PJ FLECK: I just want to wish all the Minnesota high school coaches and schools who are in the playoffs here to start this week all the best as they continue to make their run for state championships, I know it's an exciting time for high school football here in the state of Minnesota.

We're doing our mental health awareness game here, teaming up with Rachel Baribeau on Changing the Narrative. Really excited about that, bringing a lot of awareness to a topic that cannot be ignored in college athletics and I'm really proud of the University of Minnesota, our president, our athletic director Mark Coyle for allowing our student athletes to have the resources that are needed to be able to help them, holistically, academically, athletically, socially, spiritually, and then mentally, physically and emotionally and I think sometimes that gets pushed aside. And there's so many things our student athletes have access to in social media and the way things have changed and the immediate constant judgment, I think it's changed a lot of way that we grew up, our student athletes didn't grow up like we grew up, didn't have that. If you, if somebody had to say something, they had to say it to your face, well they don't have to say it to your face, they just go online on the bully board and just blast people. And it's really hard for young people to process a lot of that of the constant criticism or scrutiny over and over and over.

So I'm just glad that we can partner up with Rachel Baribeau and her movement on Changing the Narrative and hopefully we can make a difference in all of our student athletes' lives and all student athletes across the country as we continue to develop in the mental health department. So with that said, I'll open it up for questions.

Q. How have you seen Tanner learn from some of the mistakes he's made, like interceptions, offensive turnovers, maybe even some of the inaccuracies from last game, how do you see him kind of recover from those?

PJ FLECK: He recovers like a competitor. He's not happy about the mistakes he makes and then the success he has, he's still not happy and not satisfied enough. So he changes his best and that's what a competitor does. I said before he's got a very short memory, when good things happen and when bad things happen and that's what makes him I think off the charts in the intangibles, because that's very difficult to do. It's one thing to be able to fix your accuracy and make a better read and those things, but to have that stick with you in your mind and a play beat you numerous times, he doesn't allow that to happen. He's got to keep getting better, he knows that, but again it's not just the 100 level or 200 level now he's on 500, 600 level and he's just improving every single week. And just because he doesn't throw for 95 percent every single week doesn't mean that he's not improving, he's improving a lot. And I think his poise is getting better in the pocket and when he doesn't do it he realizes it and he can fix it pretty quick. So one thing I love about him though, just like Carter and most of the players on our team, they want to change their best, today was a better Tuesday than last Tuesday and I give them a lot of credit for how hard they're working. And it's a player-driven and player-led team and Carter and Tanner are at the forefront of that.

Q. You mentioned the Wisconsin/Illinois game to your team. What can you do as a coach to avoid those situations?

PJ FLECK: Avoid human nature right, is that what you're asking? How do you help avoid human nature? You do everything you can to bring everything back to your culture, your four walls. I didn't
bring it up prior to the game about Wisconsin, it wasn't that, it just happened to be Wisconsin at that particular time that an Illinois team beat them. I think that just shows the parity throughout our league that every Saturday, no matter who you play, has an opportunity to both you. I love that about our league, that's what make it's so competitive.

I just wanted to make sure they knew that if you're not at your best doesn't matter who you play, ranked opponents, not ranked opponents, conference opponents, non-conference opponents, if you are not at your best you leave yourself open to being beat. And it was just a quick insert right in there right before the pregame talk, Gerrit Chernoff told me right before I went out to them that that score had just happened, so it wasn't about just the Badgers and using that as an example, it wasn't, it was just about, if you're not ready, anything can happen in college football. And it just happened to be that moment, used it, didn't spend long on it at all, threw it out there and then moved on.

