

# Indiana University Football

## Media Conference

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## Coach Tom Allen

### Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Appreciate everybody being here. Just want to begin by -- really proud of our guys, the way they battled on Saturday. Last couple weeks, been able to see some growth of the way our guys have prepared the last couple weeks and starting to play complementary football, eliminating mistakes.

Didn't have any penalties by our offense, no turnovers by our offense. Scored the opening drive of the game, which is a great tone setter.

Then defensively getting off the field on the first drive and several drives to start the game. Finally got us a takeaway on a fumble recovery. It's taken many, many games to get to that. Got two of those for the game, counting the three 4th down stops. Had five opportunities where we consider those takeaways by our guys, by our unit, so those were huge in the game.

Just feel like we secured the football on the punt returns and no penalties on special teams, just playing all three phases working together, got some good flip the field with our punter again, pinning them down inside and making them have to punt and getting points off that, and obviously at the end getting the key stop.

Aaron Casey was phenomenal, as we all saw, and the big sack he got to knock them out of field goal range, and then to be able to take the ball and get some key 1st downs and make them burn their time-outs and kick a field goal right in that area where you try to make a decision what you need to do. Trust in Chris, and he did a great, great job. Proud of our players.

We just go through and try to recognize players of the game. Brendan Sorsby on offense was our offensive player of the game. Just really proud of his development. Just showed growth, poise, toughness, made some really big throws, and had some opportunities -- we left some things out there offensively.

Didn't play consistently in the second half to where we need to be for sure. But he did a really good job of

distributing the football and continuing to grow and develop.

Aaron Casey was the defensive player of the game, as you would expect with his nine tackles, four tackles for loss, two sacks, caused fumble. Just played the way I believe and know he can, and he was very motivated to -- he didn't love the way he played -- this past week was solid, but the week before that was not. He's really taken some ownership of that and just taking it personal to make sure he's playing his best football, and I thought he just did a tremendous job in every way.

Special teams players of the game, James Bomba and Chris Freeman. James did great job with our punt team, makes all the checks and calls to get everything right there I thought was excellent, and they were a big pressure team, so thought he was really huge in that.

Scouts of the week: Defensive scout, TD Collins. Ta'Derius is his birth name. We call him TD. That's his name that he goes by. Going to be a really good football player for us and excited for his development and growth. Drew Pearce does a great job for us every week in so many ways, so proud of him.

Offensively, scouts, Austin Barrett, one of our true freshmen. Really talented player who's really developing and working hard. Declan McMahon brings great energy, as well. Players love him. Just has a great personality, works really hard and helps us get better, and love having him on our team.

Then special teams scouts of the week: Reece Bellin and Reece Lozano, two guys that work extremely hard, consistently giving us great looks on special teams and also in their offensive positions.

Proud of our football team. Got to continue to get better. Got a great opportunity and challenge this week as we travel to Illinois, a team that's playing really good football, their best football of the season. Got a big win this past weekend. A big, physical football team, have the biggest back we've played against, biggest running back, very athletic quarterback, really talented receivers, and then a



big, physical defense, one of the best defensive lines in the Big Ten. A team that has played well defensively.

Just a very well-coached football team in all phases. A lot of respect for Coach Bielema and the job he's doing there. We have to continue to develop and be able to build off momentum that we have from this past weekend and just keep getting better and play our best football this coming Saturday.

Questions?

**Q. Kahlil Benson didn't finish out that game. Joshua Sales played. Is Benson out, worry about him long-term? And Omar Cooper the same way, he went out early. Just curious if either of those --**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, since those guys left the game, don't know about either one of them at this point. We'll do our availability report. Don't expect any of them to be long-term situations.

But do want to announce that Cam Camper will not be returning this season. Had a procedure done over the weekend, and just to try and help him for his long-term, and excited about the procedure going well and getting him 100 percent healthy for the future, and be able to help them in that regard.

That's definitely one that we wanted to make sure we were clear on with his status. If a player is out for the rest of the season, we would say that publicly, and then if not we use the availability report to be able to allow us to announce those injuries.

**Q. Is Camper's related to his previous injury?**

TOM ALLEN: It's the same situation. It's just kind of a chance to really kind of get it cleaned up and help him have a really, really 100 percent clean future.

**Q. Jordan Shaw, I think somebody asked about him on Saturday, but he's played a lot. He was your co-leading tackler on Saturday against Wisconsin. He had some accolades coming out of high school. What is the trajectory he's been on? Feels like we've seen more of him the last two, three weeks.**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think even before the injury to Noah, he was a guy that we had just noticed in practice. You think about -- I talked about this with our team on Sunday. When you're a young player, you get your opportunities on the scout teams or on special teams, and guys are flashing and they start making plays and just the way they move and the way they finish things and how they drill and how

they prepare catches coaches' eyes and we say that's your responsibility to convince your coach that you should play. We put that on them and make your coach say, man, we've got to find a way to get that guy on the field. That's kind of what started happening in practice with him.

