P.J. FLECK: Thanks for being here. Happy homecoming. Looking forward to having a lot of our own back, even our local alum, having them at the game, having them around all week. Just saw Ben Utecht. He was over at the radio show. So it was good to see him.

Funny thing about homecoming, we have a lot of freshmen -- it happens every single year, my seventh year being head coach -- every year, there’s one freshman that walks in my office and asks, when’s the dance? And I look at him like are you serious or are you actually -- I'm not telling you who it is. I don't want to embarrass him. But I had that happen.

There's no gym. There's no streamers. We don't have to set up the gym and make the Kool-Aid and all that other stuff, but it happens every year. I thought it would be fun to share that with you for homecoming.

We're excited to be back at home, TCF Stadium, still celebrating ten years with TCF Bank, and Craig Dahl and all he's done for TCF Bank. Just want to thank him again.

It's good to come into this game 0-0, and we continue to think that way. We want to be better today than we were yesterday. We were able to find a way to be 1-0 in the Purdue season. There was a lot of really good things in that game, a lot of things we've got to correct and fix, but we're on to Illinois. With that said, I'll open it up for questions.

Q. P.J., when you talk about the 78 percent, in each game where has the tackles gone in each game? And obviously against Purdue, where was that?
P.J. FLECK: We lost the tackle battle with Purdue. We are 2-2 in our four games. But the others, we've won them. The only one that we've had to worry about the 22 percent -- so if you come to our facility now, there's a plaque that says 22 percent on it, and it shows all the mistakes we made at Fresno State and still found a way to win, but you don't want to live in the world of 22 percent because it's 22 percent. You want to live in the 78 world, right?

But we show that even really good football teams, at times, if you do happen to live in the 22 percent world, you can find a way to win, and when you can find a way to win and you're living in that world, you have a chance to be a pretty good football team. You just want to get out of that as fast as you can.

But the missed tackles, we had way too many missed tackles in this particular game, which was addressed in today's practice.

Q. In the other game against Fresno State, how many did you have?    
P.J. FLECK: I don't know off the top of my head. I'd have to go back and look. I don't want to give you any inaccurate information.

Q. P.J., on the missed tackles, it seemed like guys were in position a lot of times but just didn’t wrap up. How is it when you're not tackling in camp, not tackling in practice, to be sharp on your technique and wrap up?
P.J. FLECK: There's a few things. One, it's wrapping up, but the same guy wrapping up is also going for a strip at times, which I get. We want the ball as a program. But the same guy, when we wrap it up and we hold it up, the second guy wants to come in and second man strip it at times. We're trying to do all of it in one sequence, and they're falling out of tackle. It's happened numerous times. That's what we're working on getting fixed.

Tackling in 2019 with practice, with concussions and injuries and different things like that, I think everyone in the country has adapted how they practice a little bit. For us, we use a whole tackling circuit. Whether you are tackling somebody head on or tackling somebody from the side or now you're behind the guy and you have to sweep the ankle, we work on all three of those tackles all the time, the rugby type tackle, all of that.

You work on it in drills, but it's hard to simulate it at full speed all the time in the season, so you try to do everything you can to do that out of the season.

But we have to be better at it. I think the game's evolved too. It's not just we're the only football team that's missed some tackles. The game has gone sideline to sideline, goal line to goal line, and coaches are really smart. Get really good, athletic people in space and make a one-on-one play in space with a really good athlete on a really good athlete.

The days of the Oklahoma drill -- and that's where you got all your tough tackling -- the game's evolved. The game's changed. You have to be able to tackle in space better, and we have to work on that.

Q. What was the thought process behind shaking up the interior of the offensive line, and how did you think the O-line performed against Purdue?

P.J. FLECK: I think we were better. We still have so much room for improvement. The sky's the limit for that group. We were better, and we're getting better. Again, not a senior on that offensive line, but they're learning how to play together collectively, and they're working really hard at it. That's what I love about it.

