

Indiana University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 13, 2023

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Just want to start by congratulating Todd Yeagley and our soccer program, being regular season and conference tournament champions. Once again, just continued success in being the class of soccer in the Big Ten is impressive, so congrats to them. Wish them the best in the tournament.

Wanted to recognize some of our players for the week from this past week. The scouts that continue to do a tremendous job getting us ready, Race Stewart, Aaron Stewart, defensive scout team players of the week.

Offensive scouts were Eli Jochem and Derin McCulley.

On special teams, Jackson Wasserstrom and Clayton Allen. Guys continue to work really hard for our team, help us get prepared.

Obviously still just a tough, tough loss Saturday. Super proud of our fight of our team, and just the ability to give us a chance at the end. Really encouraged by the growth of our offense and their development. Very disappointed in our defense.

It's on me. It's my responsibility. Take full responsibility for that as head coach, and that side of the football must play better and really just didn't get the job done.

But definitely played well enough offensively to win the game.

Opportunity this week is tremendous, being the Brass Spittoon. Huge opportunity for our team. Our guys understand, and thought we had a really good day yesterday coming back, bouncing back, and getting their minds right and having a good day together. That's their whole focus now is get ready for the first trophy game we have of this season, and big opportunity.

Michigan State is a very talented football team; that's just very obvious when you watch film. Physical, plays very, very hard. Just a lot of respect for them staying together and fighting, and it's obvious on film that's what they

continue to do.

Big week for us, important game. Can't wait.

Questions?

Q. With a bowl opportunity off the table, a couple weeks left, I know you want to do right by the seniors and try to win out, but how do you get young guys more reps for the future? What's your philosophy on that?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, there will be some that will naturally be involved just because of some guys getting nicked up or dinged up this time of year, but the objective is to win the football game Saturday and the following week, as well. Two very important games for us, for our program and for everything moving forward.

Bottom line is that yes, some of those younger guys are going to have opportunities because of their development throughout the season and get those chances during these last couple weeks of practice, but at the same time, the goal is to win the game.

Q. What's kind of the plan this week in practice in terms of addressing some of the miscommunications and breakdowns defensively and just how you're going to try to go about fixing that?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think from day one, just continued reps on possible scenarios that happen within a call, with motions and movements, different things like that, and just make sure all the guys that are going to play are fully prepared for that, starting with the walk-throughs all the way through even some post-practice work to make sure those get fixed, that they get corrected.

Obviously caused us issues on Saturday, so without question, major emphasis. Make sure the plan is direct and simple enough to be executed by all the guys that may be playing, due to whatever happens throughout the course of the game, and making sure that our guys can execute the calls because that's what has to happen.



Q. Wanted to ask you about Donaven. Obviously you tapped him as a potential breakout guy since the spring, but since he moved to receiver he's dealt with two wide receiver coaches, two offensive coordinators, five quarterbacks. How has he been able to develop in the way he has despite all those moving pieces?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, that's a valid point. I think it's just a testament to him, his talent, his drive. He just keeps getting better and better all the time. I saw that in him and felt like he could be.

He and I have had a lot of one-on-ones about it, and the way he played on Saturday is the way I envisioned him playing, being a guy that is a very difficult match-up, very big, strong and tough to defend.

To me, I just think it's once again, he's worked extremely hard. He's very coachable, very humble in regards to whoever he's with. He doesn't have some big it's-all-about-me ego. It's not that at all. He just works hard. Whoever the quarterback is, it's just, give me the ball, give me a chance to make a play.

Just love who he is as a person, which is to me a great testament to his family. He's been very well-raised. He understands how to do things the right way on and off the field, and that's a tremendous thing. He just comes up and shows up every day and works really, really hard, and he's a competitor.

Love him. I just think -- continue to say he's just going to keep rising.

Q. This might be an obvious question, but in dealing with sort of the letdown of losing bowl eligibility, the advantage basically of having these two trophy games -- I recognize every game is important, but there being something tangible that you can put in front of the guys and say this is what you're fighting for, it's a rivalry, it's a trophy game, there's something we'll be able to hold up and celebrate if we can win even if our longer term goals are off the table?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, there's no question, and I don't set the schedule. The fact that we play Michigan State at this point in the season, again, I think is -- yeah, definitely advantageous in regards to what you just stated.

