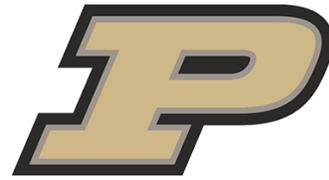


Purdue University Football Media Conference

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Jeff Brohm

Press Conference



COACH BROHM: Good morning.

Well, definitely we're very happy with the victory this past weekend. I thought it was a great way to win the football game and our guys hung in there tough. Played hard till the end. Found a way to overcome a lot of adversity which is great to see and it was a big win for us without question, so we're happy to come out victorious. It was great to be honest with you, to see some of the faces of some of our seniors that have been here awhile. They were more than extremely happy, and you could tell it meant a whole lot to them. So that kind of makes coaching very rewarding.

So we'll move on to the next one. Got a great opponent in Wisconsin, without question. Very, very well-coached team. They were very talented and they play really, really hard, and you can tell on video, they kind of set the standard for toughness and playing to the end and that's why they are very good.

It will be a challenging game for us. Very, very good on defense and on offense, they are going to run the football at you, control the clock, wear you down, and we're definitely going to have to do a lot of things right to have a chance to win in the second half but we are looking forward to the challenge.

Q. If you look at the numbers, in your three victories, you've only allowed 17 total points in six quarters; one was late to Ohio. Anyway, your numbers and your defensive rankings have significantly improved over last season. You told us Saturday after the game, you like this defense. You got here; you had no preconceived notion of what happened last year. Where has the change occurred and why has it occurred?

COACH BROHM: Well, I think it's a lot of factors. I did like the personnel when I got here, and the more I watched them and got to be around them and our guys got to work with them, I liked some of the parts we were able to work with.

We had some experience. We had some guys that really not only looked the part but they played the part from what we saw in practice, and you know, it really was about just getting some of the other guys that had not played a lot in the mix and see where they fit in and

trying to build some depth so that we can spell those guys and not make them play every single rep. I think we've been able to do that to this point pretty well.

I think our defensive coaches have done an outstanding job. We do try to play an attacking style of defense and try to take away the run and make a team beat us throwing the football. You know, load the box, so to speak, as much as we can, to make a team earn every touchdown they get.

I think our guys have played very well and they stood up to the challenge and they've responded many times. Like I said before, without the spring and summer and fall, going against our defense, we were not very good on offense.

So you know, I was hopeful that it was because we were putting on defense and not the latter, but I didn't know that. I think that it's been good for our offense to work against those guys. I think we'll continue to get better on that side hopefully but our defense has been solid and they have been stout. If we can keep them healthy in, my opinion, that's the key, and if they are somewhat fresh for the game, I think they will continue to play hard and perform well.

Q. Nick Holt, it seems like the guys love playing for him. He has a passion for the game. Obviously I would think part of that improvement is Nick Holt's passion for coaching defense. Would you agree with that?

COACH BROHM: Well, without question, Coach Holt, we've been together for a long time. I know exactly what he stands for, and he does love the game of football; and he loves to coach it and he loves to give back and he loves to do his part as a coach to not only improve his defense. But do it in the right way, and he knows how to motivate his guys; he knows how to push his guys; he knows how to have the right combination of fire but yet still teaching.

I think he's done an outstanding job, and I feel like, really, our defensive staff with Coach Holt has been very good. We have a great mix of guys that have been there and done that and played the position and coached the position. Of the four full-time defensive coaches, three of them are former defensive coordinators. Coach Poindexter was an All-American

safety and came here as the defensive coordinator at UCONN and they were very, very good at UCONN.

Reggie Johnson, our D-line coach was a defensive coordinator before and he's done a good job with our guys.

Derek Jackson is a former great safety at Duke that came from Wake Forest, had a good spot, to come here.

I think they have all gelled together with all of our support staff, and they have done a very good job and our players have bought in, and really, you know, we try to do it the right way. Our guys, while we want to work them hard and motivate them, we want them to have fun and enjoy it and I think our guys have the right mix that our players have been able to respond to.

Q. Kind of along those lines, when your defense is playing the way that your defense is playing, and you're the play caller, does it make you more aggressive or less aggressive?