Really has high-level coverage skills, has really elite ball skills. He's a guy that was a two-way player in high school and a return man.

Because of the situation with Noah, it allowed us to be able to kind of catapult him to a higher role probably a little faster, but he was ready when called upon. As you mentioned, he was our co-leading tackler on Saturday and was matched up with their best receiver many, many times.

So just really excited for him and his opportunity he was given, and he took full advantage of it. Came into the Penn State game a couple weeks ago and made some big plays there and showed me that he was ready to take that next step and be given some more responsibility.

Definitely put a lot on his plate pretty quickly, but he responded well. I think he'll continue to grow and develop, and he's just a tough kid. He's got a really good football IQ, and as you mentioned, we had high hopes for him, expectation for him coming out of high school, and he's proven to be a guy that's going to be a great future here.

**Q. Obviously with Cam out and with Omar I guess we'll find out, but EJ Williams' return was timely. Can you talk about how that kept that unit from slipping off a little bit and what his production has meant to Brendan so far?**

TOM ALLEN: There's no question. Like you said, the timing is huge, getting him back, because Cam really hasn't played a lot lately. So EJ's length and speed, he's our fastest and longest receiver combination that we have.

Really excited for him. Made some big plays for us. He's a big enough guy to break tackles and can stretch the field.

Going to need him to continue to elevate and continue to be a guy on the rise, which we're seeing right now from him, so really proud of him, and as Donaven McCulley continues to elevate his play and be a guy that we know we have to be able to count on to step up and make plays, so EJ is a guy we had high hopes for when we brought him here, and unfortunately had the injury in week one that really set him back, but he just stayed positive, stayed the course, kept training, kept working, was doing all the things he needed to do to get back, and was ready to go when he got back.

Now he's played a couple games, and each week he just gets more and more confident with Brendan and our system that we're doing here.

Big expectations for EJ in these next few weeks.

**Q. The Big Ten has honored Aaron Casey for his performance. Just talk a little bit more about that and the way he has responded. Not everybody responds well to adversity, but obviously he has with the way he performed the last couple weeks.**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think just a testament, once again, to his character. He was really bothered by how he played against Rutgers, to be honest with you, and we weren't afraid to hold him accountable for that because he's a leader and he's expected to play at a high level each and every week, and he didn't do that, and he knew that.

As a matter of fact, he sought me out.

Just love the way he's responded to that, being the leader of our team, and definitely the leader of our defense. When you're a captain as a linebacker you've got to lead that side of the ball just by default because that's what linebackers do, but what you're the captain you've got to lead the team.

So just being a consistent guy that practices hard every day, does little things right on and off the field and getting recognized for the defensive player of the week, Big Ten Player of the Week this week is huge and very well-deserving. He was very, very impactful in that game, as we all saw, and it just kind of -- I think it kind of willed us to win that game because we obviously had to have those stops, and he tackled extremely well, which is what we expect him to do. He's one of our best tacklers in space. That's something that needs to be consistent for him to do that.

Just really excited for him, and we're going to need him, need that leadership down the stretch here, and as we've talked about, we know what's at stake, we know where we're at, what we have to do each and every week. It's a 1-0 mindset, and he's the leader of that group.

**Q. I noticed Matt Hohlt, Josh Rudolph maybe getting more snaps; Venson Sneed, I know he's played some, but you talk about developing that depth. How important is it for those guys and what have you seen that makes you more comfortable with them playing more snaps out there?**

TOM ALLEN: I'll tell you, you think about both Josh and Matt, both have multiple tackles. Josh had three really

physical tackles that I thought were impressive. Matt had three tackles, didn't play a ton of snaps, but the snaps that both of them played, the numbers are going up.

You mentioned Venson Sneed. That's on purpose. I think he's a guy that has a really, really great future for us. He's young. Those are all young guys and guys that haven't played as much but also have -- just helps our older guys get some rest and also allows those younger guys to develop.

But they've earned our trust to be able to put them in there and make plays. At this stage of the season, a lot of guys are dinged up, and you've got to be able to tackle big backs each and every week. We've got another opportunity to do that this week, so we're going to need a lot of fresh bodies, and the more we can play those guys -- we made a concerted effort to play more guys on the defensive line in a smooth rotational way, and I thought that was very, very beneficial for us to finish strong in that fourth quarter, which we know we need to be able to do.

Those are guys that we have seen positive things from. I expect that to continue to grow.

