

# Indiana University Football

## Media Conference

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## Tom Allen

### Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: I want to just say how proud I am of our players and how hard they played this past weekend and prepared well and fought their tails off. Just got to continue to finish, stay the course, and keep getting better.

Got a very, very great opportunity this weekend against a very good football team at home. A lot of respect for Coach Fickell, what he does as a coach, especially the last couple of years, and the team plays really hard, very well coached, very talented football team.

Elite running back, elite receivers, big offensive linemen, big physical defense, as you would always expect from them, tackle well, good linebackers. I like their size up front, and they've got some good cover guys too.

So well coached, and his whole staff there does a really good job. Great opportunity for our program. We know where we are, and we know what we need to do. It's just a matter of just locking in folks into the finish line. Very important week for this program.

Defensive scout team player of the week, got two guys, Race Stewart, Jeff Utzinger. Proud of those guys. The effort they continue to give to us is huge. Offensive scouts of the week, Max Williams and Reece Bellin. And special teams scout of the week, Connor Hole.

Very proud of the team and the way the guys keep being resilient as a whole group, continue to fight and battle, and just continue to sharpen each other as we go against each other in practice. Whether the role is a scout guy or good on good, however that looks.

We're going to continue and look forward to this weekend. Questions?

**Q. You mentioned Wisconsin. For years they were known for their offense, their power running game, kind of old school football. Fickell comes in, brings Phil Longo, air raid guy. What differences have you seen in their scheme offensively and what they're trying to do?**

TOM ALLEN: Significant. It's completely different than in the past. It was two and three tight end sets, shift in, power, and just downhill runs, play action off of that.

They still run the ball effectively and well, got an elite running back. But just a different style without question, and Coach Longo's had a lot of success everywhere he's been. So definitely in the passing game significantly.

Just went out and brought in some receivers that have a lot of talent and more suited for that style of offense. Quarterbacks as well that fit that system. So they've done a good job of matching that up, which you need to do.

Yeah, it's really a complete different philosophy than they've had in the past. You kind of knew that obviously by who they hired and the direction they were going. Definitely creates new challenges for you.

The throw game is very vague -- vertical shots and reading and reacting to what you give them. They do a really good job of that, very well coached in terms of finding, as we call it, green grass in your coverages and things that they do well.

Then the RPO system is a big part of what they do and how they are able to set it up. They have a really comprehensive run game. It's not -- sometimes it's a couple run plays and that's it, but they're way more complex than that. So they do a good job with that.

Very well thought out, really good system that I know they believe in.

**Q. In regards to you mentioned needing to finish Saturday's game better, when you looked back at it, was there anything you identified that maybe you wish you would have done differently as a coach, I guess offensively or defensively, in kind of those last five or so minutes?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, you think the last three, and prior to the field goal -- I answered the question after the game, you look at the first and second down, the more aggressive



there. The third down, I think, is definitely the right decision to make once you're in field goal range.

You look at what happened before the half, we threw an unfortunate interception right before the half that cost us three points and gave us -- could be a six-point turnaround. We lost a chance to get three. Obviously you want to make sure you don't do that in that third down situation. So that affects your thought process in some ways.

As we talk to the staff, those first couple downs or after the takeaway, you'd love to be able to -- comment on the headsets, let's go score a touchdown. That was my whole thought process there. When we got the ball, that's what you want to do. When you get to third down, it's like we've got to be smart with the football here. Just make sure whatever we call, we make sure we're smart and have a chance to kick a field goal to tie the game up at that point.

Then defensively, we've just got to make a play. We can't stay true to what we've been doing. They're still trying -- game is tied. So they just need a field goal. So you can't just get in a different mode mentally. You've got to be able to stop the run. They've got two elite running backs that can hurt you.

Didn't necessarily disagree with things there. It's just we've got to make a play. We've got to come up. And we played so well, especially that last quarter, defensively. We're doing a really good job and getting them in third and longs. So just got to finish.

Proud of our guys. They fought so hard. You go back, and you look, and you try to make adjustments on things that you do, but, yeah, that would be my thoughts.