Q. The box score, when Paul gave you the box score after the game what's the first thing you looked at?

Q. Quick strike guys and big play guys, does that become a little less relevant?
PJ FLECK: Depends what the score is. I always felt like we have to control the football. I feel like the explosive plays and that's one part of it, but if we're explosive plays over and over and over, then we should score a lot of points and possess the ball over and over by playing really good defense. That's the first thing I always look at just to see what the difference is, by quarter. And then I just look at like pretty much what everybody else looks at total yards, first downs, you look at your third down conversion percentage, look at the turnover margin, you look at those things that really actually matter. But the first thing I always looked at just as a head coach, just how I've been raised in the coaching profession is the time of possession. What it looked like and it's not saying it was good or bad, just what it looked like and what kind of game was it. You remember that, but you also look at it in terms of, okay I can see why we lost the turnover battle -- or not the turnover battle but the time the possession battle -- because of those quick strikes and things that we have.

Q. Still think that's a good indicator of success?
PJ FLECK: I always do, based on how we play the game, because I think you always have to be able to run the football in the Big Ten. I think you have to be able to do that. I'm still old school, I'm a wide receiver guy, but I'm still a little bit old school in terms of -- I don't know even know if you call it old school, just the way I believe in football, running the ball, controlling the clock, grinding out first downs, play action pass, RPO game, run setting up pass. I just feel like you have to be able to do that. So I still think the time of possession, not directly to these guys that we teach is directly tied to winning, but it's tied to how we call a game, how our philosophies are offensively.

Q. The secondary appears to be improving every week, where have you noticed the most growth with that position group?
PJ FLECK: I think Rod Chance, Joe Harasymiak, the coaching that our guys are getting, I'm so glad that we split those two positions up. I think it's the learning's constant, there's no time for a break in a meeting where they're talking to the safeties instead of the corners and the corners instead of the safeties. And I think the teaching has gotten better and those guys have really benefited from that and they have applied the education, they have applied the fundamentals, they applied the detail and I think that's where we made the most growth.

Q. How do you assess how Michael Lance has done?
PJ FLECK: True freshman kicker. Very difficult to come into that role. He didn't have -- and plus he didn't come early, so he was here in the summer and then thrown into a role. He's had some highs, had some lows, but that's the price of success. You got to go through some of the failing to have
success. He's had some really big kicks too. He had a great kick at Fresno State, he doesn't make that one we don't, we're not even talking about what we're talking about these days. He's also had some ones he probably would want back. It's a typical year for a true freshman at kicker.

Same thing when you're talking about young freshman quarterbacks, young freshmen receivers, they have got to fail to become successful, you have to fail to grow. That's part of it. Do you have to have some success too, sure, but you've got to go through both of that. So it's been up-and-down, but I'm proud of the progress he continues to make and the resolve that he's had, he's learning a lot about himself as well.

Q. Special teams, what do you want to see or how do you feel about the return units?
PJ FLECK: I just want to see more consistency, that's all. Just because we haven't taken one back there's -- the punt return we haven't had a lot of opportunities to do that. We either come after it with a block more than we have, or we have been in punt safe more than we were last year, based on the type of game, what they have showed, fake situations, where the ball was placed. So we haven't had as many opportunities as last year. And then we just need more consistency of guys staying on their blocks in the kick return game, being able to create field position. But we also played against some really good kickers as well with our touchbacks and I'll take the ball at the 25 yard line, but I think it's just being able to stay on some blocks, be more consistent and just continue to get better.