COACH BROHM: Well, I have confidence in our defense, so that isn't a question. I'm gaining confidence in our offense. There's certain things we can do and there's certain things we can't do.

So would I love to be able to get some more shots up the field? That is correct. That's probably not our strength but we're going to continue to work on it. I think it's important to utilize the guys we have, do what they do well, get our quarterback comfortable and in somewhat of a rhythm and make sure we take care of him.

And every week we've got to adjust and we've got to learn from the previous game and figure out ways to get points. Nowadays, really in, football, at a high level and the professional ranks for college, when you're going against good defenses, you've got to have some creativity and you've got to do things that maybe they haven't seen before.

You look at this past game, a couple things that we did, that they had not seen before were touchdowns or they took a time-out because they had not seen it. You have to have the perfect mix of having a base system, but also changing things up, giving different looks, and, you know, the thing about offense is all 11 guys normally have to perform to make a play work, unless you're doing some type of trickery or misdirection. And while on defense, while you need 11 guys, if one guy just makes a play, that does the work for you.

So I have confidence in our defense, but we'll still try to be aggressive; but really, it's just about scoring and trying to control the ball. I think when you turn it over a

lot, I think it makes you try to be even more selective a little bit. But they happened; we have to overcome them, and I think we did a better job in the second half.

Q. Speaking of those turnovers, that seems to be an area where you put the past into the past; issues that surfaced last year, you guys have moved on. What do you do now after a four-turnover game to reemphasize those same points?

COACH BROHM: We just have to stress it again. I think our guys have bought in and understand if we don't turn it over, we'll have a chance to win. Just unfortunately it happened in this game and kind of steamrolled from there a little bit and four -- not for sure but may have been four straight possessions.

But you know what, we got better the second half, and sometimes those things are going to happen. You know, you can't predict them all. We are definitely going to continue to work ball security, take care of the ball, preaching it, talking about it. But I still want our guys to play aggressive and try to make plays. There's a fine line but we will work hard at it again.

Q. Were there specific things you saw with David with his interceptions?

COACH BROHM: Well, you know what, I think on the first one, he kind of predetermined a little bit, which he occasionally does. They disguised the coverage a little bit, but I think he should have been able to see that they were going to Cover 2 and we got over the ball a little bit and checked out open, and I think he just tried to force it a little bit.

The second one, I think he kind of got locked on again. Had a little push that blocked his vision and didn't see that the underneath throw was very open because of what they did. And you know, I think him, we've just got to get him to relax and feel comfortable in the pocket; and if he can't see things or just not have the rhythm, he's just got to continue to move up and find a lane.

You know, I was talking to my brother, Brian, just yesterday, and as you guys know, Drew Brees came in for the game and he was actually -- my brother was in the same camp for a little while, and he talked about one of the training tapes that they made all the quarterbacks watch was video cutups of Drew and his ability to find lanes and throw, was definitely a strength, and you could see it on the video.

So those are the things with guys that maybe aren't 6-5, you have to make sure they are working on and if you don't have clear vision and you miss an open guy, that's okay, just maybe slide up or buy a little extra time and see if maybe you could locate him and if not, come

underneath and we've just got to continue to work on that.

Q. Are there things about the personalities, Elijah, David, enabling them to be successful in this two-quarterback role?

COACH BROHM: I think first off, just because they are great teammates and great young men; they understand they all want to win and they want to be the guy but they understand it's all about winning.

So they have been outstanding to this point in that aspect and that's been a big reason why we've been able to do what we've done at that position.

I do think they are both getting better. I do think it helps to have two guys that you feel comfortable you can play and I'm sure sometimes that will play itself out but you know, both guys have gotten better. Both guys are good teammates and they want to win, and I firmly believe that our team feels comfortable when both are there.

Q. How about in terms of Wisconsin? What stands out about the defense? It looks like it's close to elite, if not elite.

COACH BROHM: You're exactly right. It's an elite defense and they do a great job, not only in their scheme but their personnel. They have got big guys that can play and challenge you, and they don't give up easy plays.

As good as they are, you can times it by two, and that's how hard they play. They set the standard. It's something on video that's impressive to watch.

