

Purdue University Football Media Conference

Monday October 22, 2018

Jeff Brohm

Press Conference



HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we're definitely still excited about winning this past weekend. After watching the video, it was a great win for our program. Our team is excited about it and we are proud of the fact we were able to pull off that win. Meant a lot to the team.

With that, it's one game and one win, and we have to move on to the next opponent, Michigan State, on the road. It's going to be a tough environment and a tough game for us, as you guys know, for us it's always been a one-game season. That's the way we treat it and we're going to have to continue to make sure we stay with our principles on that. We've had some bad losses and we've had a good win.

So anything can happen on any given Saturday in college football, and this is a tough matchup for us. These guys will come in hungry and fired up for a win, and we're going to have to respond and play a clean football game just to have a chance. But I know our guys will be able to get back to work tomorrow in the practice field and we'll work as hard as we can to try to find a way to win this game.

Q. Is Lorenzo Neal okay?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Lorenzo got nicked up. I doubt he'll practice on Tuesday. We'll see where he's at on Wednesday. We're hopeful that we can get him back for the game.

Q. Upper body? Lower?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Lower.

Q. What about Kenny Major?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think Kenneth is in a similar situation. Had an injury to his upper body and probably a little limited in practice this week and we'll try to get him back for Saturday.

Q. Antonio Blackmon had three defensive stops in the red zone. What improvement have you seen from him this season?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: The great thing about Antonio is he works extremely hard to give us everything he has and he has since the day he got here. You know, the thing about him, we know we put him out there, he's going to compete and do the very

best he can.

I think on two of the three threes, he was probably beaten and the ball was slightly underthrown, but because he found great effort he found a way to get there and get it out. That's a credit to him.

He's got to continue to work and get better. We'd like to be perfect in our alignment and our displacement and where we're at and keep the ball in front of us and have our eyes on the ball and make it quicker, but, he plays extremely hard and because of his effort he's able to overcome a few things and that's football.

But we know that when we put him in, he's going to give us everything he's got.

Q. The defense held Ohio State to only 76 rushing yards. What strides have you seen from them this season?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I always feel like our defense is set up to stop the run and that's what we're going to try to do. We've gotten better the past few weeks at doing a good job of that.

We knew this team wanted to throw the ball, and I don't think they tried to run the ball as much as some other teams would, but the great thing is, we're very good on short yardage situations to this point.

We've been very good inside the ten-yard line. We tightened things up. We make them earn it, and I think whenever we do that, we play better in general, but I was very proud of our defense for holding them out ever the end zone.

Q. Talk about the offense's efficiency and production.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, that's a good thing. Our goal is to get in the end zone, and I think our guys have been opportunistic.

We have taken chances. We wanted to make sure no matter what the score was in this game or the half or the quarter, that we continue to take shots and be aggressive and try to score, and I think because of that, it paid off. It helped us get touchdowns at the end of the game. It's helped us respond when the other team has made a run and thins have been bouncing

our way lately, as well. I think all of those things have added up to some victories and we have to find a way to keep that going.

Q. Started out the season 0-3 and now you're on a four-game win swing and the team swept the Big Ten weekly award. What does that just say about the turnaround of this team?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, two things are great on that. Yes, I am proud of the turnaround that we've had to this point. I think we've learned a lot from our mistakes. The losses hurt and they hurt bad and they hurt us all and we found ways to improve and it meant something to us.

The fact that we have award winners from this past game is a testament to pulling off a great upset against a great opponent in a great environment with a lot of things on the side thrown in there, as well, that made the game more meaningful. That's a credit to our players.

I'm happy for them. They have gone through a lot to get to this point and to just pull off a victory like that, in my opinion, they deserve it, but I'm very proud of them.

Q. What was that moment like for you I think after the game, you went to the middle of the field and just kind of stood there and students and crowd and people just surrounded you. What was that moment like for you?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I was told to go to the middle of the field to do an interview, so that's why I looked like I was standing there. Then after about five seconds I was stuck, but it was a good thing. I was happy to be there.

There were a lot of people that it meant a lot to them and they were into it and excited and happy and that's kind of why you play the game. You play the game to not only win and represent your team but represent your fan base and your university, and when it makes that many people excited and happy, that's why you play the game.

In my opinion, that's why it's still and always going to be a game that's meant to be entertaining. It's meant to create excitement and hopefully we can continue to do that.

But it was a great moment. It was awesome to soak it in. It was awesome for our players to soak in and it was a great scene.

