

Big Ten Conference Football Media Days

Friday July 19, 2019

Jeff Brohm

Purdue

JEFF BROHM: Good morning. To start off, I'd like to definitely offer congratulations to Jim Delany for his distinguished career in the Big Ten and the tremendous leadership he's provided for the conference. I'd also like to welcome Kevin Warren to the Big Ten, as well.

When it comes to our Purdue football team, we're excited about this upcoming season. I think there are some tremendous challenges we have ahead of us, a great schedule that we're looking forward to. Our guys have worked extremely hard to this point. We're looking forward to getting started here August 1st for our first game, when we go to Nevada on a Friday night.

With this time around, we brought three players, Rondale Moore from the special talent we have at receiver, had a tremendous year for us. We have Markus Bailey, an outstanding linebackers that's done a great job. Then also Lorenzo Neal, our nose guard, big, physical presence on the front four. So all three guys not only outstanding players, but excellent students and great leaders, and they'll have to lead the charge for our team this year.

But for us, I think we have to develop more consistency, figure out ways to play at a high level each and every week. Also I think we beat ourselves a few times last year in some games. We've got to play smarter, got to do the small things to give ourselves a chance. But I do think that with the mixture of some youth, which we'll have some young guys going in there this year, I think our team has about eight seniors on our football team, those guys are going to have to step up and be ready to go from the get-go. But I do think those guys, a lot of names that you haven't heard of will be in the mix and get a chance, an opportunity to showcase what they're about.

But our guys are excited to get things going. From there I'll open it up to any questions.

Q. You mentioned Markus Bailey. What has he meant to your program?

JEFF BROHM: Well, Markus Bailey has done a great job. He's a playmaker for us. He works extremely hard. He likes to prove to people that he's a special talent, one of the top linebackers in the league. I think



for us, he can do a lot of things. He can play in the box. We can play him outside the box. He can blitz off the edge very well. He can run through blocks, run around blocks, and he's very active. And I think just his energy, the way he approaches each and every practice, the way he wants to win when he takes the field, our guys feed off that.

So I think he's a guy we're looking forward to having a great year, and for us to play at a high level, our defense needs to play better this year, and he needs to take charge of that and become a little bit more of a vocal leader, which he's done a great job of to this point, but really just a tremendous young man that's had a great career up to now, and I know he wants to finish it off strong with a great senior season.

Q. Coach, what type of immediate impact do you expect the freshman class to have, especially with the receiving corps, especially with Wright and Bell coming in. And if you can touch a little bit on the defensive side of the ball.

JEFF BROHM: Well, I do think we have some incoming freshmen that will see the field and will have to do a good job for us, the ones you mentioned, David Bell at receiver I think is an outstanding talent that will possibly start for us, but has a chance to be a special player. We really signed a group of four receivers last year that all have a chance to play, and David Bell, Milton Wright, Marshawn Rice and TJ Sheffield, all four guys have shown us things to this point that we like and they're going to be in the mix, and they'll probably be on the field.

I think we have two young tight ends in Garrett Miller and Kyle Bilodeau that have a chance to be very good players and could easily see the field, as well. I think at running back, we signed two running backs: Da'Joun Hewitt and King Doerue that have shown some great promise to this point, and while we feel good about our other running backs, there's not a whole lot of depth. So they could be in action on the offensive line. We're a little bit maybe a year off from those guys getting in the mix.

On the defense Jalen Graham is a true freshman that enrolled early. Did a tremendous job for us in the secondary. Marvin Grant has come in at the safety position, has a chance to play. I think George Karlaftis

is an outstanding talent up front that came in, enrolled early, had a great spring for us. Was probably our best player on defense all spring. And there's some other guys up that we think can get in the mix in Dontay Hunter and Steven Fauchaux.

So a lot of guys could see the field, and they're going to have to, and they're going to have to be ready to play because we are going to be a little bit young, but I think they've worked hard to this point and they understand that we need those guys to step in and be ready to go, and while they're going to have to learn on the job a little bit, I do think they can improve and they'll be up to the challenge.

Q. A lot of expectations, preseason publicity for Rondale Moore. How do you expect he's going to handle that situation?

JEFF BROHM: Well, Rondale is a guy we don't have to worry about. I think he'll handle it great. He's exceeded our expectations, and our expectations were high from the get-go. He's somebody when the lights come on, it doesn't faze him one bit. He's a special talent. He works extremely hard off the field. He's a great student, and we're going to give him the ball. So however we've got to do it, we're going to find ways to get that done.

I know teams are going to key on him. So will he put up the numbers he had last year? I'm not for sure but we are going to try to get it done for him. But he's unselfish, as well. He wants to win. But he does know that he has to make plays for us, and he has to stay healthy for us to have the best chance to succeed. But he has put on a little bit of weight, he's a little bit stronger, which he's always been fast, but he just works extremely hard in practice. He gives great effort. He goes full speed all the time, and I think he'll have another tremendous year.

Q. With so few seniors, with only eight, have you ever been around a team that had less than 10 seniors, and how does that dynamic work? And how do you anticipate this dynamic working with so few seniors?