So we've got our hands full. But it will be a great environment. It will be great for our guys to go up and play in it. It will be a great challenge and we've just got to embrace it.

Q. Are there things you learned playing against another elite team in Michigan as a team collectively or a play-caller that you can use in this one?

COACH BROHM: Normally it's similar things but we've got to get completions and find ways to move the chains and take care of the ball.

I think when you play a team like this, like in the Michigan game, we had too many third and longs, and against good teams you're not going to convert those. You look at Minnesota, we had them, I believe, when it was a third and four -- they were 1-for-13, and normally if it's longer than that, the percentage is even lower, against good defenses.

So we've got to make sure we do our part to not get in those situations, and sometimes it was penalties in the Michigan game, sometimes it was other things. We've just got to get positive yards, get us in a manageable situation and try to convert and hang in there till the end. And against good teams, if you can't sustain that the entire game, you could be in for a long day.

Q. Did T.J. McCollum get nicked up the last play of the game, and if so, could you update us on his status?

COACH BROHM: Unfortunately it was the last little handoff when the game was out of reach and they just handed it off to run the clock out. It was mostly an ankle but slightly the knee a little bit, as well. We're hopeful he'll be back but I'm not for sure.

Q. What's your general philosophy on having guys in there on situations like that? Obviously you had some front line guys out for the last ten seconds; something you need to evaluate or do you like keeping the guys out there? What's your policy?

COACH BROHM: Well, I guess you could look at it, I guess you could maybe say the game was a two-touchdown game, but it had been tight up until then, and those guys were playing, and really we didn't think twice about it. We just put our main guys out there to be alert for the Hail Mary or lateral pass or anything that could happen.

But yeah, we might look at it, depending on how much time is on the clock.

Q. Terry Wright seemed to hurt the shoulder again and didn't come back in, of course he fumbled, also. Is he healthy?

COACH BROHM: Well, Terry does have a shoulder that has some issues. He's been able to play through it. You know, we have to manage it to a certain degree, so I don't know exactly where it's at right now, but he'll probably have it all year.

You know, he's gotten better each and every week. He's got some explosive play-making ability for us. Yeah, we've got to take care of the ball. He's had fumbles the last two games and that's not good, so we have got to get that corrected. Hopefully we can get him improved in that aspect.

Q. Did you run a bubble screen on the first play and was that intentional, a nod to Joe Tiller?

COACH BROHM: Correct. I wish it had got more yards, but yes, it was. He kind of made a cut on the perimeter and the guy got back up and hit us for a one-yard gain.

Q. How did that develop during the week that you

decided you wanted to do that?

COACH BROHM: To be honest with you, I don't even think I told anybody. You're the first one that raised the question. I don't think even our staff knew why I wanted to run it.

I did want to sneak in a bubble screen right off the bat in honor of Coach Tiller and I thought it would get more yards. When we lined up to an empty set and they walk everybody out with no linebackers in the box area, I'm like, okay, (chuckling) not really the look I thought we'd get.

We did it anyway and moved on to second do you know. We scored the first drive, so was able to work.

Q. Did the players know why you were doing it?

COACH BROHM: No.

Q. Anthony Mahoungou came up with a couple really big catches for you. Why has he been able to be successful in those instances?

COACH BROHM: Well, pretty much pure and simple: Anthony is a guy that's one of our hardest workers on the team. He loves the game. He's competitive.

If you really look at some of our practices, sometimes I walk out of the office an hour after practice and just look out on the field, he's still out there and he's catching balls and he's doing things on his own.

When you see a guy work that hard, putting that amount of time and is that coachable and can take constructive criticism and just work hard, give you his very best every single time he steps on the field, that's what it's all about.

So I was as proud and happy for him as anybody on the team because he made some plays for us, and he did a good job on screen, on the crossing pattern; he got open and got yards after catch.

For whatever reason, we haven't been as good on crossing patterns versus man as I would like to, but we've worked hard at it and he did it exactly the way it was taught and made a great catch that was a low pass and then made a great run.

So to see guys carry out what you're trying to coach them on and how you're trying to get them better and to see them work hard at it, and then to be that much of a major factor in the game, I was thrilled to death for him, and he was a big reason we won.