Q. How about the Brohm household celebrate the win? How long into the night or the morning, or was it just business as usual?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think everyone separated their own ways when it was all said and done. Of course, we got together for a while after the game, but then even then, it was hard to go to bed at night.

So even though no matter what time you got home at night, it was hard to sleep. You were just excited and happy about what just took place. You didn't want the day to end.

You know it would be great to end the season that way but we've got more games to play and a lot more work to be done, but that feeling is a special feeling and it's rewarding when a lot of people put in a lot of hard work and you get to just enjoy in the moment. I think we all did: Family, coaches, players, fans, university and rightfully so.

I think that there's a lot of great people that are involved and helping teams win. It's not just the coaches and players. It's everybody and everybody he is a part of it. I think that's what makes Purdue special. It's a big family and everybody felt a big part of it.

Q. When you factor in the whole day, Tyler's situation, his story going really national on game day and what you were able to do on the football field, do you remember a day in your athletic career or that you witnessed that had all those ingredients that made it the day that it was?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: No, I don't think I've been part of a day like that. It did have every aspect to it. From the atmosphere to the game to the win to Tyler Trent and everything he's been going through, I don't know what else more you could ask for. It involved everything and there was a little piece and a reason for all of it.

I do think football is a game, and it was a great moment, when you talk about someone's life and Tyler Trent, that's real life. For him to be able to experience it and enjoy it and feel the love, not only from our football fans and all fans across the country, I think it helps him be stronger and get through it more and that's kind of really what it's all about.

I know he's experiencing a lot of tough things right now. I was shocked he looked as great as he did, great spirits and smile on his face. I know underneath that he's probably in a lot of pain and suffering, but boy, he was able to experience that moment and he were able to give it to him and hopefully that can push him through a little bit longer.

Q. From what you've learned about your team's maturity, why will they handle this moment and not

let it affect them as you continue on in your season?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we need to make sure we do handle this moment, and you know what, you never know for sure. I mean, this is a team that's learned a lot. I think we've gotten better.

I think we do understand it's a one-game season and we've had some extreme highs and some extreme lows all in one season. So anything can happen when we play the game if we're not fully ready and hitting on all cylinders.

Now you're not going to hit on all cylinders some games, so you have to be able to do the small things along the way to give yourselves a chance. You guys know college football. We're not at the elite status by any means. We're a team that's found a way to win.

And we've got another great opponent that was in the Top-25 before this past week and lost to Michigan, and it was a great team. Michigan State has won a lot of ballgames.

Coach Dantonio does a great job. Their team plays hard, physical. They have struggled a little bit on offense but they have got some weapons. Their quarterback does a good job and their team is built around their defense.

We know this team will come ready to play and if we don't play well, we'll get blown off the field, so we have to do all the small things to give ourselves a chance to win and we're going to work very hard to do that.

Q. Why was your red zone defense so effective?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think red zone, really, inside the ten-yard line is when we're very good, because the field gets shorter. When you look at our short yardage defense on third and short and fourth and short, we've been outstanding because we just tighten things up and we're going to make you earn it and we're going to err on the side of having too many guys up in there and too many one-on-one matchups, but hopefully guys up in their face, and because of that, teams have to earn it, and I think that, you know, even when they got a few guys open, path wasn't just quite perfect, we were able to recover.

We had a little luck on that and because of that, they didn't hit the shots when they took them, at least not perfectly and we made plays because we had great effort. So we just did a good job and the ball bounced our way a little in the tight zone. Our guys played hard. We got a little bit of a lead.

Like I said kind of before the game, any little thing like that that happens, it gives the underdog a little more

confidence and gives the other team a little more tightness, like, okay, this isn't happening the way we wanted it to. So all those things matter and it culminated in helping us prevail.

Q. Is there a cool name with the Joe Schopper play?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: You know what, no, we did not have a cool name for it, but we've had some tricks in the last few weeks.

Coach Tommerdahl and our staff have done a great job. I haven't called any. Luckily we got this. Thought it was the right decision. We could have easily taken three points but in this game, I thought we needed more, and we executed it. We actually had Cole open. It was a pass run option. He was open as well, and we said, if you err, err on running and get the first down and Joe ran hard and lower his shoulder and got the first down. Great job by him. Great execution.

Q. Michigan State has not had the year they thought it would and they have had some injuries and banged up across their team. What have you seen from them?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think they are a good football team. The losses they have had have been tough losses. No one blows them off the field. I know Michigan found a way to win but that was a close football game. Arizona State, close. They have had a lot of close football games, and really that's what makes a lot of conferences. And of course the Big Ten is a great conference: On any given day, anybody can win and so they just had a little luck.