**Q. Brendan said after the game that he didn't practice a ton during the week. Obviously he was listed as questionable going into the game. How do you feel like he was able to put together a good performance after not having all those practice reps during the week, and just what do you feel like has allowed him to settle in the last couple weeks?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, it was a situation where we tried to modify everything to make sure that he was 100 percent available on game day, both physically and mentally, so I thought he did a tremendous job of locking in. I think that takes a maturity to do that. Not everybody can do that.

I think Coach Carey did a great job of getting him the mental reps, all the walk-through reps we do, even parts of practice when you're doing the run game where he's not throwing, he did all that with our offense.

Then we got -- each day we threw the football in a very controlled setting to be able to get him ready, as well.

But then part of it is just -- I think he's a natural passer, from a throwing perspective. He's not a guy that was a manufactured quarterback out of high school. He's very -- he had not played that position very long in high school, doesn't have -- some guys since they were in the sixth or seventh grade they have a quarterback coach that shapes them. He's not that way.

He was a baseball player. I think he's just a very natural athlete, and I think those kind of guys are not high-rep guys with regard to that area of throwing the football.

But obviously it's timing with your receivers, so we had to work on that, but I think it was impressive what he was able to do. There were some definite question marks, but we felt like it was what was best to get him ready to be able to play his best.

I think it's just a testament to our training staff. They did a tremendous job getting him ready to go, and then also he's a tough kid, and there's a toughness piece to this game that's demanded, and he still is going to get hit. It's part of it.

So he just showed he can handle that, as well, so we're just going to try to do everything we can like we do with all of our guys to get him ready for game day with the proper preparation that they need to be able to execute, but that position is obviously very unique and special.

I thought our staff did a really good job, and he responded, and we've just got to keep building off of that.

**Q. Sticking with Brendan, I guess the offense had kind of stalled there for a portion of the second half, but then in that drive leading up to Freeman's 50-yard field goal, Brendan had the 1st down run and then the pass to McCulley. Curious what you've seen from his mentality in terms of sticking with the game, leadership traits, things like that?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, it's about finishing, and we've talked about it over and over. If you want to win important games, you've got to finish. He was able to do that.

Like you said, we had that lull there in the second half, which is frustrating. Got to work through that, got to get better at that, got to eliminate those issues, and when you have a chance to score some more points, you've got to take advantage of it.

He had one ball that was batted down. I think might have even allowed us to not even have to kick the field goal; we'd be able to stay on the field and run the clock out. But that happened; he was able to get some key completions, some key runs, be able to allow us to get ourselves in position for that field goal that we were able to kick.

Just poise, confidence in himself, only grows over time, and you're seeing that from him every game he plays. Every snap he gets is important, and as is the case for all young players.

I just think his natural talent is kind of starting to come out, and as he gets more comfortable with what we're doing and what he's seeing and how he's able to distribute the ball at critical times. Expect that just to -- once again, every single week, we've just got to keep getting a little bit better.

**Q. I wanted to ask about your defense. I know the linebacker play was phenomenal with Aaron Casey, but specifically with your defensive backs they were opportunistic taking advantage of Wisconsin's passing offense. How can they build on that going into the last three games?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, very, very critical. We had a lot of PBUs by our defensive backs, several tipped balls up front, which we emphasized. Just give Coach Guerrieri credit. He's the safeties coach. And Coach Shelby does a great job with our corners and just working on conceptual things, being able to be in the right position.

We play a variety of coverages and require different techniques of anticipation and their eyes, whether it's based on the coverage, where they're supposed to be, and playing with that kind of discipline, and just getting your hands on balls. We thought we had a couple picks that we should have had, two for sure that I would say we just missed opportunities there, but they were in great position to make those plays.

Our coaches have done a really good job, and just got to continue to help those guys grow in confidence. It's a group that has some young guys mixed in there, and a lot of new guys, period, even if they're older per se, but they're not -- haven't been here a long time, so their communication is critical. I thought we had a couple mistakes that we were fortunate with a couple times, but at the same time we've got to keep working on that to make sure that we're doing a great job, always being in the right position to make it hard on the offense.

3rd downs, I felt like even though we held them to 14 points, both our touchdowns came on 3rd downs, which is really frustrating to me. We should have got off the field I felt on both of those, but we didn't. They executed and we did not.

But at the same time, it's a group that needs to step up, and they have, and I thought they did a really good job for us, and it's going to be demanded again this week.

Just proud of our secondary, and I just expect them, once again, to be another group that keeps getting a little bit better, which we call being on the rise.

**Q. What happened in the second half with the offensive line because they just didn't seem to be able to block like they did in the first half, and what was the problem? Was it something Wisconsin did, or was it problems on your own offensive line?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, so just -- when you go back and watch it on film, we lost some one-on-ones. We had a mistake up front on one of the pressures, which really hurt us in a critical situation where we felt like we had a chance to get a big 1st down and we did not and you have to punt. That obviously changes, kills momentum at that point. Just felt like that when Kahlil went down, I think that hurt us, too. He's one of our better players.