Q. How do you think your safeties played without Thieneman in the first half?

COACH BROHM: You know what, I think we did a good

job and those guys are getting better and it was good to see him get out there and compete. I think they started to feel more comfortable.

But without question, when Thieneman came back in, I thought we got settled back in even better. Jus this knowledge and his feel is a little bit farther ahead than the others. But I did like the improvement that we made at that position and it's good to continue to develop that depth.

Q. What's your evaluation of Garrett Hudson and his start playing the first half?

COACH BROHM: You know what, he did a good job. He had a solid performance. He had a great week of practice.

He's a guy that works extremely hard, as well. He's been outstanding for us on special teams and he made some plays on defense, so you know, I think Garrett is a tremendous teammate and does everything the right way and does everything we ask, gives us 110 percent every time he's out there, and I was happy he did a very, very good job.

Q. You mentioned from the Wisconsin offense, they are going to try to control the clock and wear you down. What's that going to look like, from a grouping standpoint or the plays they kind of like to run?

COACH BROHM: They like to play power football and they are going to come downhill at you; and they are going to run power a bunch of different ways and pull the guard and have a lead blocker; and sometimes have two lead blockers and sometimes use three tight ends, sometimes four; and really just kind of try to get to a third and short situation.

And then they will mix in, you know some, playaction off of it that's very good, and they will occasionally move the pocket. And when they have to throw, they can, but that's not their strength.

So yes, it would help if we could find a way to get a lead and maybe not make them do everything they want, but it's going to be hard and it's going to be tough. We are just going to have to hang in there. We are going to have to stop some of the things, even they do well, but they are a power-running football team.

Q. How does that freshman running back look?

COACH BROHM: Well, they are very good at what they do. I mean, he can run the football and he's got strength and he can break tackles. They have got big guys ahead of them that can block. They have big tight ends that can do their part, and when he's got a full steam going ahead, he's going to get yards. So it will

be a challenge.

Q. You guys have shown a little bit the last couple games but you're not putting a running back out there in a handful of plays. Why is that something you like to do? Is it depending on what you're seeing in some of the defense?

COACH BROHM: Well, you know, kind of like I said earlier, I know the first play, we technically didn't have a back in the backfield but we had them split out. We put them in motion and scored a touchdown on them and we had multiple guys running wide open for a touchdown; and I think they probably had a call on, not ready for an empty look, and we gave them that with that personnel and they got all screwed up.

The very next time we ran that formation, they called time-out. So I could tell they weren't used to that and it was something different. Really, all the different little looks you give, you hope that it just kind of creates a little confusion and gives you an edge and finds a way to get somebody open without having to win one-on-one every single time at every position.

So it's important to have a couple different wrinkles. We need it make sure we have them this week to just kind of create some type of confusion or something that they haven't seen before.

Q. So D.J. Knox -- on the touchdown -- you did motion out your backs three or four times, or started them --

COACH BROHM: Yes --

Q. -- as receivers, too --

COACH BROHM: Correct --

Q. -- versatility to be able to do that --

COACH BROHM: Well, we just had a small little package, so it was just a few plays and they knew exactly what to do and really one was the playaction where we're trying to throw it up the seam where we have Hermanns for the easy touchdown and Greg Phillips is running wide open, as well.

The other one was a speed sweep where we're handing it off to the running back and really those were the two plays in that exact look and we called them both and got yards on both.

You know, we try not to make it too difficult so that when we are doing something that maybe we haven't done something, it's a small package and they have repped it and they know what to do, and they did a very good job with it.

Q. You say "play hard" all the time. That's the thing

you talk about these guys; you want to see them play hard. How do you define that? What does that look like to you?

COACH BROHM: I think it's a visible look that you guys can see and the fans can see and our teammates can see. So it just guys that when you watch the video, even when you're on the field, they are going hard. They are finishing at the ball. There's no let-up. It's every single play.

We even tell our guys, for some reason you don't think you can go 100 percent, come on out and we'll put somebody else in and that's no problem. We think that's better than some guy continuing to go when he can't give everything he's got.

I think it's a visible aspect of people practicing it every day, getting used to going hard. Even when we're not in pads, going full speed and finishing at the ball and never quitting on the play.