Q. Where have we seen some kids taking the red shirt in programs that are maybe not doing as well. Do you worry about coaches, about kids maybe want continuing to take a red shirt to save a year of eligibility when things aren't going the right way?
PJ FLECK: I think the whole red shirt part is open communication from day one. What are your expectations of that particular player. So I meet with all of our freshmen every single week all the way through the first however many weeks they're here. We have individual meetings, we have freshmen meetings, it's kind of like you're a freshman coach as well, right, in a high school type, where you think you have freshman coach, you have a junior varsity and then you have the varsity. You have to look at your team that way at times, as long as everybody understands their expectation for that particular year. Here's what we're going to do with you, this is what I would like to do with you, if I can't do that, I'm not, I'll put you in this role. But there's other people from day one, Tyler Nubin knew, you got to play, we brought you in here to play, you have to play, we're low on depth in some situations on some special teams plus safety, so you got to be ready and we feel like we can do that. With Cam Wiley he knew from day one, I don't want to play you. If I end up playing you I'm going to play you, but I don't want to play you. I think that open, honest communication where, when you have, you're communicating with someone and there's an expectation, and there's this reality between their expectation and what reality really is, that gap in between usually is filled with negativity, somehow, some way, a lack of communication, and that's where you have people not on the same page. I'm not saying that we do that perfectly, but what I am saying is I do everything I can as a head coach and our position coaches to make sure our players are always involved of why. You can ask our players all the time, just ask me why. You can ask why about anything. When we were growing up it was just, because I said. That doesn't fly with these young men in 2019, I got news for you, that does not fly. So they want to know why. And as long as you know why and you tell them why usually you have a pretty good understanding between you two and a mutual agreement of, this is what we're going to do.

Q. Maryland on tape, looks like they have some good athletes but not a lot of consistency there?
PJ FLECK: They have got a lot of injuries too they're going to get a lot of guys back. The inconsistency at times has been lack of quarterback being hurt, running back being hurt, offensive linemen being hurt, wide receivers being hurt, both sides of the ball with some injuries, but now they're getting a lot of those guys back this week. They're very explosive on offense, we all know
about McFarland, what he can do, we have seen a lot of him, very talented runner. They have two
quarterbacks that they will probably both play, one's a little bit more of a runner, can still throw it. The
other one is a little bit more of a passer, but can still run it. And then when you look at their offensive
line they get some guys back that are really big, strong, long, athletic. And then their tight end are
involved. But they have a wide receiver, talking about being a first round pick and he is exceptional.
Think of like Rashod Bateman, Tyler Johnson, but two, three inches taller. Rangy, long, he's a really
explosive playmaker for them.

Defensive side of the ball they have transfers from Clemson and Florida State, Ohio State, really
good ball players, they're very athletic. This is a, this is the most athletic team we have played up to
this point in terms of athleticism and we got our work cut out for us for sure. They're a really good
football team. They have proven that a lot of times throughout the year, scoring 70 points, they can
put up points in a hurry, they rely a lot on the explosive plays and they have got explosive playmakers
everywhere.

Q. With Kamal a game-time decision how have you seen Mariano and Braelen and Thomas
Rush develop here this season?
PJ FLECK: They have gotten a lot better, they have had to grow up fast. Mariano especially, same
thing with Braelen, those are two guys we really got to lean on, not only for this week but our future. I
don't want them being anybody else but themselves and be the best version of them self. Nobody has
to be Kamal, nobody has to be somebody else, just be the best version of yourself and continue to
grow. Kamal being a game time decision, if there's one person I don't worry about practicing, knows
the defense just as good as us, it's Kamal Martin. So as we keep going forward we'll make a decision
on that, but we had some really good news, which I know all of you reported on, which was really
good for us and really excited for him as well, because that can be scary for a young man, that's had
the career he's had and the success he's having this year. But the other guys have to be able to step
in, step up, if he doesn't play, which we feel they're capable of doing.

Q. Chris Williamson is a guy who doesn't get talked about that often. Yet he's top-3 in tackles,
sacks and interceptions on your defense. What you can you say about him?
PJ FLECK: I think he's matured. We talk about maturity is when doing what you have to do becomes
doing what you want to do. I think he's made huge strides in that department. When he got here what
he had to do maybe wasn't what he wanted to do. And he's completely changed that way. He's
become a leader, he takes care of his body, we have been able it play a lot more nickel than we did
dlast year just because he gives you that linebacker length, but he gives you the skill set of a corner,
safety in coverage. He's one of the smarter players we have on defense. He's really grown up and
taken advantage of his opportunities. He's one of funniest people I've ever met. He keeps things light
at times. I think he is a --- he cuts the tension at times, sometimes when he needs to, sometimes
maybe not when he needs to. But I love that. I would rather have that that way than the other way. He
really enjoys playing the game, he enjoys being the teammate of everybody and he's a connector and
he's gotten a lot better this year.

