

# Purdue University Football Media Conference

Monday October 8, 2018

## Jeff Brohm

Press Conference



HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Got in young guys some quality reps and see where now it's at. It's back to the grind to win the next football game. Our team understands there is no margin for error. We have to come out at the work and give ourselves a chance to win the football game.

I think Illinois is improved from last year. Had a lot of young guys last year on their team and you can see the improvement that they have made. They have a strong running quarterback. Lovie's done a good job and he's back healthy and did a job this past week running the football. Passing a little bit but he's a runner and their defense has improved because of the experience now that they have playing the young man last year.

This team is 3-2. They lost two games. Had a chance to win both of them. Had a lead on Penn State in the second half and was up on South Florida the second half, so they definitely are a good football team that has improved and we'll have to play well and do all the small things in order to have a chance to win.

**Q. You mentioned a couple times in reference to -- being part of a season where you finished 6-0, finishing 6-6, was that season particularly influential to your growth as a coach or however you put it, was there any significance though that experience for you?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think that along with -- combined with the experiences as a player and having ups and downs is the experience that you have. I think it's important that -- throughout the course of the year, you're going to have some really good games and some games that aren't as well, and you've got to find a way to win as many as you can, even when you're not playing well and find a way to improve even when you are winning.

And I think through the first three losses, we knew we had to improve a great deal and we have worked hard to do that. I think we have been somewhat brutally honest as far as what our weaknesses or and how to try to go about getting them fixed. Our guys have done a good job of coming to practice and going hard and giving better effort, and hopefully we can continue to improve.

Now, we have had two wins. So we need to have that same hunger, that same desire to win and improve. There has to be that intensity on the practice field. We have to show that intensity and we have to make sure we coach the effort and intensity still, and stay on the small things so that they don't beat us.

I think if we're doing that, hopefully we have a chance to win when we step on the field. But you're going to experience some tough times and we have to fight through them when we do have them.

**Q. So that was kind of just one more season for you?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, that season was -- every one is unique in its own way but sometimes to be quite honest, you play maybe not the tougher part of your schedule at the beginning and then you hit some tough games at the end, and I think a little bit of that happened with us at Illinois, and then you lose your confidence, and when that happens, then it's hard to beat anybody.

I think a combination of those things happened. So to me, I think just the fact that, hey, win or lose, the next week, you've got to work hard to prepare to win the next game and it doesn't matter what happened the week before. You have to do those things. I think that is what we brought to the table here and that we're trying to do each and every week. You know, when you lose, you're definitely hungrier. When you win, you have to find a way to keep that hunger and that desire to get better.

**Q. What did you learn about your young guys last week?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think that our guys had a good week of practice. It was good to get some live scrimmage, live tackling going on. I think a few people emerged, but there's definitely guys that need to understand that they need to work hard to improve, and sometimes during the season when you're not playing, you can get into a lull and a habit of maybe not going hard all the time because you don't think you're going to get in, and that can't happen, whether you're a backup quarterback or a backup at any position.

These guys have to work hard to improve, and they have to be ready when their time is called. Otherwise, there's going to be lapses like we've had this year, people that aren't ready and that's on us as coaches as well, but definitely the players have to understand that it's going to be important for them between now and when their time comes that we give them as many live situations as we can.

**Q. Did any of the young guys make a move where they might see some playing time this week or in the next few weeks?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think -- I don't know if I get to that point. I think Branson Deen was a guy that's been injured early on. He's got a chance to help us at some point, whether it's this week or not, I don't know if that's the case. But he did show some signs of getting better.

I think Willie Lane, even though he's played a little bit, when he's got in the game he hasn't played as well as he has in practice. We have to get him to translate that over. He's a guy that I think can help us in the long run hard.

Jaylan Alexander's got some reps. Cory Trice got some reps, Elijah Ball, those three guys. Jordan Rucker is a guy that's getting closer.

The offensive side of the ball is probably the most productive guys. Payne Durham did a good job for us. He's a big strong blocking tight end but he can do a little in the passing game as well and showcase that.

Evan Anderson ran the ball hard and was productive and it was good to see that to a certain degree and our quarterbacks got a lot of good reps, but as far as anyone stepping forward in this game, I don't see a whole lot of that, no.