Obviously you make some of your luck, but this will be a tough football game and a tough environment. This team is very good. They won a lot of games and they are well-coached. They play hard and for whatever reason they have not been able to score as much lately and sometimes that comes in cycles and hopefully we can find a way to hold them out, but it will be a very tough matchup for us.

Q. Are you reaching a level of balance offensively, maybe not in terms of yards, but in terms of plays and situations where you want to run the ball? Are you reaching the level that you're comfortable with?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I like where we're at. I think, you know, we want to throw the football, set up the run by the pass. I think it helps your running game when you have a passing game. We have been able to do that. We've hit some big plays.

I think the key is creating big plays, throwing it and passing it. I think at some point in time to be a great

team, you have to be able to do both, pass and throw it. You know, harder thing to do for some teams is pass the ball, so we have worked hard to improve that. I think it's opened up some other things, but yes, we want to continue to have balance. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean 50/50, but we want to be able to have balance and be able to do both.

Q. How does your one-game season motto become difficult with the idea that your captains haven't had to deal with this, your veteran guys, a win like this, and being told this next week that they are great everywhere they go? Do you have to be the Grinch at practice and tell them that they are not great?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, that's my job. I do think our guys understand, this was a big win. Last year, Iowa found a way to beat Ohio State probably by even more and two weeks later at their home turf, a young team came in that was 4-6 and found a way to beat them.

So anything can happen. We're going up against a very good team in Michigan State and we've got a bunch of very good teams left on our schedule. So we've got a lot of work to do, and you know, while this last win was big, it's one win. It doesn't count for more than another, and you know, we've got a long ways to go.

Without question, we've got to just work as hard as we can to win this football game and our players have to understand that whatever's being said out there doesn't matter. What counts is what you do on the field. You've got to prepare and give yourself a chance to win and you've got to take the field and go find a way to get it done and no one is going to hand you anything.

Q. In a similar vein to the preparation for Ohio State last week, is Michigan State a little different than historically you would categorize them with their struggling ability to run the football and them having to throw the ball a little bit more?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think they have struggled a little bit on offense and at some point everyone is going to have that happen. Doesn't mean they are not going to bounce out of it. I know last year they were able to score points. They had a big breakout year. Their quarterback played outstanding and they were able to spread the ball around.

Sometimes not just all the offense; it's a combination of other things. I do think they play tough, sound, fundamental defense and they have been very good at that for years. They do a good job on special teams.

You know, Coach Dantonio and his staff, they have

been around and know how to make adjustments and know how to win. This team has a lot of history and tradition. We are going into their stadium so it's a tough contest for us.

Q. In the sense of the one-game season, do you talk about controlling your own destiny and the Big Ten West and having that goal still be on the table for you?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We actually don't and I know sometimes that may be said, and that is a long-term goal but no, we don't. I don't think we're anywhere close to worrying about what's going to happen at the end of the year and I definitely don't think about it one bit.

I think it's important that everyone strictly focuses on just finding a way to win this game. The key is if you do all the things necessary at the end of the year, normally you're where you want to be and if you haven't, well then actually probably that's where you should be because you didn't get it done. So there shouldn't be any excuses.

But this is a tough contest and going to be a tough matchup for us and we've got to find ways to continue to score and see if we can get a lead and make them do things that they are uncomfortable doing.

I think that's what we have done a good job lately is being aggressive in creating a little bit of indecision on the other team and a little bit where they have to maybe do some things that they don't like to do all the time and that's helped us.

Q. David talked on Saturday night about how comforting it is to play Ohio State with the best play baller in the country. Can you talk about, just like a player, maybe your confidence or rhythm as a player caller has gotten more and more, better and better as weeks go by?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Kind of like I said before, I think it's just a matter of being aggressive. We feel like we've got a lot in our arsenal. We can do a lot of things. We can throw a lot at you but early on I wasn't using all of it. You get hesitant to take a sack or to throw the interception or to make a mistake. We're not going to play that way and really, that's not -- I'm doing a bad job, and I knew I needed to do better.

So once we decided to open this thing up and stay on the attack and be more aggressive, our guys have done a great job. It's not always going to be perfect, but I think David has played outstanding, and, you know, I've done a better job with him, which has helped him.

You know, they feel confident that if we call it and we use everything we have, which is a lot of different things, which I think helps, because it keeps the defense on their heels, but if we are using all those things and I'm aggressive and I'm on the attack, I think it does help our players play better and it helps our team perform.

