

Purdue University Football Media Conference

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Jeff Brohm

Press Conference



HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Our team is looking forward to this upcoming week, getting a chance to go on the road, playing at a venue, and a team that has a lot of history and tradition, excited to get back to work this week.

There's still plenty of things to work on, a lot of things to work upon and I think our team needs to make sure we stay hungry and continue to improve.

The team we're going to play is going to be like us last week, be very angry and hungry and be ready to come out and make a statement and we're going to have to be able to respond and hang in there and play a good football game in order to have a chance to win.

Q. Trying to find different ways to ask you questions about how good Rondale Moore has been but when did you know in camp or once the season started that he would be this ready?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Probably day one, I would say. You know, Rondale came in, obviously I know a lot about him. He's carried his team whenever he's been on it, been the focal point of that. Has handled it very well. Isn't one of those guys that needs a lot of attention. He just goes out and works and makes play. You can see that when he scores touchdowns. He gives the ball to the referee because he's been there numerous times before. He's got a great work ethic. He came into camp with us and from day one, he's been making plays, taking every rep.

You know, you're always concerned about giving him too much to do and putting too much pressure on him, but I think he handles it well because he's a worker, and he doesn't get into whether his name is out there or not. He just wants to go out there and make plays, have fun and win some games. So I'm glad he's on our team.

Q. Was there something he did that first day or was it just basically your background with him?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: I knew a lot about him. He was here all summer and summer school and you could tell he was a worker then, wanting to gather more information, absorb more, learn more, wanting extra time to meet with coaches. He had a grasp of it very fast so that you're always encouraged when that

happens and when we went on the field, he just goes hard and he makes plays.

He does it every day in practice and there was some practices where he was really, really special and we're hopeful that, hey, this thing will carry over, but it for sure carried over. He's a guy, like I said, he's got to get his touches a game and some games he'll make more plays than other, but he has game-breaking ability that quite a few others around the country maybe don't have that special quality that he has.

Q. On the Rondale Moore theme, incorporating him into the running game, you've done it a little bit, but is there more there that he can do in the running game for you?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, it's funny you asked. We talked about that this morning. I don't want to give him too much.

And ask him to do too many things. I think he actually could probably run the ball a little bit more.

We've been kind of giving it to him around the edge a little bit and maybe there's a few other extra things he can do. We'll have to be selective with it. Like I said, I think he's been playing on the inside; every receiver has been playing on the outside. He returns kicks. He's on special teams, he runs the ball around the edge when we ask him to. You send him in motion as a decoy numerous times and he draws a lot of attention; gets other open.

We'll be careful with it. Yeah, there's probably a few extra little things and wrinkles that maybe we can add to the mix.

Q. In the first four games, how are teams trying to take him away and then how do you -- what's the next step for him to counter what teams are doing to him?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Teams right off the bat, after game one, started lining up guys right over the top of them and normally maybe they will split the difference and help support the run. Safeties are going to be locked down a little bit tighter to him and where he's at, linebackers, as well. Any time we put in motion, they are going to go to where he's going.

I think teams have done a good job of trying to do that to be honest with you and it's opened up some other things for us, some playaction and we've still been able to get it to them enough. You know, it's going to be important that, yes, some teams may just put a guy right over the top of him the entire game like you do in basketball and in a box on one and guard him that way.

We still have to find ways to get him in the mix and that means not only throwing the ball down the field but getting to the line of scrimmage sometimes before they can get to him and being a little creative with it.

But yes, they are going to have their eyes on him, but we still have to get him touches. And some games, it is more challenging than the others, based on what they are doing. So we have to make sure we do that, but also I think it does open up things for other guys to make plays, and our receivers the last couple weeks have done a really good job making plays.

Q. Your first road game coming up. Concerns with getting out on the road for the first time after four straight home games?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: There's always concerns and with us, we have a young football team at certain positions, so you want them to respond and act in the right way. As you guys have seen, it took a little while to get us going here. We're on the road. It's going to be loud. It's going to be a little more hostile. You're going to not be able to communicate as well with the noise and there's a lot of factors that factor into it, and you can't let it throw you off your game.

Yeah, I'm always concerned about how our guys respond. I think the starters we have on our team now, guys that are playing, they haven't played a whole lot in the past. Yes, it's going to be a new environment for them and this is going to be a great venue for them to go and showcase what they are all about and see if they can keep their poise and composure and still make plays.

Q. Markus Bailey had ten solo tackles on Saturday. Did that tell you more about the performance he had there?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: I thought it was probably his best performance this year-to-date. I think we found a way to put him in the box a little more. I think he's more effective in there and he can make more plays and do a good job for us.