**Q. You had Ball and Trice on your travel squad to Nebraska; that would be a sign they are a little bit closer than others. But you don't foresee them immediately getting on the field or is that something that will wait toward the end of the year?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We like Cory. We like Elijah. It's as far as knowing all the small things, the details of their position, making sure they are lined up properly in the right spot. That's where they are slightly lacking compared to the others. It's just the experience factor, and the experience factor and the ability to not hurt us badly on one or two plays and that could happen, possibly, with them, just because they haven't been in there as much as.

As far as talent, they both have the talent to get it done

but they are getting closer. I think they will both play this year and we'll see whether we redshirt them or not but obviously if they are not playing a lot, we would like for them to play and be able to redshirt as well.

**Q. An update on Cole Herdman; more optimistic today than a week ago whether he'll play Saturday or not?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: He's improved greatly, Cole has, and we'll give it till Tuesday to see where he's at. We're hopeful that he could play. Now, whether that's the whole game or as much as he used to, that remains to be seen but I think he has shown considerable improvement.

**Q. What are the keys for your defense as far as defending a spread offense, similar to what you face in Nebraska and what you have coming up on Saturday?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we've got to get a lot better and I think when we look at the Nebraska game, certain key things came about. The ability to play the zone read, which we were awful in the game at that, and really a lot of that has to do with just the defensive ends technique and play. We've worked hard to get that fixed. That has to get done.

As far as some of the misdirection runs around the end, that's on the end and the linebacker. We have to be better. We worked all week in practice that week and didn't carry over to the game in the first series. After that series they got a little bit better at that.

Then the perimeter throws and perimeter pump plays that they hit on us, we've got to cover that better. So we've worked it hard this past week. If we can eliminate those simple zone read perimeter pump throws, we would have played a lot better.

You know, I think in general our pass coverage was better against the normal plays. We just gave up a lot of easy pump passes that we should have recognized better that hurt us. And we've got to defend the perimeter better, and that has to do with linebackers, expanding out, expanding out with the motions, seeing things with their eyes, having their eyes on the quarterback.

We weren't great at staying inside the seam routes. We were buzzing past it way too early and they hit too easy ones that shouldn't happen. Just those simple things we have to improve at, if we do, we'll have a much better chance.

This week, this quarterback is going to run the ball and he'll run it strong and he'll mix in a pass, but whether it's the zone read, the zone slice read, or they have a

tight end coming, arcing across the back side to help him; quarterback draw, they will drop back and run routes and he'll run it, even if it's design run, to run late.

But we have to contain him, have our eyes on him and make sure we are not giving up easy big chunks, and we have got to get after the quarterback, which means we have got to make them do things they are not good at, and hopefully we can have a good week of practice and see what we can do.

But the athletic running quarterbacks are always a danger because it just takes one or two big plays of them breaking loose and they are going to go the distance. So we have to make sure we eliminate the big plays and the big chunks.

**Q. Seeing a play, like an NFL play on TV or on film, and you like to use that play -- I guess the process of you seeing a play or someone bringing a play to your attention and then how quickly does that end up in your playbook or on the practice field? Is that like a two-hour thing or a two-day thing? A two-week thing? How does that process evolve?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we definitely want to stay ahead of the curve and anybody that's doing something that's productive that looks good, whether that's in college or the NFL, we are going to take note of it. Each of us are watching not only our opponent and ourselves each week but we are watching certain teams each week just to see what development we can add to the mix with what we do.

It's important that you have wrinkles. You look at the top teams in the NFL right now, the Rams, the Chiefs, they are as college-like as you're going to get and they have different wrinkles, and it's not traditional base plays every single time. They are definitely having some creativity to it, and because of that, they have become really good.

You want to make sure you have enough. You want to make sure you don't do too much. But it is important you give yourself a chance to win and we definitely want to err on the side of being creative.

**Q. How long does it take?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: It can get in right away. With us, whether we see it on TV, whether we watch it on film -- eastbound if we see it on TV, we'll get the video and we'll watch it and study it and we'll look at it, see if we already have it; see if we have something similar; see what we can call it. Sometimes it's about getting a new name for it, and seeing if it relates to us, but it happens very quickly.