As you guys see and everybody sees, sometimes the scramble play is tough to cover. I think it creates more big plays, but if your defense is continuing to burst and find ways to get to the quarterback and plaster receivers; if on offense, you're finding ways to work to get open and you're finishing blocks and if a D-Lineman traces and we're able to block him again and create a lane for the quarterback, big plays happen.

I think we actually, every day in practice, practice the scramble drill on both sides of the ball just so we get used to it. We get used to throwing it for the quarterback and we get used to getting open with the receivers, and the defense knowing, hey, on these plays, I have to get cover longer than three or four seconds.

And it's -- but getting back to your question, I think it's a visible thing that we've done a good job of, and we've got to continue to even get better at it.

Q. Austin Larkin tried to play, played a little bit, couldn't finish the game. But Antoine Miles got more snaps, and he looked like he was maybe pretty effective at rushing the passer. How is Larkin doing, and then what did you think of how Antoine played in that role?

COACH BROHM: Well, Austin hopefully will be more healthy this week. He wasn't able to practice as much, so he didn't get in there a whole lot.

Antoine, when he was fresh, I thought he did a very good job. When he was in there a long time, I thought he got tired. So we've got to make sure we get the correct amount of reps for him, we don't overdo it, unless we have to have him in there. But when he was

fresh and healthy, he showed up and did a good job.

And even the little bit Kai Higgins played, he showed up, and he hasn't played a whole lot. We've got to figure out maybe a way to get him in there.

At the same time, you want your best 11 guys out there and just be able to rotate and keep them fresh.

Q. Seems like you got everything you wanted out of your backfield last week against Minnesota. But now you face one or possibly the best rush season you've seen all season. What challenge is that for the backfield?

COACH BROHM: It's a challenge for all of us on the offensive line and entire offense. The running backs all work hard. It was good to get Markell back in the mix.

I think D.J. Knox stepped up and did some good things. Richie Worship has been solid. He can do a lot of different things: He can block, he can run. He didn't get as many carries in this game because Markell and D.J. were in there most of the time. Weren't able to get Lankford in like we'd like to a little bit but he's another guy that I think can help us.

So to be able to have multiple guys and keep those guys fresh where they are not getting pounded the entire game. Just like with a quarterback getting hit a lot; if a running back is in there a whole lot getting hit, he's going to start to wear down and he's going to start to see ghosts a little bit.

Having multiple guys, got to continue to work them all, make sure they are all ready and have certain little packages for certain guys and get them in there but to be able to run the football in general is going to help us, and be able to do it this week would be huge but it will be very difficult.

Q. Any indication on the status of Tario Fuller?

COACH BROHM: You know what, he's got an ankle that is a pretty good bone bruise; that he's probably going to be out more. It's taken longer than we had thought, and it probably will take a little bit longer for sure.

Q. No secret Michigan is a second-half team. What is it about them --

COACH BROHM: Talking about Wisconsin? You said Michigan I think.

Q. I'm sorry, Wisconsin. What is it about Wisconsin that allows them to do this?

COACH BROHM: Relentless. I think that's one thing that stands out: They are relentless on defense.

I mean, their guys go hard and they finish and they tackle and they hit and they wear people down. And you know, especially if you're getting into a situation where you don't have the lead and you've got to do things like be a little pass-happy and not have balance, they are going to be able to tee off.

And they just do a lot of different things, give you a lot of different looks. They are very athletic. They stand up their ends. They are two-way go guys. They are going to run past you, run through you, run around you, fake you and twist, and it's just a very active defense that challenges on the outside and tries not to give up easy completions.

So when they get the lead, it's very difficult to do things on them unless you're going to continue to just have great balance and hope that that works.

Q. They lead the country in interception return yards. What allows them to be so good at that?

COACH BROHM: They pressure you and make you throw a lot faster than they want, and their corners press you and they do a great job. They are good cover corners. There is not a lot of separation. They know routes that are coming; when a certain guy take a certain release, they know how to undercut it and they know where they are going. Their safeties are right there, and like I said they make you throw faster than you want and that's a recipe for disaster for an offense.