You know, I think a combination of a lot of things helped him play better. I do think we are better against the run. So that helped us, as well.

But I think our plan was good and I think where we put

him in position to make plays was a better scenario for him and he was able to capitalize on it and be more disruptive.

You know, I think he feels more comfortable in that position.

Q. After you looked at the film, how impactful was Derrick Barnes at the Leo position or being on the line of scrimmage throughout most of Saturday?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, Derrick is a young player, and he'll get better each and every week. We do think his strength is rushing the passer. In space, he hasn't been quite as quick trigger. Been a little hesitant and it's cost us, and he'll get better there.

But he does give us ability to rush the passer and he's got a little bit of speed mixed with power and that's what we need. I do think some of our other pass rushers and defenders got better, but we're always going to need assistance there.

The fact that we can put him in there and he made some strides against a good football team this week helped us. I think we were able to get a little more push. I think we did things to put our guys in a better position to get that done and I think they were more active and the effort was more intense throughout the entire play that all added up to more production.

Q. How do you view this Nebraska team? The record is what it is, but what are you seeing when you scout them?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: I actually think they are a talented football team. I know we played them last year. They beat us at home. I think they have a lot of people on defense with a lot of experience. They play hard and they play tough.

Kind of got stuck against a good running football team last week and they popped him on a few big runs and when that happened, it kind of snowballed from there and I've been there before.

It's just one of those days. It wasn't their best performance but they have had numerous opportunities to win before at the beginning of the season and just kind of let it slip away like we did. I get where they are at and I know they have got to come into this game extremely hungry and extremely angry, which means it's going to be a tough opponent with that, as well.

I know they are coached well and they will come out ready to play in front of our home crowd and I know they will be licking their chops for us.

Q. Any history playing at Nebraska? Have you been there before?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Yeah, I have it's been years before. From what I remember, it's a great venue and they are actually very friendly fans to the visiting team. Just a lot of history and tradition there, and then they pack it in there, and I'm sure they will be packed in for this game.

Q. Scott Frost was quoted after the Michigan game saying, we get a game that we can win. Don't know if you were aware of that, but your reaction to that, and is that something that you will share with your team, if your team doesn't already know it?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, you're correct. I think that obviously he was talking after a loss that he didn't like very much. So I get it. But no, I think everything that's said is heard, and our team needs to respond and understand that we've got to show up ready to play and this team will be licking their chops trying to get us.

Q. Did you notice on the film that Boston College kind of took outside throws away, or do you feel like there was detriment there --

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, Boston College, going into the game, we thought they were very good on defense. They had two defensive ends. I think one is ranked second defensive end in the country according to Mel Kuiper who is stout and really good. The other one is athletic and has a whole bunch of sacks. We knew we'd have a hard time blocking him.

Up front, they had active linebackers that play downhill. I thought their secondary had experienced safeties and one corner we thought was really good, No. 4 and we thought the other side wasn't as good so we tried to attack him a little bit more.

For us, we wanted to spread them out a little bit more. Isolate their linebackers a little bit more in space and attack maybe a certain corner more than the other side. I think that we were able to do that fairly effectively.

You know, I thought our receivers made catches, made plays. I know we had the one fumble when Isaac made a great catch down the sideline, and David had one fumble when he was getting pressure. But they were able to get pressure on us. We blocked it really well a few times and sometimes we didn't, and they got sacks.

Sometimes you could say, well, we hailed too long. We probably did, but there was quite a bit of push and on third down they were dialing up a little bit and getting after us.

You know, I do think it helped against Boston College that we got the lead and took them out of their game, and when that happened, they are playing the type of ball that they don't want to play. I think that affected them. I think the lead we had at half-time is tough for a team like that to overcome that isn't a true passing team.

They are going to run the ball, run the ball, do a little playaction. When we got them out of their element, it helped us. Our defense played well in that element and it helped our offense and even though we weren't good on special teams, those two things just put them in a position where they were not at their best.

Q. Your evaluation of the running game, seems like when you take David's numbers out, which include the sacks, your two running backs were pretty consistent.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: I actually think they reason hard. Sometimes there weren't a whole lot of big holes like we sometimes can open up about but they ran hard and got us some hard yards. Even though it was three to four yards at times, they did a good job. We tried to be a little more wide open the last few games.

I think we've got to continue to be aggressive with wherever that is and mix in the run and set up the run by throwing the ball effectively and taking what they give us.

But I do think D.J. plays extremely hard. He loves football. Markkell has some times where he's been effective, and I'm not -- I think our running game can be effective. We've got to make sure we utilize it enough and that we mix things in.

