

**November 25, 2014**



An interview with:

## COACH HAZELL

THE MODERATOR: We have Coach Hazell here for comments and questions.

COACH HAZELL: 30-second recap on last week's game against Northwestern, obviously you can't turn the ball over as many times as you do, and expect to be successful. So that's one of the things that obviously we have to clean up.

I think our guys have really focused on making sure we don't beat ourselves in those situations, and it was unfortunate that we shot ourselves in the foot so many times, but this is a huge, huge week for us.

Guys know that. We had a great meeting on Sunday night, and they're fired up. You wait all year long for this game. It's been up on our wall for 365 days, and the clock ticks down every single day so we're excited about going down to Bloomington and playing our rival on rivalry weekend.

**Q. Hey Darrell, you're facing an Indiana team in particular, tailback Tevin Coleman who has been dominant despite defenses attempt to stop him. What makes him effective?**

COACH HAZELL: He's a big back, Pete, and he's fast. When the hole is developed for him, he hits it, with great philosophy and it's funny, guys take the wrong angle on this guy. I'm be the sure they know how fast he really is. We got to make sure we eliminate those running lanes because if you don't, that's when he becomes a really good back.

**Q. You're dealing with an Indian passing team that has taken some hits with quarterback injuries, as you look at it, I don't**

**want to say what concerns you, but what do they bring to the table in terms of passing?**

COACH HAZELL: The quarterback hasn't played many games but you can see him get better and better each week. One of the things that concerns you about the quarterback is he's not afraid to pull it down and run it so we got to make sure we do a good job of tackling him when he does do that, because he is -- he's got a little shiftiness to him when he does pull it down.

**Q. And offensively from your perspective, in order to start generating a few more points what do you guys need to do?**

COACH HAZELL: Our execution was not very good on Saturday, Pete. They're ganging the box up on us a little bit without our wide receivers. We lost Danny Anthrop and they're starting to put a lot of guys in the box. We got to do a better job of executing the plays that are called right now, I think we all realize that and we got to put ourselves in better situations on third down so we can make those things more manageable.

**Q. And do you see the receiver -- basically the receivers have to step up. Are they capable of that with one game left?**

COACH HAZELL: I think so. I think they're growing up, they're young guys, we played two true freshmen on the outside last week, which is always hard, but they're not the only guys, we all have to step up. Every single position has to step up. We got to finish blocks in the run game, offensive linewise, I thought we had to -- some of those plays we talked about for the keys to victory is you have to make more than what they're giving you. So there was a couple of plays where we had a chance to make a few more yards than what we got so those are the things that we have to get better at.

**Q. And the last thing, you Al eluded to this, the importance of ending the losing streak, ending the season with a win, how**

**crucial is that?**

COACH HAZELL: This is a big game, everybody knows that, everybody in our program knows that, everybody in their program knows that. It's a huge game for both programs. You can throw out all the records. This game will come down to the effort that you play with, and the execution that you have not turning the ball over, that's what this game is going to come down to.

**Q. Last week you talked about your seniors and how they have bought into what you want them to do and the pride that they take in the program. Do you worry about the young guys this week, having a disappointing loss and the last couple of games not being able to generate the points that you wanted to? Do you have to focus more on the young guys and amp them up a little bit?**

COACH HAZELL: No, not at all. I think one of the messages on Sunday night was we all -- not only the players but the coaches as well you have to clear your mind from that last game because if you don't it will clutter your vision to what needs to happen this week. Whether it's a freshman, a senior, a coach, it doesn't matter. You have to clear your heads and you gotta go forward, that's the bottom line.

**Q. This game, seen a lot of 'em, and sometimes strange things -- guys step up. Some guy that maybe hasn't made very many plays all year. You would look for something like that, especially maybe out of one of your wide receivers, right?**

COACH HAZELL: We talked about that yesterday when we were watching film. We talked about one of the plays that Brandon Cottom made last year was a 60-yard reception. Somebody has to step up in these rivalry games and that's what makes the difference in the games. It might be someone you wouldn't think about, might be a wide-out, a tight end, you don't know, but someone has to make plays that may not have made them all year long.

**Q. I know, obviously everybody saw it, ball security last week in the first half just imploded everything you were probably hoping to do. Were there any things you noticed? Guys weren't securing the ball, or it was a multitude of things that caused those first half turnovers?**

COACH HAZELL: You look at the turnovers that happened in the first and second quart, the first one was a tipped ball, the second one was -- he just didn't secure it well enough and the guy punched it out and the third one came quickly where he caught a pass in the flat. Probably need to do put that high and tight a little bit faster, ball squirts out and the fourth one was the next series out when Austin probably has to secure that ball a little bit better in the pocket. Those are all things that we always talk about. That's the number one thing in winning and losing football games and obviously it came back and got us.

**Q. What about Indiana's defense? It's improved obviously from last year. What have you seen in terms of the Hoosiers' ability to stop folks?**

COACH HAZELL: I think what they're doing is playing hard. You turn the tape on and guys are flying around. Sometimes they may be out of position but you see guys running to the ball, and I think that's where their major improvement has come from last year to this year.