So we have got to be very careful in what we do and we've got to be somewhat creative. You know, like I said, the key is just getting it manageable third downs, figuring out a way to get a few big plays here and there, but they are very, very good and their secondary good.

Q. Keiwan Jones came out of the game. What is his status going into this week?

COACH BROHM: Yeah, it's not looking good. We don't have a full test back, but probably a pretty good injury.

Q. From a depth standpoint, any candidates to slide in there and give you more depth on the defensive line?

COACH BROHM: Well, I think we've been able to add some depth there. When you have Gelen Robinson that can move back and forth helps, and then you've got Lorenzo and Eddy; you've got Kai in the game a little bit; Antoine in the game a little bit in the end. You know, Danny E. played really a stand-up end for us, as well.

Gives us some flexibility. So I think we've got depth there and whether another guy gets in the mix, we'll see. But I feel good that we still should be in a decent

position.

Q. You said earlier you're gaining confidence in your offense. What next step do you want them to take?

COACH BROHM: Well, I think that we've been able to run the football a little bit better.

I think that our receivers, especially the guys that have been here and know exactly what we're trying to do have been consistent in what they are doing and try to do exactly what we coach. They have been good in the running game. They have blocked. They have been in the right spot. You know, they did a good job on the short passing game, so to speak. They did a good job on the screen passing game.

We weren't able to throw it much farther than that, which we've got to continue to get better but that's not all of the receivers; it's the quarterback, it's the O-line, it's everybody. But they are working hard, and I think that if we can just continue to have positive plays, not have the negative plays, not turn it over, you know, I think we'll continue to get better.

You know, we had some yards. We just kind of turned it over. I think we could have scored more points but because of the turnovers, we weren't able to.

Q. The way you used Markell on Saturday, is that an indication of how you'd like to use him? I think 17 touches overall, when you combine the rushing and the receiving.

COACH BROHM: Yeah, I thought that was pretty decent amount for the first game back, and I think that the more he was in there, the more comfortable he got, and he started running a little bit better towards the end.

I think that he's got good vision. He's got good hands. And he had this knee brace on earlier that I think kind of hindered him a little bit. He took it off towards the end. He said he felt better. There were a couple shoestring tackles, whether he got tripped; that probably as he gets in rhythm, gets some more yards on a few. But he did a good job. I think it's good to add him back to the mix.

Q. This will be your third ranked team you're playing. Overall, playing Louisville and Michigan, and now going into Wisconsin. What have you learned from those first two games that you can apply this week?

COACH BROHM: Well, these games are a lot of fun because it is, you're playing against the best, and it's a true test. I mean, fans look forward to it; really players do, and it's a great match-up for us to play against such

a talented team and to see how we measure and to see how we've gotten better.

We had our chances in the Louisville and Michigan game. Just kind of couldn't finish it off and now we've got a another chance.

Now I do believe Wisconsin is the best team we're going to face to this point. They have proven it, and you're going to have to beat them in order to win. They are not going to beat themselves. I'd like to find a way to get better. I'd like to find a way to score some points.

I'd like to find a way to even get better on defense, special teams, see if we can create the big kickoff return, really help us make the two-minute drive a lot easier and those things matter. To continue to get better on those small things against great opponents will make our team better but it will be a difficult task.

Q. What do you need to get better on first and second downs so you're not in those third and long situations?

COACH BROHM: That's where we've had some penalties that have hurt us. You know, sometimes I think they have been good calls; others questionable. But we had a clippy call, and we had a few calls that have knocked us back, some holdings.

When that happens, it makes it harder to overcome, so if we can try to clean that up and you're always going to have some penalties, but just try to minimize it as much as can: Practice it; talk about it. Communicate, hey, we cannot have these things. Take care of the ball. Make it important.

I do think you can get better, but those are things that are hard to overcome. I think those have been setting us back here lately.

Q. On McCollum, you said you are hopeful he'll be back; do you mean this week, or period?

COACH BROHM: No, I'm not for sure exactly where it's at. I'm hopeful he'll be back this week but I don't have any clarification. I think we're going to have to wait and see. Maybe tomorrow we'll know a little more. He was in some pain after the game. So we'll see where it's at. But he's done a really good job for us. I'd like to have him back.