It's one thing to say, okay, here's our issues, but if you're not working really hard at them, nothing's going to change. I feel like every week we're working on it and getting better and better, and that's all I want them to focus on. Be this much better today than we were yesterday, and if these are the things we need to get better at, let's focus on just these right now. We'll focus on them and get better at that.

In terms of the rotational stuff, I felt like we had five guys playing, one redshirt freshman, one a sophomore who's only played for three years, football in general, and then moved one of our best guards to center, and I felt like, if we can get John Michael Schmitz in there to provide maybe a break for one of the guys once in a while, but also get John Michael's toughness on the offensive line as well. I think that's what he provides, his leverage. He's a really good center, and he deserves to be out there as well, be able to rotate with the interior guys, give Blaise a quick breather and get him back out there.

But I thought it worked really well. I thought they played well together, and we're going to continue to do that moving forward. How much we do it, it's up to how guys play. The better you play, the more you're going to play.

But I think it's great to create some depth as well. We've come a long way in two years on the offensive line, from where we were when we got here to where we are now. That's only 2 1/2 years of progress. We've got to continue to get better and continue to find how the right pieces fit together.
Q. How much do you use Illinois last year for this team and Reggie Corbin specifically?
P.J. FLECK: It's a completely different year, so when we're talking about last year, I don't talk about last year with our team. This isn't -- we don't talk about words like revenge or things like that. Those things do not exist in our program. We've got to be better today than we were yesterday.

Corbin is a dynamic athlete. He is one of their best football players, but so is Dre right behind him, so is Smalling, so is the transfer wideout from USC, so is the offensive line who have played together for some years now. Their center may be one of the best guys I've seen on film at center in any year at any level. Their quarterback is playing at a really high level. He can distribute the ball. He's a really good passer and a really good football player.

We've got to focus on everybody. It's not just one guy anymore. It's everybody.

Q. What are you seeing from St-Juste since he's joined the team?
P.J. FLECK: We see length. He's got to be more consistent, but we see him being able to get in the rotation and working and getting himself on the field. He can run. He's long. He made some really good plays. He's just got to continue to get better every single day at everything, whether it's down the field covering, whether it's making the play on the ball, whether it's being that much quicker on his break foot, drive foot to be able to make the play on the ball instead of being that far behind, but he's a wonderful teammate, and he works hard every day to get better.

Doesn't talk a lot. He's a pretty quiet guy, but he knows what he wants to do, and he knows where he wants to go, and he's a wonderful teammate.

Q. Expecting Mo to be back in the running back rotation this week?
P.J. FLECK: Expecting it to be, yeah. We've expected him to be back probably the last week and a half and had some setbacks here and there, which happens based on the injury he has at times, but I'd expect him back. I want him back. He wants to be back. We're working on it.

Q. With Shannon, it seemed like he was super excited. Was he maybe trying to go -- his mind was going faster than his body?
P.J. FLECK: He was amped up, and he admitted it. I remember the first time -- we had a Sunday night practice. Remember I told you we had the Sunday night live scrimmage we always do and put him in for about eight plays. After two plays, he was already exhausted because he was so amped up just to be in there, just to get live reps again.

And I think he had a little bit of that on Saturday as well. Plus he knew he had a pitch count, and he knew the number of the pitch count, so all of a sudden, he knows, I've got to have a home run every time I touch the ball. No, you don't. Just take what the defense gives you. Follow your reads, press the hips, go ahead and be Shannon Brooks. Don't be anything else but Shannon Brooks.

I think this week he's completely settled down. He's got the newness of being back out of his system, and now we continue to move forward.

Q. Does he get more snaps?
P.J. FLECK: I'd like him to get more snaps, yes. I'm not in charge of that, but I could see him getting a lot more snaps next week.

Q. With the success you've had with the slant routes, particularly with those wide receivers, is that something you guys have just liked as a part of your scheme, or is that something you've sort of tailored to the personnel you have that's able to run that play?
P.J. FLECK: I think it's a mixture of both. Whether it's play actions or RPOs or true quick game, we felt like we could attack the middle of the field, and that's what it presented. There's other times where that's not necessarily there, and you've got to attack the perimeter more on the outside. You're doing something to set something else up. You're doing one thing to get the next thing, and everybody's going back and forth. It's a cat and mouse game from coordinator to coordinator.