Q. I know Boston College doesn't typically like to throw the football, but your evaluation of your cornerbacks and safety played like the best game of the season so far

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, it was. It was much improved. I think they worked hard. Had a good week of practice. You know, they improved upon the weaknesses we had. We worked hard at it. They put in the work. We had a better plan. They executed it.

Yes, you're correct, it's not going to be the best passing team we play. I think for us, you know, we had a little hard time against teams that spread it out and throw the football and that will be the true test of where we're at.

So we have to make sure we're ready for that this week and moving forward and while it's important to defend

the run and stop it, I definitely want to do that; we've got to defend the pass, too. We can't allow teams to spread the people and throw the ball all over the place. I'm sure that will try to happen this week and in the future.

Our guys worked hard. They improved. I thought they were in better position. I thought they played with better leverage but we still have a ways to go and we'll still be much more tested than in that game.

Q. It would seem obvious that David is your guy going forward, but do you have an idea of how you'd like to play them both? Are you at the point where David has established himself as the starter?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: David will be our starter in this game. He's played well the last two weeks and he's taken advantage of his opportunity, and Elijah is still coming back from his setback, and we'll make sure he's ready to go in case we need him. We'll take it from there, but I'm confident in both guys.

Q. Was Eli active and ready to play on Saturday?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: He was not 100 percent but he was active and ready in case we needed him. Depending on whether David would go out for a few plays or the whole game would have determined whether he would have went in.

Q. On the subject of quarterbacks, Nebraska was one of the teams that they named the starting quarterback from the backup to a transfer. Do you feel fortunate in any way considering the current landscape that David stuck around and has been available, considering his other opportunities?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Yes, I think we're very fortunate to have that happen. I think everyone wants to play and wants to start.

I do believe the fact that we tried to be as honest as we can with both quarterbacks throughout the whole process and up front as we possibly can, and as fair as we possibly can, and the fact that they both played a lot last year, and even I think they knew they were going to get a chance to both play this year.

Both of them are competitors and they want to play and they feel comfortable probably in this system around our guys, around their teammates and have a lot of pride in playing for Purdue and their school.

So I don't -- while something may pop in the back of your head, I think David was all in and he's competed his tail off to earn where he's at right now.

Q. Two weeks ago, David was really expecting to

be the backup quarterback, and then after Elijah's setback, he came into a situation, has a record-setting performance; follows it up with a victory over a ranked opponent. What was that conversation like with him after Elijah went down and what kind of things did you discuss that you were looking for from him?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, to be quite honest, we don't overtalk it a whole lot. I think he knew when Elijah went down, he's up; it's his time to go.

I think he knew all week we were practicing whoever was going to play, that we were going to be more aggressive and we practiced all week long at throwing the ball vertically and pushing it up the field and challenging our quarterbacks and receivers and O-line to protect long enough and to figure out ways to do that.

So I think he was excited for that opportunity, and he took advantage of it. I know, you know, his ability to throw up the field; he was extremely accurate. Made some great throws. I thought he made some great throws up the field this past game, as well and he's proven that he can throw the ball vertically. We've got to make sure that we utilize that with the right combination of getting it out quick, too, so he doesn't take too many hits and protect him that way.

He knew what was getting ready to happen and I think he's worked long and hard to take advantage of this opportunity. For him it's about relaxing and playing. While we all want to do well and it means something to us, he loves the game and wants to win so bad, he's got to relax, just go out and play and cut it loose and not overthink things too much. When he does that, he plays much more effective.

Q. How about Scott Frost, have you had any interaction with him or relationship before this?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Yeah, we know each other. Have a great deal of respect for him. He's done a good job where he's at, and he's taken over his alma mater, which I know he has a lot of pride in and he wants to restore the history and tradition there.

Like all of us, when you take over somewhere, it's not easy right off the bat. I mean, normally, if you're taking over somewhere, if that coach had not moved on to a better job, you're taking over because that person couldn't get it done.

So to think anyone could just come in and win right off the bat and be consistent, whether that's more difficult to do than people think; and I know that, you know, he's going to put in the work and he's going to put in the time.

He was a hard-nosed football player that played quarterback and defense and he wants to win. I'm sure that he's going to work above and beyond, find a way to get that done and we've got to figure out a way to put it off for one week if we can.

But it will be a tough challenge because his team will be hungry and they will be angry and they will be out for blood this game. We're going to have to hang in there and play stuff and still do the small things in a visiting environment and see if we can get it in the fourth quarter.