Our guys have worked extremely hard, and it's a very driven group, very motivated group.

The seniors want to be able to do everything they can to raise that trophy at the end of the game. It means a lot to them.

Obviously even this past season, you saw the response a year ago, and it's no different this year. We definitely have a lot to play for, and we understand that it's a testament to your character as a person, as a team, and as a program when you don't allow the circumstances on the outside to dictate your focus, your effort, how you do things on a daily basis and eventually how you perform on game day. Great opportunity in front of us, and we're excited about it.

Q. The defense has had some kind of wild swings this year in terms of looking really good one week and then the next falling backwards. Have you been able to trace why is it you see that difference level in practice, or is it just -- I'm curious, what have you seen behind the scenes? Have you been able to predict where this team is going in a given week on defense?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I will say this: I didn't see this one coming. I didn't. There's been a couple weeks where I was concerned about our focus maybe collectively going into a certain game. But not the case this week. Just really hard to pinpoint for sure the reasons for some of the things.

I know you had about five pass plays that accounted for three-fourths of their yards, which is crazy, and I think it kind of caused us even as we called it, as Matt called it, just to -- kind of squeaky about some calls that we probably shouldn't have abandoned that broke down on us early to stay with them, because I think we needed some of those.

But at the same time, I don't think -- there wasn't anything in the week that I saw that, man, I was really worried about this, about them not being locked in or focused or being able to make those communications and checks.

But I do think it does go back -- we keep saying it, but being able to play several different guys and they've got to be able to get in there and make adjustments and be able to make the checks and do the things we're supposed to do.

But once again, it's my responsibility. It's on the coaches. Our guys played hard, and they fought and they battled. Even defensively, as bad as we played at times, we had some huge stops in the score zone to force field goals, a huge stop at the end of the game to be able to force the punt to give our offense the ball back to at least drive down the field with a minute 30 to go and no time-outs. They bowed up in those situations, but obviously we didn't do a good enough job as coaches, and like I said, the buck stops here.

The guys practiced hard last week, and I expect them to

practice hard again this week. You're right, the inconsistency is very frustrating, but it's obviously a focal point for us this week to be able to allow us to be able to play to what we believe is our standard and the way we need to play and we can play, and that's what we've got to do.

Q. When you said "frustrating," you've seen what the defense can be. Does that make it harder each week when you fall back --

TOM ALLEN: Oh, yeah, I think there's no doubt. That's human nature. If you didn't think they could do it, it's just, okay, he just kind of -- but when you see, you know the product that can be put out there on a consistent basis and when it doesn't happen, especially when you see how well we were playing offensively on the road and had an opportunity that is so massive in front of us. It's just really difficult to accept.

But at the same time, there's a reason for everything, and we've got to face it and identify it.

So yeah, it is hard, a hard pill to swallow, but we've got to own up to it and move forward.

Q. With Aaron Casey, Saturday being the last time that he'll be playing in Memorial, when you kind of reflect back on his recruiting process to now, what are you most proud of in how far he's come?

TOM ALLEN: You know, I would say just the grit and perseverance that he's displayed. It hasn't been easy for him to just come here and become the guy right away. It took several years. Most guys aren't willing to do that. They're not willing to wait.

He's showed tremendous just diligence and being true to himself. He's been very consistent on and off the field. He's never been a guy that's ever caused any issue whatsoever, even when he was young and wasn't getting to play. Just always where he's supposed to be, doing what he's supposed to do, and just growing, growing step by step.

It's just been such a neat process to see him just grow and develop gradually over time, and then to be able to play his best football in his final season is just what you want.

You want guys to come here and be developed as men and as football players, and that's what he's done. Through all that, he's been consistently taking care of his business in the classroom and representing his family in a first-class way in all that he does. That to me is to see a young man come here and fulfill his full potential, maximize

that, that's what you want for your guys.

We had a vision for him as a player when he got here, and he's stayed true to that, he's stayed with us, and it's neat to see him rewarded for that.

Q. Asking about Andre Carter, in the same light, he's only been here for the one year, but in getting to know him and learning his backstory, it seems like he's been a pretty good representation of your program. Looking back on him this year, his impact, what do you take most from him?

