

Purdue University Football Media Conference
Head Coach Jeff Brohm
October 14, 2019

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Once again, we're excited to get started for another week of practice. Going and playing at Iowa will be a great challenge for our football team and see kinds of how we stack up.

I know Iowa has played some very good football. Like always they are well-coached and sound in what they do and do a great job on defense and don't give up points. They don't give up big plays. They make you earn it. They have got some size up front. Really good defensive end that's a projected first-round pick, maybe possibly Top-10 pick, and a lot of good players around him.

So it will be another test for us to see how we can manage up front in the trenches. On offense, they control the football, run it, mix in the pass. Use the clock and you know, try to really play fundamentally sound football.

This needs to be a great week of practice for our guys. We need to find a way to go on the road and beat a good opponent. It will be a tough match-up.

Q. Any chance Rondale practices and plays this week?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: You know what, probably too early to tell. I'm not real optimistic about it.

Q. How about Lorenzo?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: No. He's out.

Q. Is he out for the rest of the year?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: You know, I wouldn't go that far yet, but you know, he's out a little while longer. So kind of week-to-week. Probably wouldn't say that yet.

Q. Smiley left the game second half. What's his status?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I think Smiley should be back this week, and I think he was able to come back in and play.

You know, really, on defense, Cornel was out last week and Branson Deen was out at the last minute, and we lost Kieren Douglas later in the week at linebacker, as well, and he'll be out this week.

Q. Are Cornel and Branson extended?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Too early to tell on those two. We'll see how it plays out. I know Kieren Douglas will be out.

Q. With the offensive line the way it played Saturday, what about that

group clicked where maybe some other groups haven't? I understand competition, who you are playing, plays a role in that, but what did you like about that group and looked at their film?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I was proud of our offensive line. A lot of times, you take a lot of blame when things are not going well and when things are going good, the skill players get the credit. Those guys gave up one sack and that was on Jack, holding the ball too long. Could have gone rid of it. Could have thrown in the flat on the little roll-out there. So that was good to see.

Now we did a few things to help our guys, and I think that did help, as well, but I do think our guys played hard. Without question, Grant Hermanns has had his best game. He definitely stood out. I think Matt McCann was solid again and those two have to be our best players each week and that did happen.

The others, I think with the competition, with a few of the adjustments we made and the fact that they play hard and play confident, I thought they did a good job and I was proud of their performance.

Q. How did Sam Garvin grade out?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Sam, for a guy who hasn't been here very good, give him a lot of credit. He came in, he executed, he made the calls, he snapped the ball well, and he did a good job.

Now, do we need more out of him? Yes, we do. We need him to be more physical up front. We need him to knock people off the ball a little bit more and strike. Those are things he could work on.

But for a first start, and just managing the front and the calls, and -- the snapping of the football, I'm very proud of his performance and we're hopeful that he can continue to improve and get better.

Q. You mentioned after the game, he started at IU and came to your program. What's the backstory on how he got here?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, it's interesting. I think -- my memory's not great but I'm pretty sure it was our first year I got here. First January, and we kind of said, we're in the picture late, and we kind of brought him and his family in to convince him come walk-on. Thought he had a great visit. Had some people in our corner working behind the scenes and next day, said he was going to IU (chuckling). I said, well, probably didn't go as great as I think.

I think he was so entrenched with IU at the time, they had recruited him, a lot of friends and buddies going there, and he maybe knew things and he felt more comfortable with that, is what I was told.

It was after one semester, he, in his opinion, made the wrong decision and transferred over to us. You know, so I think his parents went to Purdue. Maybe he felt he made a mistake. He's done a great job. Works hard. Gives us everything he's got. Is thrust in the role and I just hope he continues to take advantage of it.

Q. Viktor Beach not an option this week?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: No.

Q. To give Tario some carries and into the game, he obviously has some rust to knock off, but what did you see out of what he gave you on Saturday?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I was proud of Tario. I know he had the one fumble, but you know what he came and ran hard. There were a couple times he was a little tentative but he just had not played in a while. Continued to add some weight and strength.

He just looks smaller out there than I remembered him, but we're going to continue to utilize him and I think he'll continue to hopefully get better and we need to make sure we are able to rotate the backs and keep guys fresh.