Q. Lastly, you said in the teleconference that you thought Markus Bailey would play well on Saturday, and from a tackling standpoint, how key was he to you probably having the best tackling night that you guys have had since you got here?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: He was up for the game. This one meant a lot to him. He's a great football player. He's played a lot of football games and he's got a ton of experience. We asked him to do a lot, and that's what he's got to do; we're going to ask you a lot and we're going to expect a lot. He's got to be able to run the passer, blitz, come off the edge up the middle, has to carry, cover guys in man-to-man coverage, got to understand he gets guys lined up.

Him and Jake are the two quarterbacks of the defense and they have to be able to handle it all and what we ask them to do is a lot and it's a lot on their plate. For him to come ready to play and find a way to win this football game, I know it meant a lot to him and his family and teammates. I was very happy.

Q. At this time last year, you were kind of critical of the way your receivers were playing against man coverage. I think you've played now three straight teams that play a lot of man coverage. What strides have you seen in that area?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We worked hard to improve our passing game. Definitely last year, that's where we struggled and it was a lot of time versus press, man-to-man coverage. It's been an every day goal, an every day chore, to get better.

While we're still not where we would like to be, we've gotten better, and it helps when guys can't just latch up on you and get their hands on you and disrupt the timing and take away what you're trying to do.

Obviously Rondale is a tough guy to guard man-to-man but our receivers on the outside and other guys have gotten better. We want to get to them all, and while Rondale gets his touches, the other guys have to step up and perform. The other guys have gotten better and we want to continue to help them improve and be a part of the offense and they do great things for us. They have all been very unselfish and just want to win, and that helps.

Q. There was a little bit of a pregame scuffle. Ohio

State came right at you when you were gathered before warmups. How did you address that with the team beforehand?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I did not. You know, sometimes those things happen. I don't think it was intentional. Happened to come out at the same time. They did happen to come over to where we were at, but I think for the most part it was handled pretty well and it could have been a lot worse.

So no, I try not to take away the aggressiveness of our team right before the game.

Q. How did D.J. Knox big run there, you had an interesting play call there. What did you like about that play call or why did you choose that particular run in that situation?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, fortunately it worked. We've been able to basically run our trap plays quite a bit this year for some big chunks. When we have called it, it's been big chunks. Now when it gets stopped, it's probably a no gain.

But we knew on third down, they are going to give you a lot of looks and walk guys up on the line of scrimmage. We felt if we got a certain look we could run the trap play and if we hit it we were going to hit it big because there was no second level and we got the look we wanted.

I think it was around third and then and we passed the ball quite a bit and we got the look. We called it and we hit it. Those plays are huge for us. When you can break a run for a long play, especially on third-and-long, it's big and that one kind of separated the gap a little bit and gave us a little breathing room, but it was a great run. It was extremely well executed and like I said we worked that play quite a bit and it's been good to use a couple times a game.

Q. I think you used Cornel (ph) in the slot a little bit and two tight end personnel groupings, two running back personnel groupings. When you send two running backs on the field and come out in a spread formation with one in the slot, what does that do for the defense and what are you looking to exploit there?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, it does quite a bit. You know, I don't know if we were successful on the couple ones we had, but I think I'm going to get him more involved. He's a guy that plays hard. He can play fullback, running backs and we can play him as an off the ball tight end and we can split him out because he's got good hands.

Hopeful to maybe use him a little bit more, get him involved and take a little pressure off our tight end from

maybe blocking as much. I think he can do a better job there, so we are looking at ways this week to maybe continue to get him more involved because we do think he can be productive.

Q. Two weeks ago, you had Sparks run a little bit of wildcat. I know he's a former quarterback. How much of that was because the game dictated and how much was to give Ohio State more things to think about?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we always like to play a little cat-and-mouse with that, but you know what, Jared is a good, strong runner. We had a couple small plays back in last week. We were able to call a few. Didn't get it called this week. But we're going to continue to carry a small package for him.

I think it's good to get him some touches, as well. I like the fact that he's just a competitor. Everything's not perfect right now and I know he's hard on himself when things don't go well, which he needs to back off that a little bit and play looser.

But he's going to be a very good player for us. He's still got a lot of room to grow. He's still young at the position. But he has a great work ethic and he wants to go out there and win and compete, and those are the type of guys I like.

Q. How about specifically when you look at Michigan State's defense, what exactly do they do that you think will be a challenge?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, they have been consistent for years. They play Coach Dantonio-style defense. Their front four is very good. The linebacker are play downhill. They are going to pressure on the outside.