TOM ALLEN: Well, you take a young man like that that a year ago we didn't know, and you get to know him through the process. It's a pretty quick process you go through. You see that you're able to get him an opportunity for something he wants to be able to do for himself and his future.

Then just being a quality, quality person, just a joy to be around. You see that with him one-on-one. He has a good heart for people. He cares. He's been through a lot. Life has not been easy for him and his family.

Just to see him choose to be able to just keep going -- even yesterday coming back after a frustrating situation on Saturday and just come back with a smile and realize, hey, it's back to work, I'm just being a pro about things, and that's what you've got to be able to do.

We talked so much about the future of our guys and we spend such a really small part of their life playing football. There's going to be so much more beyond the game and what their identity is as a man is never what happens on the football field even though it's easy for that to be the case.

Just those kind of conversations with a guy like that that's mature. He's been through a lot in his life, and he sees that part of it.

So at the same time, he wants to also chase after being great on game day. I think we've helped him grow in those areas, helped him fulfill some of those things, but we want to see him finish out the right way.

Proud of bringing a guy like that here that fit with us, represents us in a great way in all that he does and is going to continue to play hard and finish strong.

Q. You're very openly a very positive guy, but the third straight year without a bowl, you have these losses this year, some of them have come because of offensive problems, some of them defensive problems,

some of them some special teams breakdown. When you're driving home after a game, where is your level of frustration, and at some point do you say what do we have to do to get on the same page? Where is your level of frustration right now?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, you know, being positive is a choice. I'm not positive because life is easy; you're positive because life is hard, and things are hard. We have a lot of challenges that we have to battle and things you have to go through to get your guys ready to play, then the landscape of college football is now completely different than it's ever been and those challenges have been accelerated here.

It's just a really -- "frustrating" is probably the best word to use. Just I was sick about that game and the outcome of that game and just did enough good things holistically and then enough mistakes defensively in my opinion to not, but you've got to protect the football, too. We've got to not get a kickoff return all the way inside the 20 called back and those kind of things that you can't do to hurt yourself.

But you know what, that's just being able to -- the margin for error is very, very small, and to be able to eliminate those mistakes in all three phases that work together, and when they all do, we have a chance to be a really good football team.

It's been very frustrating without question, and at the same time, I'm responsible. I'm in charge. It's our program. I've been put in position to lead it, and when you don't get the results you want, it's on me.

Yeah, it's hard to sleep. You lay your head down and you've got a million things going on in your head. You want it so bad for your kids, your players, our families, our coaches, their families, our fans, our university, everybody I represent, you feel all that. I'm just going to keep battling, keep fighting, but at the same time, it's been hard, to be real honest with you. We've got to adapt and adjust to the new world that we're in, and it's different. There's no question about it, with the changing of rosters and the different things that go with that.

At the end of the day, we're going to stay together, keep arms locked and just keep fighting, keep building, and that's what we're going to do. We've got a chance to finish out with two huge trophy games that mean a whole lot to this team, to this program and to this university, and that's the plan.

Q. Obviously Rod Carey came in, not an easy situation coming in mid-stream taking over the offense. Just talk about from the outside there's been tangible

improvement. Talk about what you've seen as far as improvement each week with the offense and him leading things.

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, I think really proud of him and the job he's done with our offense. I think obviously Saturday was a great proof of that, that he's done a really good job of bringing the staff together first and then bringing the offense together and being able to just keep seeing a little bit of growth every single week. It starts up front. Those guys' development has continued to be there.

Then with the quarterback play, that's been a huge plus these last few weeks, and then the receiver play has been elevated in all the positions.

I just think that there's just a lot to be said about getting everybody believing, everybody together, and just getting some more consistent execution.

Still, got a chance to grow and got more opportunities to improve in that area. Could have done some more things on Saturday, as we all would agree as we talked and watched film from the game.

But just really proud of what he's done, and you're right, it's not an easy situation to do that at all, but he's come in and taken the guys that are here, both coaches and players, and got them all together and done a great job leading that group.

That to me is very exciting, very encouraging, and definitely one of the huge pluses from this past weekend.

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