**Q. In the secondary they made some interceptions, last week against Ohio State, made some plays that kept them in the game. Like you they have had some troubles with the pass rush, do you see signs that that area has improved for them or is it an area that you really have to be able to keep their rush away to be able to do what you want on offense?**

COACH HAZELL: They play this odd front, especially on first and second down, they play a nose and we're calling them ends that are playing over top our tackles and leaving the guards uncovered. I think they're probably going to bring an extra guy for us, if I had to guess, probably play a little more man coverage, they have not played a lot of man coverage on first and second downs so the key will be or the question will be what are they going to do against us early on first and second down? To create that pass rush.

**Q. The quarterback is getting better. Outside of giving your game plan away, what do you have to do to cause him to be uncomfortable early and often and can that make them one-dimensional enough to make you be able to have your way against their**

**offense?**

COACH HAZELL: Well, there are a couple of things I think we can do to make him uncomfortable and without giving anything away, that's what we need to do, because that's what he struggles a little bit when things are happening, you can see some things breakdown.

**Q. Special teams, too, this game has a way of strange things happening and they had a punt return against them last week, so they've been pretty good in special teams most of the year. How do you evaluate their special teams play especially in the return game?**

COACH HAZELL: They have a good kick return and punt return in wind, he's a dynamic player, he's quick and he has a way of finding those seams. So we have to do a good job. He catches everything on the punts. So we got to make sure we don't overrun him on the punt returns but we also got to do a good job of corralling him on the kickoff returns to make sure he doesn't get started.

**Q. What about the environment in Bloomington? You went down there last year and history in the fact that you will have played back-to-back games in Memorial Stadium in consecutive years but what did you learn from last year that you take into this year about what this game is all about?**

COACH HAZELL: I believe no matter where you play you got to block out the things that are outside the white lines, and that's the key.

If you can execute the things that are on the game plan and stay focused and not get distracted, that enhances your chances to win football games, no matter where you go.

**Q. You talk a lot about mind clutter. How is your team going into the game, like obviously it's tough coming off a loss, but what's going on in their heads? What's motivating them because it is a rivalry game?**

COACH HAZELL: The biggest thing we talked about other than clearing our minds is what we're playing for this week, the significance of what we're playing for this week, and they understand that.

It's probably mentioned 15 to 20 times in our meeting on Sunday what we're playing for.

**Q. How does Coleman stack up to Cobb and Abdullah and Gordon?**

COACH HAZELL: He's a very good back. Those two backs-- the other backs that you mentioned, those are phenomenal backs. This guy is a really, really good football player. He's strong, he's fast, and he sees the holes pretty well.

**Q. Is it an overstatement to say that the outcome in this game can really swing how you feel about the season going into the off-season?**

COACH HAZELL: I don't think I look into it that deeply to be honest with you, at least not on a Tuesday.

Our minds are around preparation and making sure that everything we do gives our guys a chance to win, and what we did this weekend, as a staff, on Sunday is crop down the game plan so we can make sure our execution is where it needs to be. If you look at our call sheet today as opposed to the previous weeks, it's probably a third to two-thirds of what we've called.

**Q. What did you learn about the rivalry going through it for the first time last year?**

COACH HAZELL: You can't let it get away, and that's what happened last year. When we came out, a lot of things happened in the first quarter, and you were fighting uphill. I think you gotta make sure you keep it close, don't hurt yourself again in those early situations and if you do go down a little bit, you gotta make sure you're battling and keep that thing closely, you got a chance to win it at the end.

**Q. What's your schedule for Thursday? Will you have a team dinner?**

COACH HAZELL: On Thursday we will practice early in the morning, we're going to meet at 8:00. I think we go out on the field at 10 or so for about an hour, hour and 15 minutes and then we have a team dinner at 2:00 over at the Sheraton and then the players are off until Friday, 12:00.

**Q. I know with just eight players manually you have them fill out things they're thankful for, will you do anything on Thursday, you will have guys speak or anything? Or will it be a straight-up dish dinner?**

COACH HAZELL: We'll have someone

say the prayer but it will be a straight-up dinner.

**Q. What are you thankful for?**

COACH HAZELL: I'm thankful that I have this opportunity to be here and to continue to work at gettin' this program better each and every week, and thankful for all the players that are in our locker room right now.

**Q. Speaking of Thanksgiving what's the one dish you would bring to dinner?**

COACH HAZELL: What's the one dish?

**Q. Yeah, Thanksgiving dish.**

COACH HAZELL: My mother used to make these minced meat turnovers, that I don't think I've seen since her making these turnovers, so that's one thing I would bring.

**Q. She won't ship 'em in?**

COACH HAZELL: She won't ship 'em in for me, no.

**Q. I know you're focused on the game but being looking at the season, what group, what unit maybe has improved the most?**

COACH HAZELL: I think if you look at one sole group -- there's probably two groups that really took off, but I think if you look at one group I think it's the linebacker group. I really am impressed at their development and how they continually get better each week. Those three guys are going to be really good players, Jimmy and Danny E. and Ja'Whaun. I think those guys are going to be great Big Ten linebackers when it's all said and done.