**Q. This is a little more out of left field, but obviously one of the bigger stories in the sport right now is what's happening up in Michigan. I know you played them somewhat recently. With all the talk of sign stealing and everything like that, is that something you were aware of, something you encountered, and do you have any thoughts on that situation?**

TOM ALLEN: Do I have any thoughts? That's loaded. (Laughter).

I've been asked about different things. I don't know what's going on there. I know there's a gamesmanship, in-game signals. That's why you see all the contraptions. We kind of laugh sometimes about all the stuff we go into. We've got three different signallers wearing goofy looking shirts and hats and all these different colors. So that's the gamesmanship of it.

Then there's whatever, there's different things that goes beyond that, that's different to me. But I don't really -- I don't know enough about it. There's no question a lot of conversations going on by a lot of people that don't know a lot of things.

But there's also an integrity of the game. I just believe in that. I believe in doing things the right way. You've got to be able to stand up and give account for how you operate as a man. Look yourself in the mirror and know you do things the right way.

I'm not saying they did it. I don't know what's going on there. I just want to say we need to protect the integrity of the game. That's my stance on that, and I think that's important.

**Q. Try and follow that up a little bit, but asking about Wisconsin, looking ahead, you've said that you kind of found some building blocks offensively from the Penn State game that you kind of wanted to build off of. Looking at Wisconsin's defense, how can you kind of build off of that foundation you set at Penn State?**

TOM ALLEN: Just you look at what we were able to do against a really good defense, and we're playing another really good one this week. So you've got to be able to run the football, and we were able to do that, especially in the second half, in an effective way. We've got to create explosive plays in the throw game. We were able to do that. And you've got to build off of that.

The play of our quarterback, which is critical in every offense, his confidence and growth and development is huge. Just the way our receivers play, their confidence. I was so proud of those guys, and they made a lot of -- some contested catches and just did a great job. And just guys up front, getting better up front. I thought our running backs were running hard.

Just got to continue to build and grow off of those things and continue to score more points. It's about that. It's about finding a way to get one more point than the opponent has on game day. Definitely a lot to build off of, and we're going to continue to focus on those things.

**Q. I know Jaylin Lucas has struggled with punt returns, but overall in the offense his touches have been way down the last three weeks. Has it just been a symptom of the offense looking for an identity with kind of the changeover, or do you need to go back and get him involved in maybe the swing game, or what can you do for him?**

TOM ALLEN: I just think that unfortunately we've muffed

some punts, and there were several leading up to this one. Just trying to get that fixed, it has to be fixed, so that will be addressed.

Obviously they're keying in on him defensively and trying to take him out of the game in some ways. So we've got to continue to find some ways of getting the ball in space. That's never going to cease to be a priority.

I think, as you grow and develop, obviously the other guys making plays will obviously help him have his opportunities. When he gets those, to take full advantage of them and maximize those and just to relax and play the game and not try to have to hit a home run every time with that.

I think that he's a phenomenal player, phenomenal person, and I want to see him continue to -- and I think we will. I know we will. That's always going to be a goal for us to get him the ball in space and to do it in a creative way each week. But it's everybody doing their job -- receivers, running backs, O-line, quarterbacks, tight ends. He's just one of those pieces for sure.

**Q. Asking about, I guess, the impact of injuries. First of all, Brendan, everything kind of fine once he got through, coming out the next day, not feeling anything with the shoulder?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, he's fine.

**Q. Wisconsin, they've obviously got kind of a different look at quarterback with Mordecai out, and now Braelon Allen, his status is unclear. He was out in a walking boot the second half on Saturday. How much, especially when you talk about Coach Longo's kind of offense and how successful he's been with it, can you separate preparing for the scheme versus preparing for the players when maybe you do have some pretty sort of core injury concerns on the other side, if that makes sense?**

TOM ALLEN: I think the quarterback position would be the one that -- the change of quarterback, since it's happened a few weeks ago, they've had, with 18 playing, you kind of see some of the adjustments. That would be, if that person's different, that would change things, and the running back position as well.