Q. Defensively, shutting out a team in the second half was an accomplishment for the group, but the way that you wanted to play defense with some of the looks and trying to be creative, did that follow through with the plan on Saturday?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Yes, I think we're making progress. You know what, you take away a draw that ran untouched in the end zone for 30 yards, and a third and one naked that ran untouched for 50 yards; we played a pretty solid game.

Now, you know, I didn't think their quarterback threw very well. He had some opportunities. They had a touchdown called back early where it could have been a big score. We had an interception that gave us momentum. A lot of little things happened that helped us and that needs to happen, as well.

But I think in general, we played fundamentally more sound. I think we understood the package a little bit more and I think we -- especially on third down, tried to be a little more creative like we did in the second half at Penn State and give some different looks and disguises and all those little things help and there were some new faces in there, there were.

You wonder how they are going to adjust, but you know, you've got to give our defense credit, when you shut someone out regardless of the circumstances, that's a great accomplishment, and we need to build upon that, and I think hopefully we can gain some confidence.

You know, we're going to face a different animal this week in a physically strong front and running attack with some playaction off of it. We're going to have to be able to handle that.

Q. How do you manage the linebacker situation moving forward now with the injuries you've had there and lack of depth? Would you consider moving Derrick Barnes back there or is he good where he's at right now?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: No, we have some concerns. There's no question the

lack of depth is a strong concern right now. I think Ben Holt has played a lot of snaps. Cornel is injured. Jaylan Alexander is playing a lot of snaps. He's doing some good things. It's good to see.

But the back-ups, we had to force Saunders into action who had not played yet. First time in the game. Did a solid job, I think he has a bright future. We had worked Derrick Barnes in the back end and to use him at linebacker, and Branson Deen went out on the defensive end, so we got short-handed there. So we kind of kept him at his position, but yes he has to be able to play both.

To me, he is someone who has cross-trained at both the hybrid defensive end position and the linebacker position. So yes, we have to make sure we have a couple different options ready.

Q. How many more new faces will you put out there in the next few weeks?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I don't know if there's many more new faces not to put out there. You know, you saw Hewitt, the running back, which was new and you saw Saunders at linebacker, which was new.

I think there might be one or two more, but there's not a whole lot left that haven't played yet. It will be all based on injury situations or performance situations. We do want to have some depth, which is limited right now, but the competition is important. I think getting Cam Allen back in the mix has helped us. You know, if we had Marvin Grant available, he would be in the mix, as well.

So I think we're pressing the limit as far as not having anybody else left that's new that hasn't played.

Q. Nate Stanley has been around a long time. His growth and development, what have you seen out of him this year compared to last year when you played him?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, he's got great experience. He can stay in the pocket. I think earlier in the season he was playing outstanding and did a very good job and then they ran into a couple tough contests playing against Michigan and Penn State's defense, and those are two outstanding defenses. So that tested them and their offense.

But I think he's got great experience, great poise and he does a great job running their system.

Q. Just talk a little bit more about the development of Cory Trice. Talking to him before Nevada, he had not played corner since 8th grade.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Like I said, he's got some rawness to him at the position, but he's tall, long, athletic. Plays with no fear, practices hard. Goes hard. Hasn't missed a practice. Competes every day and those are the type of players that normally excel.

So I think it was great to see him excel and make some plays for us and making

the two interceptions was huge. The one changed the momentum of the game, the one he returned for a touchdown. I'm very proud of his performance and I think it's due to his work ethic, his ability to stick to it, his ability to be unselfish and move from safety when he probably would have played a lot of safety for us.

But we needed -- we thought of all the people, he had some athleticism at corner that maybe the others didn't and that's what stood out, but he's done a very good job.

Q. Talk about Jackson Anthrop, a guy you recruited, good talent, but here he is, sort of a Swiss Army knife. Been one of the more valuable players for the offense so far.

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Jackson's done a great job. Consistent, steady, gives everything he has and does tremendous on special teams and now he's thrust into the role more as a receiver. He's going to make the catch and do everything right, and he's the exact guy you want to have on your team.

Love him as a teammate because he just goes hard, and he's got to continue to be in the mix and he's got to continue to make some plays for us, and receiver, special teams, running back, speed sweeps, you name it, he does a good job.

Q. Is there a reason why Brooks didn't punt on Saturday?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, we had a little bit of a wind at times and going against the wind, we do want to now continue to have a normal punt, and also the rugby punt. With the rugby, it allows you to buy a little extra time. It allows you to kick away from the punt returner a little bit. It allows them, forces them to have to prepare for the rugby and how to bring guys off the edge and do different things there.