Q. What byproducts or needle moving do you want to see with the mental health awareness?
PJ FLECK: The whole part of that word is awareness. Too many times I think in our society we think
that young people should grow up how we grew up. I just don't agree with that. I think times change,
change is inevitable. I'm very thankful to work here because our athletic director, our president are
always behind resources, how can we give them more resources. Not, you have to go here, you have
to go see this person. But wherever our players turn, I feel, and we're always making it better, I want
to make it better, and continue to make it better, but wherever they turn they have a resource for help,
no matter what it is.

Whether it's mental health or some other type of topic to talk about, they have resources. And some
people feel like too many resources is a bad thing. I don't believe that. Tell that to some people who have lost their children because of mental health. My job is to be able to educate and teach. And my job as a head football coach is to provide opportunities and resources for whatever the needs are of our children, of our 125 football players. That is my responsibility. It's not to say they have to, it's not to sit there and be the doctor. It's to be able to say, in our program that's a holistic program, that's a life football program, a life program, that you can turn anywhere and get the help you need and the help that you have been asked to take, if from the professionals. And that way I can put my head on the pillow at night saying, we're doing everything we can to help them become better in their lives in every area of their life, academically, athletic, socially, spiritually. So that's what we want to be able to maybe push. It's not just about, you have to do this, because again, Doctor Carly and Doctor Justin are two of our mental health specialists and they're tremendous. We have coaches for a positions, we have fundamentals and techniques for linebacker play and defensive line play, well, where's the brain coach? The most powerful tool we all have as a human species is our brain. Where is that coach? Because everything goes through there, before we make decisions, before we can do that football-wise, but we got to be right as people first, to be the best football players we can be. And that's what we want to be able to drive forward is this awareness and the resources that we have, and Doctor Carly and Doctor Justin and their company do a great job with our football players. I'm so thankful that we have them in our organization, so glad we have Mike Sypniak and the trainers that we have that are always alert. That we have our board of directors meeting, that we have every Monday with me, that we talk about every player on the team, just in case I miss something, our coaches miss something, what does our trainer see, what does our Athletes in Action or what does our nutritionist see, it's all the non-coaches meeting on Monday morning -- and I know I'm kind of rambling on this but I think it's really important -- that to say, if we miss something, what did you see, did you hear somebody got, their girlfriend broke up with them or a relationship's going bad or something happened back home that they didn't allow to us see, but they told somebody else. Well that way they feel comfortable going to somebody that's a professional and say, hey, I think you might need to look at so and so. And that way it's not just on the coaches, it's around the whole support system that we provide our student athletes that give them the ability to read body language, to ask the right questions, to be able to dive into these young people's lives to get the most out of them, mentally, physically and emotionally.

So I know I went on for a long time, but I'm very passionate about it. I was a student athlete and I wish I had the resources that our players have here at the University of Minnesota. I wish I did. Because if this isn't right (points to head) it's very difficult to be the best you can be.

Q. Rachel talked with your team before. How much has her message impacted them?
PJ FLECK: It's not just her message it's her messages, she spoke to our teams numerous times. A lot of our players have very personal relationships with her in terms of being able to share information with her that maybe they haven't shared with a lot of other people. I think it's important to put other resources in front of them, that have voices. I'm really proud of Rachel, she became a really good friend of Heather and I and our family and for her being an advocate of mental health and a lot of other topics that relate to our student athletes, she has a huge voice in college football, she does a tremendous job, and for her to be able to take her path and her platform and to move it to this direction and to this awareness, I give her a lot of credit for doing that and I wish more people would do that.

So again, we're just, it's a small part, but it's really important to our program, it's really important to our players, I feel, and I feel like it's necessary for us to be able to help her movement.