Q. Coach Frost has a reputation as a really good offensive coach. Good came up through Chip Kelly and whatnot. Have you studied that and what do you appreciate about his offenses?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, I think that, you know, everywhere you're a product of the people you're around and he's taken the people he's around and used that to mold his system on offense, and whether it's Chip Kelly or Tom Osborne or all those things, even his days in the NFL, he's molded to what he believes can help them win. And he proved at Central Florida that that can work.

And now he's got to take that to Nebraska and get that done. I think he's going to spread the field and try to run some tempo and do some things to deceive the defense and get an advantage and be creative with it.

And right now, like certain teams, maybe it's not working as effective as he wants but it doesn't take long, and as soon as it clicks, sometimes it clicks, and from there you ride off and things start to go a lot better.

So I'm sure he's realizing that it will eventually happen and people are getting accustomed to how he practices and what he wants to do. So just a matter of time. We've just got to try to delay it as much as we can.

Q. Traditionally the Big Ten West, everyone thinks of Wisconsin and good defense and power running teams. Do you ever think about you guys, up-tempo, throwing the football around and what they want to do, as well, Nebraska, how the Big Ten could be changing with the two new coaches, with you and with Scott Frost eventually?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, I haven't thought about it a whole lot. I do think that everywhere you go, you've got to take what you have on your team and put it to the best use. So I think we are all about winning and while I do love throwing the ball and doing that stuff, if I thought we were more effective running the ball that, is a little safer and I don't mind doing that.

You look at the teams that can do that, they are very talented and they feel like they have the personnel to get that done. Normally they do. Otherwise they have to adjust.

You know, as teams progress, I think you have to find a way to run the ball and you have to find a way to have some power football and you have to find a way to build toughness. So the great teams in my opinion all have that element. It's just a matter of, you know, to get to that point, you've got to do what you think can help win the football game.

Right now, I think each game is different, but you've got to take what you have and put it to use and try to win games and then continue to build and get to the point where you feel like you're balanced and effective and can beat anyone with both the run and the pass.

I think the best teams can do both and if you can't, just like the Boston College teams, if that's something that's not your strength, it can hurt you sometimes if you don't have the lead and you're not able to throw the ball effectively.

Q. How about the defense? You described them as "lights-out," which I don't think anyone would have used that term through the first three games. What's the next step now for this defense?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, we've got a ways to go. I think it's a combination of a lot of things. I think our coaches worked extremely hard to put in a better plan to put our guys in a position to succeed. I think our guys practiced extremely hard to get better at our weaknesses.

And then we played a team that, you know, my opinion, were better against in the first place and then we found a way to get a lead and make them do things that they aren't great at and that played right into our hands. A lot of combinations played to our favor.

To me, the next step is playing a team that can throw the ball and spread you out and be effective in defending the pass and while it's important to stop the run and do what we can to do that and make teams throw it, we've got to defend the pass and we've got to defend the pass against a team that is he effective throwing the football and we've got to have balance and make sure we're doing both.

So that's what I think has to happen, and we'll be challenged in the rest of the season on that, and until I see that, will I feel more comfortable -- but we did a good job of loading the box and stopping what the last team did effective, but now it's about being a balanced defense that can stop the pass, as well.

Q. How much will special teams be involved in practice this week in two ways? One, fixing what's wrong with kickoff coverage and two, maybe a competition at kicker.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROEHM: Well, it's a great question. Our special teams wasn't our best game, and I think we all realize that and saw that.

So we're going to work hard at it. We've looked at a lot of different things. To be quite honest, our kickoff cover team, we would like to have some bigger bodies. Normally that's what we had running down the field. Right now, we don't have guys we think could be on there that we need to, so we're probably a little thin at those positions, so we have to maybe try to move some things around and beef it up, but we have to get better at what we're doing.

You know, believe it or not, as great as Evans has kicked all year, this was not his best game. Not only was -- on the end zone, there was no hang time. So when it goes right to him, you're not near as far down the field. And they were big lanes. They were big lanes to run, and that was disappointing.

So we've got to shut those lanes down but we have to be more consistent kicking the ball. But he kicked all week in practiced as good as he's ever kicked. I mean, flying out of the end zone consistently every time. Just didn't happen in this game.

So we're going to put more pressure on the kickers this week in practice. We're going to make sure that they feel the heat a little bit and that they understand every kick we take is a pressure situation. I think that will help and yes, we're going to work hard at making sure that we don't give up big plays and we don't let them win the field position battle, which we did.

There's a lot of things to work on, like you said. And really, it was the kickoff cover, that was the main thing and continually missing some extra kicks and extra points is disappointing, as well. Those are the two main things that have to be addressed and fixed.