And the wind, going against it, had a factor, but we still want to play both. But we do want to challenge Brooks. I think he has tremendous potential. Got a huge leg. Consistency, even in the summer and fall, we knew would be an issue, but we were hopeful that -- some reason, he seemed like he was a gamer. He played receiver for a long time and did a good job earlier on and then he got into a little bit of a rut just not being consistent with us.

We just wanted to challenge him with some competition, but I think he'll respond and I think you'll see both out there.

Q. If you're 2-0 against Kirk Ferentz, why do you think you've had success in your two meetings with Iowa?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, no secret formula to that. I think -- I know went down to the first year, and we hit a couple big plays. They pressed us. We hit a couple big plays over the top, our defense played well and we found a way to win. Just one of those games.

This past year at home, we found a way to score early, which is important against them because they want to control the football and they want to run the clock. We

got a lead early, which helps. It's always going to help against the way they play the game, so just kind of things went our way and we had some luck on our side.

You know, that is the key against Iowa. You're going to have to find a way to get a lead and make them play a little bit different brand than they want to, because when they can play Iowa Football, they have a good chance of winning and Coach has done a good job there. They are consistent, steady every year.

Q. What about Sparks?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: We're hopeful to get him back. I thought it would happen last week. It didn't. I don't want to say it will happen and all of a sudden it doesn't. I think we'll see more as we get into practice.

Q. Speaking of guys who haven't played a whole lot prior to this past weekend, how did Eric Miller fair when you went back and watched it?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: I thought Eric did a good job. You know, he's got great length. Very similar to Will Bramel as far as got great length. He's got great promise. Not as strong as we would like at this point and have the punch we would like in the running game, but you know what, he goes hard and those two guys are very similar.

Will is probably slightly ahead, but I think Eric came in and had a good week of practice. Provided competition. And I think you'll see both of them out there. You know, when you look at the tackle position, you have Grant who has the most experience, and then Eric and Will are right there right behind him.

Q. Does your situation at linebacker change what you ask of your nickel, especially now that Graham is playing and he's a little bit of a bigger guy, anything like that?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, I think when we look at Jaylan, he's still a true freshman. We've asked him to do a lot. He's played a lot of football. When we had him in the spring, we had him more at the nickel position and I thought he was very good. There was a situation, we moved him back to safety and he's done a good job, but I think he's more suited for the nickel position.

But right now, he's spinning a little bit still just because he has a lot on his plate. You know, I think he's done a very good job and he's going to continue to get better. He works extremely hard. He cares about winning. He's got a good feel of things and he'll just continue to gain more knowledge and he'll become even better.

When you see him and he's not playing his best, I just think he's hesitant and I just think getting overall knowledge of the game will help his speed increase.

Q. In recent weeks, King has become more of your future back. Obviously his production has been up. What have you seen out of him as far as growth? I know Zander didn't really play in this past game. What have you seen out of King and Zander in these recent weeks and why has he been playing more?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, Zander was out this past week with injury.

King from day one has showed promise. He goes hard, runs hard. When we put a monitor on our guys that gauges the speed of how hard they go in practice every day, he's now at the top. He goes extremely hard. You know, that carries over to the game.

The adjustment has been left for him because he goes that hard every day in practice. It was great to see him in the pass game, not only have some good runs, but also catch the ball in the backfield.

I think he's gaining a better understanding of protection and a feel for the game. We want to continue to have other running backs in the mix to keep him fresh. You're going to get tired at that position carrying it low.

We do want to try to run the ball more successfully than we have at the beginning of the season, which I think we've made some small strides and got to make more and he's going to be a big piece of it. I think between him and Hewitt, two true freshmen running backs, I think they are going to be two very good players for us.

Q. To build off that, can you talk about Hewitt and his development? How do you feel about the running back group as a whole?

HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM: Well, Da'Joun got in there and did some good things. It was good to get his feet wet. That's what we want to do, prepare him every week to play. With Zander being out last week, he had to play some for us. We'll see how practice goes this week.

But I think he may be a little slipperier than King at times. Got a decent feel for the game, and I think he'll be a very good player. You know, you'll see him in the mix for rest of the year, depending on how much we play him each game, depending on each situation and where we're at.

But we feel good that they will be good players for us in the future. They will be a good complement to each other and we have to make sure they get touches, as well.