been sacked very many times because he's hard to get on the ground. We've played him the last couple years and know full well.

So, yeah, we've got to specifically drill. We're going to do some things specifically in drill work as a defense to be able to work through this. I've got to do a great job of simulating that. Going to make some adjustments schematically because, obviously, some things we've been doing to put a little more stress on that and not giving us a chance to be as effective. So we're going to make some adjustments there, which we need to make.

But bottom line is, you're right. When a quarterback breaks containment like that, that's when everything -- whether him running it or -- and, obviously, Irons had the ability to -- has the speed to get down the field and hurt you in a big way. And so does the one we're playing this week. So I just think that we've got to have a better -- do a better job schematically.

And then we've also got to do a better job practicing it specifically, you know. So, obviously, you work through it all, but that's got to be a specific thing we're working on. It is going to be this week because, obviously, it hasn't been one of our strengths the last two weeks. And it's going to have to be on Saturday.

**Q. The most interceptions you've had in one year is four, I believe, in 2020. You have Phillip with three right now. How would you evaluate his start? And as you reflect on his recruitment process, is this kind of the presence you thought he could maybe evolve into, or is this kind of earlier than maybe where you even thought he could eventually reach?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. He leads the Big 10 in interceptions and is doing a great job. He's, obviously, a young player. I definitely believed he was a talented player coming out of high school. Felt like we got kind of a little bit of a diamond in the rough kind of kid that wasn't maybe recruited at the level that I thought he should have been. And that was to our benefit because some people overlooked him. But he was a really talented receiver. That's kind of the common denominator between he and Louis Moore, both of those guys were receivers also in high school. And the ball skills that you have to be a receiver and understand the tracking of the football and playing the football and being able to make just, you know, good hands catches. You know, and he has good hands, but he also has great instincts, you know.

So thought he had a chance to be really talented without question. He was light coming out of high school. Knew we needed to get some weight on him. That was a knock on him being a little thin. But, at the same time, we knew once we get him here and a part of the whole training cycle and all the meals you're going to get and all the food you're

going to get and all the nutritional supplements you get to be able to help you develop your weight. So he needed to develop. And played him last year. Had big expectations for him. Thought he was going to be a really good player. And he's on schedule to me. He's got a lot of work to do. Still got to work a lot of things to get better. But he's making game-changing plays for us. When you get take-aways, it's how you win games. It's the reason we won the game on Saturday night.

**Q. You mentioned, like, some of the focus yesterday was, like, getting the players' minds right heading into this week of practice. I guess what does that look like specifically? And what are you looking for this week in practice where you can say that, you know, this is a tangible difference from what you're seeing in preparation and just kind of their focus compared to last week?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think we actually made a change in our schedule prior to the season. And I think this week was a great reason why you do that. And that is to be with our team on Sundays. You have different ways of doing it. Sometimes you give Sunday off, sometimes you give Monday off. People do it differently. And we've done it both ways here. But I just felt like with as many young guys as we have, as many new guys that we have, we need to be with them the day after the game, good or bad.

So this was a situation where I just felt like the team comes into the team room to meet the day after the game, it was -- you know, they needed to be talked to in a certain way. And I felt like that it was -- you could just see as the meeting progressed just the change -- the positive change of -- in look in the eye and the mindset because you kind of -- it was not the kind of game that you wanted it to be. And you feel a certain way after games like that, you know.

And so there was a -- needed to be challenged, motivated in a way to be able to understand, you know, why that happened. And my thing for those Sunday meetings is I try and get their honest feedback. I want them to talk to me, you know. And I want to know what they're thinking in that moment. And I just -- it just kind of goes from there. So really was very encouraged by the way the meeting finished and the look in our guys' eyes.

And, also, to the second part of your question, what I expect is a very highly focused, very intense, best week of practice of the season this week. And that, obviously, begins tomorrow. It begins this evening as we start to feed information to our eyes via their phones to get them the information they need to be able to continue to prepare for -- or to prepare for Maryland. And so but, to me, I really expect us to have a really, really good week of practice, a

physical, high energy, great focus, and great attention to the execution of the game plan. So we've got to do a great job as coaches -- we're doing that right now as we speak -- getting our game plans together, put our guys in the best position to play because we're playing a really good football team on the road.

**Q. Tom, you mentioned the snap counts of the defense. And I know the game was long, but I think you had like eight players play more than 80 snaps. Any concern about maybe trying to rotate a little more? And I know thin at cornerback. Any concern about the depth there going forward?**

TOM ALLEN: Great question. I felt like we played -- and we said this first thing in the morning when I saw the numbers. Because sometimes in the game, you don't know exactly how many snaps a guy plays. But we had too many guys play too many snaps. We didn't play enough guys at certain positions. Want to us see us play more guys at linebacker, more guys in secondary. Talked to those coaches. I understand there was different reasons for that. Got some guys dinged up at corner, as you mentioned. But the play count was too high just because of the nature of the game in terms of defensively. And it hasn't been that way all season.

So when you say concern, yeah, we've got to play more guys. That, to me, is the expectation and get more guys ready to play, more rotation up front on the defensive line. Want to see a few more of those guys play more snaps. Have some guys' snaps go down, other guys' snaps go up. And then continue to add more guys to the arsenal to help us play because that helps them, obviously, late in the game.

But I will say, as many snaps some of those guys played, for them to be able to finish the way they did, with the energy that they had was impressive. It means they're in really good shape. But, at the same time, I don't want them to have to be doing that each week.

So, yeah, the goal is to play more players and be able to do a great job of keeping the snap counts down by us staying on the field more on offense and also getting off the field on defense. That's part of their job as well, to eliminate longer drives. But the bottom line is team effort on that. And that includes the coaches of playing more guys and getting more guys ready to play.

awesome. Have a great day. LEO.

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