**Q. Speaking of Ja'Whaun and a true freshman, you know, on the scale of all the positions that a true freshman can come in and play, where would linebacker rank as far as difficulty for a true freshman?**

COACH HAZELL: I think playing the "Mike" position that's a huge task. I think being out on the island as a corner sometimes and in man-to-man coverage is a physical hard task, not a mentally hard task, but it's probably offensive lineman coming in, a young guy that's got to be physically developed as well as being handle all those different protection schemes as well as the run schemes.

**Q. And with Ja'Whaun, the plan was not to play him at "Mike" you've had Sean and Joe and others there but how he adapted to that position after the injuries and how much more vocal he is now compared to when he started there?**

COACH HAZELL: Sometimes you're asked to grow up quickly. Whether that's fortunate or unfortunate, he handles it extremely well and he's done an unbelievable job of doing all the things that Coach Freeman has asked him to do and doing it extremely well so you're proud of how he's responded to that.

**Q. When you started the year, I think the offensive line was a top question, and just how you feel like they've progressed and where they're at now.**

COACH HAZELL: Certainly they have gotten better each and every week. I thought last week they protected better, I didn't think we ran block as well as we had in the past. I thought they needed to finish blocks on the inside pick particularly with the guards, but that's a group that's -- you know, if they started at a 25% rating they're probably close to a 75% rating so we have a ways to go, still, but they made huge advancements in that room.

**Q. With Indiana's offense is it simple making them one-dimensional?**

COACH HAZELL: Is it simple that they are --

**Q. No, simple for you guys to make them one-dimensional and dictate things?**

COACH HAZELL: I think there is a couple of guys you have to take out of the game. I think No. 1 is one guy that you got to make sure you know where he is at all times because he can hurt you and No. 6 is a guy that can hurt you. Those two guys are the guys that you have to have eyes on at all times. The quarterback can hurt you from the respect that if you play so much man-to-man coverage and you don't have a spy, he's good enough to run it and get 10, 12, 13 yards. Will he go 60? Probably not but he's good enough to get himself a first down.

**Q. Will you stay with the same secondary lineup with Frankie at the corner?**

COACH HAZELL: Frankie at the corner,

Anthony Brown at the corner, Landon and Taylor in the safety and Leroy Clark will come in and play the corner when Frankie goes into the nickel.

**Q. What do you think about the job that Ra'Zahn Howard has done for you this year?**

COACH HAZELL: I think he's done well. He's been hampered all year with his back, he's been on the medical report since day one, he has some back issues so he hasn't practiced as much as you like him to practice, but I thought he's done a pretty good job of holding the point. Sometimes he jumps out of his gap because he likes to make plays which sometimes puts the defense in a quandary but I think he's done a good job, I think he continues to get better, his weight is down, he weighed in at 312 which is good, he came in at 320 at the beginning of the season so I think that helps him inside.

**Q. You mentioned he's been out during the week for practices but on Saturday he's playing a lot. Are you happy with where his game day conditioning is?**

COACH HAZELL: You like for it to be better, but it's not awful. I've seen some guys play out there that cannot go two or three plays in a row but he can go probably -- what gets him is when they get a first down and he's got to go a second series or a third series or that second first down within the series. That's what you gotta get him out and get Ryan Watson in there to get him a blow.

**Q. It was a Sunday meeting out of the ordinary or it was that a typical Sunday meeting that you had?**

COACH HAZELL: It was different for a lot of reasons and it was going to be different but it really had to be different from the respect of we weren't going to do anything with Northwestern anyway but then I had to address it because of what just happened.

Then we talked about the only thing that matters now. That's all we talked about, trying to get them to clear their minds because it's a painful situation but you got to get 'em to clear their minds and understand what really is important right now and that's all that matters.

**Q. Did you get the sense from them after the game on Saturday and then early on**

**Sunday that you needed to do something to sort of wipe the slate clean?**

COACH HAZELL: Well, I think I got to look at myself in the mirror and see how I'm feeling. I'm sure, you know, the rest of the guys who care, which they do, which they all do, the coaches and the players and trainers and all those people that really invest so much into winning a game, and you go out and do that you look at yourself and you say, if I'm feeling like this the team is feeling like this so you've got to make adjustments and the message that you're giving to these guys and it's got to be strong and it's got to be sincere to make sure the point gets across.

**Q. Did just you speak or any other guys talk?**

COACH HAZELL: I asked one question and I can't remember the question but Ryan Russell spoke up. It was a question that was not rhetorical. He spoke up and had the right answer.

**Q. Are you going to tell us what it is?**

COACH HAZELL: Something about what's important right now.

**Q. The running game, how do you go about getting it back going again after a couple weeks here where it's sorta stalled out?**

COACH HAZELL: It has stalled a little bit, but like I said before, you know the first fumble that Akeem had, it was a good running play, we hit it for about 9, 10 yards and then he put it on the ground. Those are the things that we have to be able to call more and more plays to be able to get him the ball, and he touched it, I don't know, 20 times or so, I think, which is a pretty good number for that type of game.

But we have to be able to block longer up front.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your help all season long.

COACH HAZELL: Thank you.

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