Obviously Josh has a chance to come in there and play, and that's the most he's played in a while. Need him to elevate and continue to get better and work through all that.

But at the same time, they made some adjustments and did some things that we've got to be able to have answers for. They have a good front seven. We knew that going in. Physical football team that makes running the ball very, very hard, and just feel like we need to do a better job of just adapting to that and taking the things that they give us.

We've got to be able to -- if they're overloading the box, we've got to be able to throw the football effectively and get that pressure off and be able to be -- continue to be aggressive and put the pressure on them vertically and on the perimeter.

Just felt like we didn't play as well. We didn't execute as well up front. Had some mistakes with our guys, and like you said, lost some one-on-one battles, and got to get better. They've made a lot of progress, done a lot of good things, but in that part of the game we needed them to step up, and that will be a continuing area of focus for us as we go into this week and play another really, really talented front that makes it hard on offenses.

But as is the case for all of our guys, we've just got to continue to evaluate, make corrections, and keep getting better.

**Q. With Cam and Noah out, you've lost a few really good leaders. On that topic of leadership structure within the team, have you seen anybody else kind of step up with them out?**

TOM ALLEN: Yep, Louis Moore I would say is one that sticks out to me in terms of the secondary with Noah's injury, which is huge because if you're playing the safety position, you're involved in so much communication back

there, so that's leadership on the field. Then also just on the sideline, in the huddle, when you come off to the side during time-outs and those periods of time when you need guys to be saying the right things, and more importantly in the locker room throughout the week and just the little things that you do and the way you approach your study habits.

Louis to me is a guy that really stands out to me, and he needs to continue to do that.

I think just from an offensive perspective, I think our quarterbacks. I think Brendan has really elevated his leadership, and Tayven is a guy, his practice habits and the way he's prepared, he's fully ready to go no matter what. Dexter is another guy that just works his tail off, and he's ready to go if need be.

But I think the quarterbacks to me have elevated their leadership. I know Coach Carey has made that a major emphasis. Tayven and Brendan are both young, but at the same time, you've got to have -- that position demands it, and I've seen that grow without question, especially during the games.

I think Brendan has -- he has a real good knack and understanding for what needs to be said in those moments to his teammates, and he kind of has a good calming presence for everybody out there, and that's strong leadership, as well.

That needs to continue to grow, and that's what you expect from a young guy, and I think that's where with those two guys now being out that the other guys around them can begin to elevate that.

**Q. There's no way to ask this except kind of bluntly. Things moved really fast between you guys and Brendan in terms of filling that spot with a QB and class. I think the time between the offer and his commitment was less than a week. What did you see in a short space of time looking at his film that you thought there's the tools there that we like, let's offer him, get him on a visit, see if we can get him in, and how much did that match when he got to campus and you got eyes on him in a hands-on way, the tools he brought as a quarterback?**

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, and you're exactly right, it was a very fast turnaround based on the circumstances.

First thing that stuck out to me was his athleticism on film. First step you do when you find somebody, you want to evaluate, you see them on film, and he was a guy that was making plays with his legs. You could see the natural arm

talent was there, and you say, okay, is this guy really as big as he's listed as, so Coach Bell went and watched him in person, watched him throw and was able to make that evaluation, hey, this guy has got something to him, from just a natural ball release.

Like I said, he was a baseball player, a very good baseball player. I love that. I love multisport guys. I think it just matters. I don't really care what sport it is. But to be able to play other sports at a high level shows just the competitive greatness that you have to have and also just the coordination of a quarterback and being able to be smooth and natural.

I think basketball and baseball are kind of two good things that quarterbacks -- sports they can play that really kind of resonate with me for that position.

Then just being able to be a guy that had some grit and toughness to him on film. Then you get to know the person. You get him on the phone initially and talk to him and his family and get to know them and okay, is this guy -- you talk to coaches there, you talk to people that are with him every single day, and it was a quick process without question.

But we felt good about who we thought he was as a person and the skill set. Big frame, he's 230 pounds right now, and 6'3", and he's a guy that just didn't have a lot of film. He really didn't. Like I said before, he got hurt his senior year.

I think that gave us a chance to kind of maybe get in on a guy that wasn't being as highly recruited as he probably should have been. Got that process rolling and got him here on campus with his family, and they loved it here, and we really felt like everything we saw -- then you get him here, and you know what, he's proven to be a guy that we think has got a tremendous future.

So we saw last year on the scout team, where he was kind of just playing, follow the card, wherever they tell you to throw. You could see the natural arm talent there in those settings. But once again, those weren't really true games, so you didn't know all that stuff yet.

Those were just the things that we saw out of him, which is why we offered him here, and he came here with us, and glad he's here.

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