Braelon Allen is a special, special running back, without question. He's 245 pounds. Most 245 pound people don't move the way he does, and he's elite. We're expecting him to play. But I don't know how much the scheme would change based on who else would be in there. They've got other talented running backs.

But I do think the quarterback position is one where you've got to be aware of who's the person in that spot and how that would affect the way they call the game per his skill set and his strengths and weaknesses.

Obviously you've got a system that we're playing here that's got a lot of history of great success, and so we just try everything we can do to make sure we're fully prepared in every way possible to whatever we might see.

**Q. When you reflect on the QB process really from fall camp to now, you have the alternating, you settle on Jackson, you alternate again in Michigan, you kind of settle again on Sorsby. The way he played on Saturday, I'm sure you're optimistic about that. Is there anything, when you reflect on that process, that would change about maybe the way the process went on as far as evaluating that throughout the fall? Is there anything that maybe you would change if you're in a similar spot in the future?**

TOM ALLEN: I've gone through and re-evaluated that. The thing I think you see, though, as the season's played itself out, you kind of see the dilemma that we were in. You have two guys that had shown signs of doing some good things and also showed signs of being young. Neither one really separated themselves through the process, which made it challenging to make that decision.

So to me you need to resolve it. Everyone says, figure it out during fall camp. Well, that's great. You're not playing a real football game in fall camp, especially the way college is structured. There's no exhibition games. There's no other than what you do in practice.

With that information, we just felt like we needed to see them play. That played itself out, and we made the decision we made. Then we weren't getting the growth we wanted to get from that spot. So I felt like we kind of needed to do what we did, and now we're where we are.

You just want to see whoever takes over to take it and then just start growing and take the position and run with it. I think we've seen these last few weeks the growth with Brendan. I continue to say we have two very talented quarterbacks that are young, and we've just got to -- I feel good about the progress he's making. I'm excited for his future and for Tayven's future as well.

**Q. Your ability to keep the team able to play hard, to fight, to battle, despite all the adversity and stuff, what is your approach to that? How are you able to do that, continue to do that despite -- and obviously it seemed to pay off, certainly paid off against Penn State.**

TOM ALLEN: I think you just want to capture the hearts and minds of your players. That's my goal from day one with this team when guys comes here. It's the character of our players. I attribute it to the leadership of our team, the captains we have, the leaders we have on our team, our coaches and our staff being an extension of the message that we send.

I think you just have to appeal to the heart of a young man, his mindset. I'm such a big believer of how powerful our minds are and that we don't allow circumstances to dictate the way we approach every day. It's so easy to do that. We all do it.

I think young people really struggle with it. When we get older, we start to have a little different perspective on things. Just teaching young people your effort, your attention to detail, the way you approach every day should not be based on outside circumstances, how you feel, whether we won or lost, whether the last play was in your favor or against you, and to teach them just to focus on that.

It sounds great. It's hard to do when things get hard and they stack against you, but you just try to appeal to who they are and what motivates them. I talk so much about what's their identity outside of being a football player because that's at the core of who you are as a person, and I build off of that.

They articulated that to me throughout fall camp, and I draw back on those things to try to help them work through the difficulties that I know they're going to face in football and I know they're going to face in life.

As I tell our guys many times, life is really hard, and sometimes it's really unfair. Football is an amazing teacher of life. So I draw on that, I really do. We talk about that. We're very up front about that. But the guys got to respond. Got to meet them where they are and get them to understand they're developing qualities that are going to serve them well in this life, that's going to help them separate themselves in whatever they choose to do when they're done playing football.

That's part of the conversations we have, and also you just find nuggets and words and phrases and different things to be able to capture them and connect with them and help them to stay locked in each week. As hard as that may be, to stay focused and keep fighting and playing hard for each other and for the people that helped them get where they are.