Normally after a game week, we have that film the next

day. The NFL film comes on a late Tuesday or Wednesday morning and we have that film so sometimes there might be one or two wrinkles coming in a little later, but no, it's right away and we'll watch it and view it and see if we can add it to the mix.

**Q. Do you have to do something differently this week, whether who is at quarterback, whether it's No. 1 or No. 8, or do you feel like the athletic running quarterback is involved no matter who is back there?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think both their guys can run. You know, the quarterback that played this past week, they got healthy and he's a strong runner. He can run the football. He runs it like a running back and can throw it good enough, but he's definitely a threat with his feet and that's what they are going to do try to do is try to spread the field and isolate him and hand it off.

The running back is a good player, so the combination of those two is what we have to stop, so that's going to be important for us that we eliminate big plays and big chunks and we know where the ball is. The zone read and zone slice and guys coming back and blocking for him, you have to know where the ball is and you can't let it sneak through there, so that's important that we have good eyes.

**Q. You mentioned in the preseason about getting big plays and getting more chunk yardage plays, especially in the pass game, are you pleased halfway into your season of how you guys have improved in that regard and are leading the Big Ten and leading Top-10 in the nation in large, offensive plays?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Yes, we are. I mean, I think to this point we have found a way to create big plays and it's helped us be more productive. That's always going to be a challenge, and we want to continue to do that, whether it's the same plays we're running or whether there is a new mix that we're going to add.

But yes, in order to be a productive offense, you've got to get some big chunks. Yes, we have been pleased with where we are at to this point but we have to keep it going and continue to be good at it.

**Q. What is it that you feel like how this offense can take another step? Is it completing the deep contested ball down the field like you had trouble doing against Nebraska? Is that the next step, or are there other things that you feel like are on a checklist right now that you feel you can get better at offensively?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: It's important that all of

our guys feel part of it and can make plays for us. Yes, this past game we had some big plays, but we had some other numerous opportunities and one-on-one matchups that we didn't make which actually we had been making up to that point.

But that's part of it. You're not going to make them all. We have been fairly hot before that game of hitting some throws up the field that are contested and that are not wide open and that we've made good throws and good catches, so that's been great to see. You're not going to hit them all.

So you know, we've got to continue to take our shots. I think it's important and I think it's important as a play caller to take shots and give yourself a chance to make a play. If some are not working as much, you have to do something different, but we do have to throw the ball up the field vertically.

**Q. When you're asked about David, you mention how conservative the play calling early on was and you take the blame for that. Have you seen this coaching staff evolved in a very, very short amount of time with David and that there's a lot of trust throw the ball deep down the field vertically?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Yeah, we feel great with the way David's been playing. When you look back at our team since we've been here, last year we had a hard time throwing the football at numerous points in the season. We had a hard time catching it, and it was costing us games that we were not productive with it and it was not all on the quarterback but he's going to take the blame.

But it does cause you -- okay, we are going to do a few different things here because this isn't working and we're not as productive, and these costly series are hurting us and not giving us a chance to win.

With that said, I think we have gotten back to being more aggressive. We've played some good football teams where we knew, hey, we're going to have to take some shots in order to win the games, and really, based where our defense was at a certain point, we're going to have to take some more shots to win the game; let's go down and be aggressive.

I think we've kind of evolved and we want to go down swinging each game. If we happen not to win, it's not because we played scared. We are going to play aggressive, take shots. David has gotten better at it. He feels comfortable with it and our receivers have made plays at certain times and they have improved and our offensive line has made a little more protection at times to give us a chance to throw it up the field.

But David definitely has taken the reigns and ran with it, and his ability to be aggressive up the field, but yet sometimes pull it down and get his first downs when it's not there has definitely helped our offense.

**Q. Illinois leads the Big Ten in turnover margin. Is that something that you have to be especially cognizant of this week?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We sure do because we have actually been pretty good lately at not turning it over and it's giving us a chance to win. When we have turned it over, we've been really bad. This team does a good job.