JEFF BROHM: Well, you know, I do think you'd always like to have a veteran team and a veteran leadership and guys that have seen the field a lot. But it is what it is. I think we will have a good mix. Those guys, those seniors will lead well, and they will be on the field, and these other guys just have to come ready to play.

I think between spring practice, summer repetitions, fall camp, we've got to do a great job as coaches getting those guys ready to play. But we'll be young, but I think we've got to play confident. We've still got to expect to win. We've still got to go out there and take the field

knowing that if we play our best, we can have a chance to win.

And I think our guys have done a good job to this point, and as coaches we've got to get them ready to play.

Q. I was just curious about Rondale Moore. I believe what the short-pass-and-run game he usually averaged around 11, 12 yards per carry. For this season, I was wondering how you expect to utilize him with the short-pass-and-run game.

JEFF BROHM: Well, I think Rondale, like I said earlier, is a special talent. Obviously he's going to line up in the slot for us most of the time, and we've got to get him the ball in that position. But he'll line up wide. We'll put him in the backfield. We'll use him on some jet-sweep stuff. I think we've got to do a better job of giving him space and room in the return game. I think we didn't do our best job with that last year, and I think he can be very dynamic if we set up some things that take advantage of his ability.

But you've got to get others involved, and they've got to make plays, but he is someone that will be moved around, and as coaches we've got to be creative and make sure that we're doing that. You know, that's the fun part about coaching is when you have a special talent, figuring out ways to get him the ball at a lot of different positions. And mentally he can handle it all, and he studies and he puts in the time, and like I said, we're excited to see him play this year.

Q. Jeff, talk about Elijah Sindelar, his health, and talk about the depth chart a little bit and what you're looking for in particular from Sindelar in 2019.

JEFF BROHM: Well, Elijah Sindelar right now is our starting quarterback. I do think he's got a lot of talent. He has a big arm. He can throw the ball vertically. We've got to do a better job of coaching him where we can limit the turnovers and making sure he's taking care of the football and being smart with it. And while we're taking our chances to throw it downfield, he's doing his part of limiting interceptions and turnovers and being smart with the football.

But he's gotten better. He works hard. He's a good leader. He has had some injury issues, so we've got to keep him healthy, and I think we've got to manage what we do with him in practice to make sure that he's getting to the game fresh and ready to go and healthy for the game. With that said, you've always got to have backups ready and Jack Plummer is a young quarterback we think has a bright future, he just hasn't seen the field, but he's getting better every week. He has to be ready to play. And then Aidan O'Connell really is our next guy up right now. Those three guys

have done a good job to this point, and we feel confident if they're in the game, we can have a chance to win.

Q. Your team was picked fifth in the preseason media poll. Just curious your thoughts overall on the Big Ten West.

JEFF BROHM: Well, we think the conference is very strong right now. And the Big Ten West is getting better every year. There are outstanding coaches that are coaching in this league, especially on both sides of the conference, but the Big Ten West has gotten better, and each and every week it's going to be a tough contest. I know for us with our schedule, there's not an easy week. We've got to come ready to play.

But I do think the competition is stiff. There's a lot of great young football players that are being coached well that want to win, and I think in this conference you never truly know who's going to win. Obviously there's a few teams that are more than likely going to be the favorite when they step on the field, but you never know because I think the strength from top to bottom is as good as it's ever been, and I see it continuing to get better each and every year.

Q. For the third straight year you'll play two Power Five non-conference opponents. How do those games prepare you for the Big Ten?

JEFF BROHM: Well, that is one thing I think you'll see at Purdue. We've always had 11 Power Five games, and we're excited about our schedule. We do like to schedule the best opponents we can, and us opening up at Nevada will be a tough contest, and then we come back and have Vanderbilt at home, an SEC team, and TCU at home, one of the better teams in the Big 12, and then we start our conference play.

Sometimes those games make it tough where you've got to figure out a way to win a few of those, but getting in ready for Big Ten play, I do think in the long haul we've had some success. The first year we found a way to beat Missouri pretty handily. We were close against Louisville, had a chance to win this past year. Found a way to beat Boston College when they were undefeated. Were close against Missouri, as well. So those games I think can help your team get prepared for good competition, and that's the way we want to do it, and I think our fans want to see great competition come in the stadium, and we want to continue to provide that.

Q. Purdue had a couple of new sights last year, being the fans rushing the field. What does that do -- how do you feel about that, and what does it do to the players?

JEFF BROHM: Well, those are great moments when

you have some big wins and your fans get to participate and experience the joy of those wins. We have a great student turnout. I think our fan support has been outstanding the last two years. I see it continuing to get better.

But when you play great football teams like we have in the Big Ten and even our non-conference schedule, it gives you an opportunity to showcase what you can do on the big stage. We had some good moments last year, beating three top-25 teams that were a lot of fun for our team, a lot of fun for our fans. It put us in the spotlight. We also had some moments that weren't as good.

So we've got to figure out ways to be more consistent, but I do think when you play some great competition and you can find a way to win, it makes it very special, and it does build your team's confidence, and it's a lot of fun for the fans to see.