I was just really happy with the amount of explosive plays we had that we executed, and our players last year, those same wideouts, we dropped six passes against Purdue last year, and they were freshmen. They weren't ready to explode, right? These guys are growing up and maturing at a rapid rate, and that's credit to Matt Simon and Kirk Ciarrocca, our players. They deserve all the credit. They're growing up and showing what kind of unit we can be as wide receivers and showing what kind of team we can be on offense.

But we've got to keep getting better. That's not the peak of where we even want to be. One thing I'll say about Tanner is we're walking off the field together, and he looks at me and says, I can be better. I said, I have to tell you that. You don't tell me that right after the game. You're not the one to say that. That's for Sunday. Let's celebrate now.

But that's the way our players are thinking. They constantly go back to what we can do better. That's the focus of the program. I know it sounds cliche and coach speak, and it's not fancy in the media, but that's how we run the program. Today we need to be better in all four areas of our life than we were yesterday. That's the only thing we can focus on. That eliminates the stress. That eliminates outside false expectations. It keeps everything centered for them on our vision of what we want to become, and I think our wideouts are starting to understand that.

**Q. Do you think those big plays will start to loosen up things for the run game?**
P.J. FLECK: We think so. We felt like we needed to do that. We felt like we needed to do that last year. We just weren't capable of doing it yet. If you become one dimensional and people know you're one dimensional, you're easy to stop. I shouldn't say easy to stop. You're easier to stop, right? Because you can still be really good and throw the ball 70 times and score 60 points on somebody when you have really good athletes.

For us, the way our system works is we have to be balanced. We have to be able to run. We have to be able to pass. Then as we go through the game, what's going to need more? What's going to tip the scale? Is it going to be 70/30 one way or the other, 90/10, or is it still 50/50? And the game presents itself in the game plan of how your players play. I think that changes things as we go through.

We want to be balanced. We always want to be balanced. But we felt going into this game, the way people had been playing us, we had to be able rely on the pass game to soften up the run game. I thought Coach Ciarrocca and his staff did a really nice job of executing that.

**Q. How have you seen Tanner grow just as a quarterback and a leader?**
P.J. FLECK: This goes back. I've known Tanner for five years. I've known him longer than any other player we have on this football team. The reason we recruit the Tanner in the first place was because he was a winner. We felt that Western Michigan, when we were there, we hadn't won a championship since '88, and we were sitting there thinking, we need to have somebody in here, when he has an opportunity to play, that takes us from -- and understands what it's like to be 1-11. Understands what it's like to turn a program around.

Zach Terrell did that for us, but we knew Tanner could be the next one to take over for that as well. When we came here and we offered Tanner, we felt like it was a really good fit because he had been through that as well. It's a very similar situation. We hadn't won a championship since '67 here, and it
needs a special characteristic. It needs a personality. It needs somebody who's been there and done that because it's not easy to do, because everything's going to tell you why you can't do it, and you have to have enough confidence to know why you can do it when everyone else is saying here's why you won't.

I think that's what the intangible part of him and why it sets his intangible part apart from other people at times is because he has a lot of confidence in himself. He is deep in his faith. He plays for more than just himself, whether it's his teammates or his faith, life is way bigger than Tanner Morgan, and he knows that. But he constantly wants to be better every single day, and he makes everybody else around him better.

When you have somebody like that, that's infectious, and it's real. It's not fake. It's not coach speak. It's real. That's who he is, and he's a winner. Now, he throws for 95 percent, and maybe the greatest performance in terms of completion percentage in the history of our conference, right? And now everybody's going to think that has to happen every single week, but I promise you this, he feels like he can do that every single week. That's the way his mind is.

His response mechanisms are different. Whether it's a good play or a bad play, it's over. He can throw an interception, and the next play you would think he just threw for 500 yards and 10 touchdowns, the amount of confidence he has in himself and that he gives to everybody else. He's a giver. He's been able to lead our football team through a lot of different things and a lot of doubts here and there.