It's a lot of things without question, but it really goes back

to the culture you create, and the guys have bought into it. They believe in it. Man, we've got to keep battling. And this is another opportunity to continue to shape that and form that. As hard as it is right now, we're going to keep locking arms and stay the course and not grow weary in doing the little things right, and I believe we're going to be able to get a different outcome if we just stay the course.

**Q. Kind of the other side of the same coin, but with self-inflicted wounds week after week, whether it be a muffed punt or missing an assignment in the back of the end zone that leads to a touchdown, as a coaching staff, how do you guys work together to make sure that frustration doesn't then get on the players, that you keep things positive and constructive without as a group just getting so incredibly frustrated with the self-inflicted wounds?**

TOM ALLEN: I agree. I think it's a great question. To me, it's about us making sure we can do everything we can do as coaches first. It's our responsibility to put them in the best position. Then if a young man continues to make those mistakes, are we doing something structurally to help him? Have we done enough of that? If we have, maybe we need to make a personnel change to put somebody else in that position to get an opportunity to get a different outcome.

So we look at all those different things, and there's no question it's on us, it's on me first, it's on us as coaches for the areas of responsibility because, you're right, those are so frustrating. You do all that, and you still have a chance at the end to win a football game. Those things have just got to be eliminated.

If we can just do a good job of eliminating those self-inflicted wounds -- I think that's a great way to describe them. We call them CATs, Crimes Against the Team, things we bring on ourselves. Those are things that are one of our goals, one of our three keys to winning football games. It's going to continue to be emphasized, no question about that. I believe in that.

Obviously we're not doing a good enough job as coaches of getting that point across and getting the right guys in the right positions to help finish those plays out. It's a never ending process. This week is another quest to be able to eliminate those mistakes so we can have a different outcome on game day.

**Q. Andre Carter played more on the inside than he had all season against Penn State. Was that something you thought you could take advantage of? Has he gone kind of under the radar a little bit because the sack numbers aren't there, but he's been very**

**disruptive. What are your thoughts?**

TOM ALLEN: He plays so hard, and I think we've got to probably take some of those reps off him so he can be better at the end. Want to continue to play him for sure, but obviously he's very disruptive. He cares a bunch, plays hard, just got to continue to bring guys along behind him so he doesn't have to play as many snaps.

I think that's important on the defensive line in general to take some hits off guys and be able to finish in the fourth quarter the way you want it to be. Just that whole unit played really solid on game day this past weekend. I think we need to continue that.

We've got to continue to have more guys step up in those spots. It's about pressuring the quarterback. Every week that's an emphasis. Did a really good job of that. Got three sacks on a team that had only given up eight the whole season. And several more pressures. I thought we should have had a couple of more sacks as well. But he's a huge part of that and appreciate how hard he plays.

**Q. Want to go back to Sorsby and kind of the quarterback process. You mentioned that you've seen some growth from him over the last couple of weeks that probably wasn't apparent in the fall. Part of that is probably game repetitions too. But what has he shown you in the past couple weeks that maybe wasn't there in the early decision process?**

TOM ALLEN: I think, even as you saw this game unfold, I thought the first couple throws were rushed. I think early in the process he had not played. If you go back and look at his -- just number of snaps at the quarterback position, even back in high school, was not very extensive.

Played another position as a sophomore and early in his junior year and got injured his senior year. Did not have a lot of rep base to really evaluate. He hasn't played the position in a long, long time.

Didn't have a quarterback guy that he had been working with since he was a kid. Some guys have that, especially from the state of Texas. But just saw a guy that had a lot of upside but also a lot of questions, really probably to be resolved in game when you're going to get hit. That's what you don't know. How are you going to respond?

He's a physical guy. He ran the ball in high school too, but how are you going to respond when you get the pressure in your face? I think, as he's gotten that, more of those opportunities to show the game day poise and confidence that you just don't know is there. I think that's definitely something you're seeing each week grow, and I think that

will continue as well.

He knows he's got to continue. We've got two guys still right there that are very, very close. So he needs to continue to stay locked in and focused and keep executing and just keep growing. I think there's no doubt that playing is the best way for him to gain that.

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