Normally they are going to play four cross quarter coverage, support the run hard and deep playaction over the top and deep press on you and make you earn it. That's what they do. They don't want to give you a lot of easy completions. They are sound, but they are strong up front and that's going to be once again a tough matchup for us.

I think that we handled Ohio State about as good as we could but they were fast and they were good and we had to get it out quick at times. And when we did have to max protect, to throw it up the field, we had to hold on and sometimes we were getting hit quite a bit when we threw it.

But they played as hard as they could. This group I think is very stout, very strong and they come off the ball well. They play the run well. So we'll have our hands full up front.

Q. How about their quarterback?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I really like him. I know last year he was lights-out, had some big numbers, played well. I know this year, it hasn't maybe been quite as good as last year to this point but there's still a lot of season left. He's got a continue of experience.

I think, you know, he's got, you know, when he has the right weapons, getting open and doing their part, he can deliver the ball and create plays with his feet. Like I said, I think he's a very, very good quarterback. One of the better quarterbacks in this conference for sure.

Q. The game balls from Saturday's win, who did they go to?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We truly didn't give out any game balls, so to speak, this week. We normally have some award winners after the game within the team but no true game balls for this one.

Q. Through seven games, Rondale Moore has shown us just about, we think, everything. As you went back and looked at the film of his touchdown run, what really stood out about that to you?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I agree with you. He's done an outstanding job. He's been more than impressive. He's been dynamic and exceptional. He's a difference maker. He brings it every game. This team tried to stop him and put a guy over the top of him 75 percent or more of the time and then played defense behind them. But they had one of their better guys right over the top of him, and if he didn't get his hands on him, he was going to get open.

So coming out of the game -- still giving him his touches and we knew that was going to happen, and it did and he still got it done. It's important to get him the ball numerous plays, behind the line of scrimmage, throw it to him behind the line of scrimmage, reverses, deep, you name it, because he can make guys miss.

What he is, is extremely strong. I know the win at the end when he scored, they thought they had him down, maybe because he was so low to the ground but he's not down. He is strong and had his hand, prevented him from going all the way down and kept running. It's a credit to him. He's just worked extremely hard to get to this point. He puts in the time and the work. Humble young man and he wants to win, and we're glad he's on our team.

Q. I think you targeted him 18 times, according to the stats. Even though two people are guarding him, so to speak, that doesn't deter you from going to him.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, like I said, sometimes probably the first three weeks it would have but I overcome that. We're going to try to give him the ball and we're going to allow him to get open. Sometimes he may look cover -- we tell our quarterback, but you make sure you give him time to get open because he's normally going to get open.

So we ask our quarterbacks to give him a little more time. A couple times I thought we came off him too soon and then he ended up getting open, but I get it. You're not going to be perfect and pick the right guy all the time but he just got a knack for running routes, using his quickness and his strength to get open very fast. That's the key, you can't hold it real long but he has a knack to get open quickly.

Q. What's it do to your approach as a coach when your punter is just a good football player?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we used him a whole lot last year, his athleticism and we have definitely have some things this year that haven't gotten called. He's not only a great punter but he is a good athlete. He can run, throw the ball, we've had fakes in where he can throw it. We usually carry those every week, and it helps. It helps when you have an athlete back there at that position because it will keep the defense on their toes.

We felt there was a good chance we had this fake set up, and in my opinion, it was great time to call it and he executed it perfect.

Q. I'm sure you came into the season not knowing what to expect from Jones, but is he giving you some valuable contributions in a situation where you need him?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We're definitely happy that Keiwan is back and playing. He had the injury that set him out. You know, he's a great young man. He's got a great personality, great smile. He works extremely hard and he's got to be productive for us. He's got to get in there and get repetitions and get after the quarterback, but he's been a good teammate and he's done a good job.

Q. After the game he said he stopped hesitating and the past few weeks he had been hesitating, even if he knew the play call, he didn't want to make a mistake. Did you see that? Did you know he was hesitating a little bit?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Marcus is a little bit like David where if they err, they err because they overthink things and they care too much. Sometimes he second guesses his natural ability and what he sees.

Yes, we want him to go with his first instinct and play

and when he does that, he can be outstanding and he's just got to make sure he continues to get that in his head: Don't second guess your reads, don't second guess anything, and play downhill. It's not a discredit to him. It's just about him making sure he's always doing the right things and we want him to cut it loose a little bit more and he did in this game and I think he was outstanding.