They are going to play pressure, get up on you, challenge every throw and when they play zone, they are going to play their typical Tampa 2 zone with their eyes on the quarterback and hope that they bait you into throwing it up the field and they are going to react and pick it off.

They have done a good job of getting turnovers. We have to be aware of it. We were not great in practice yesterday. We threw some contested balls that would have been picked off in a game, so we have to get back to being aggressive but knowing where the outlet is and making sure that in practice, we understand and we have to practice the ball security and make sure that we're not giving the other team another opportunity to convert by turning the ball over and for us, we have to win that battle.

**Q. Lovie is obviously a former NFL coach. Can you see NFL elements?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: That's kind of what they do on defense, his Tampa 2, Tampa they mix in a lot of man coverage. Used to be that's all they play. This year they are mixing in a five more coverages, just not be as vanilla, but they are going to be at the right spot at the right time and that's definitely based on his experience. Their offense has evolved.

Now they have gone more to the spread Arizona offense that we went against last year that we at times didn't do well against but we made enough plays to win. They are going to spread the field and they are going to isolate you. You know, take one-on-one matchups, but really you're going to have to defend the quarterback.

It's going to be mostly by the run with what they do, and with that, they have a good running back and those two guys, we have to defend. We have got to make sure that we eliminate big plays by their quarterback and running back running the football. That's where they have made their money this year.

It's definitely when the most recent quarterback came

back, he had a very productive game last week. Played very well, and he's a big, strong guy that can hurt us if we're not on our game.

**Q. Sometimes when teams play a running quarterback like that, they will do something crazy like put a safety at quarterback on the scout team or something like that. Do you have a guy on your roster that you feel comfortable kind of simulating that you'll see or will you do anything interesting or different?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We had Aaron Banks doing a lot of the scout team work last week. He was that type of quarterback to a certain degree in high school, not quite maybe at the level that Illinois' quarterback is but he gave us a better look.

Yes, we have got to have an athletic guy running around, pulling the ball, running with it around the edge, when he hands it off, pulling it off and acting like he has it; giving as much eye candy to the defense so that they are aware where the ball is and they are still playing their keys.

Yes, we have to simulate the speed. If you don't simulate the speed in practice, that's when you get hurt, and I think the first series against Nebraska, they went right down and scored and we weren't ready for the speed of it and then we made some adjustments and got better.

**Q. You mentioned the youth of Illinois. They played more young guys than anybody else in the country last year. You took a very different approach bringing in graduate transfers and transfers. What kind of success did you see with your approach or when you're building a program, how do you think that those different approaches can be used?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Everyone is different. For me, I want to win now. That's just my philosophy and ours. We want to win now. Doesn't mean we don't play young guys but it's important you try to win the next football game and you try to win this season.

For us, at the end of the year, we'll look at our roster and see where we need help, and see if we can go get it; and if we can go get it, then we are going to bring it in. If we can't, then we are going to continue to develop the guys we have and get them better and use those guys.

The first year we were able to find some guys and they helped us, every one of us pretty much played and they played every snap and they helped us get to the Bowl game and win it. This past year we didn't sign as many in the off-season, didn't have as much room, but didn't sign as many, and the young guys had to step up and

play.

Now I think they will be good players but you can tell the first game or so, they weren't quite ready for it. That's our fault as coaches. We didn't get them ready enough. But.

You want to develop your young guys. They have done a good job of developing their young guys and they have played a lot last year. You can see the improvement they have made.

Hopefully as the season gets on, we get better and you have to put those guys in a position to make plays, you're always going to have inexperience at some point in certain positions when guys graduate, and those guys got to go out there and play confident and help you win.

**Q. Drew Brees is going to break a record today. Your thoughts on that?**

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think it's tremendous. He's a great ambassador for the program. He's been great to me. I reached out to him last week and he responded right back like that. He wants to win. He's a winner. He wants Purdue to win. He follows our games. He's a guy that defied the odds and played at a high level and now will go down as one of the great quarterbacks in the history of the game. Does everything right off the field, great ambassador, like I said. Couldn't meet a finer person and I think it's because of his background and his family and the ability to play here and be so productive for this university and take it to a Rose Bowl and all the things that he's done after his playing days, we couldn't have a better ambassador than Drew Brees.