But the one thing I love about him is I never have to worry about him reading something and believing that. I never have to worry about him thinking that it's bigger than it is or he's better than he is. He's going to be exactly who he is today. He's going to change his best. He's going to be an elite messenger of the culture, and he's going to continue to represent the University of Minnesota, past, present, future, the right way.

**Q. When you go about recruiting someone like Tanner, it can be hard to scout those intangibles, right? Like being a winner, it's not a stat you can quantify, and other coaches maybe kind of overlook that or saw his size and didn't really look any further into it. How did you, I guess, find those things out?**

**P.J. FLECK:** I think that's the advantage of being an underdog yourself. I'm not the flashiest looking five-star recruit. I got a chance to play in the NFL for a short period of time, and if you play in the NFL, that means you could have played anywhere in college football, if you're good enough to play in that league, right?

When you look at it, when you're an underdog yourself and you know why you were passed up, I think at times you look and value more in the intangible part than just the physical part. Do you need the physical part? Yes. If he was 5'1", would we have recruited him? Probably not. But he had just enough height and just enough arm strength and just enough of these measurables, it was, all right, his intangibles are off the charts. So if the intangibles are off the charts and the other parts are good enough, then we can develop him into something that's even better than what you see.

One thing I say is coaches -- the original name for a coach was the horse and carriage and the coach and took people from where they were to where they dreamed of being. Coach Ciarrocca is a great example of that for Tanner. They've known each other for a long time. It's not just me knowing him for five years. It's Kirk Ciarrocca knowing him for five years.

When you have somebody who you call within 24 hours and tell him you're reporting here in like 18 hours and I just took a different job. I'm going to offer you to come to that place, and if you'd like to,
great. If you don't, that's fine too. Never see it. Never visit here. And then without hesitation, said I'm in. I even said, you want to check with your parents? Do you want to tell them where you're going? You want to know anything about Minnesota? I said, if you do, I can't help you because I don't know anything either.

That's faith. That's belief. That's what it's going to take to get to somewhere we haven't been for a very long time, at least what I believe. I'm not saying what I believe is always just right for everybody to believe that, but it's right for what we're doing right now, and he fits that.

Q. When you were recruiting Bateman, did you think if he got a little stronger, little bigger, this is what it would lead to?
P.J. FLECK: I think wide receivers are something that we have a keen eye for, whether it's Matt Simon or Luke Getsy when he was at Western Michigan with us, or Kirk Ciarrocca, who's a former wide receiver coach himself, whether it's my background with wide receivers. I remember the first time we saw Rashod down at camp, I thought, oh, boy. First off, we've got to get this kid committed as fast as we possibly can and make sure nobody else sees him. You can't hide people these days, but we've got a better chance of holding on to him committed than not committed.

When you start to see Rashod, Rashod wanted to be part of something. He wanted to be part of something bigger than himself. This has become a common theme. This isn't about just running a 40. This isn't about just being a good receiver. It's about these young men that we're bringing in -- and I'm not saying we're 100 percent right and hit on everybody.

But when you start getting your core nucleus of guys that you're recruiting and they want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and they're not afraid to come to a Minnesota when they have 40 offers and can go anywhere in the country, but they want to be a part of something here, then you're on the right track.

You could see the special skill set he had, and you could also see the special desire he had to be the best. Not saying the best compared to everyone else, but to be the best he could be. The amount of how humble he was towards his family, how caring he was, not only to his mom, but to also the other people that raised him and Mr. Shane and Mindy. You start to see how the family dynamic works, and you realize why he's such a special young man.

Then if you just get enough special people together, you can start accomplishing things. Again, this isn't just one game and that's it. This isn't just a one season thing. We're hopefully accumulating things over and over and over where you can sustain the ability to have chances to win championships or chances to have success, and it's because of people that you have that, and it's because of people like Tanner and Rashod Bateman and guys like that that take chances on us and say, I believe in what you're doing.

Because there's enough people out there probably sitting there saying, are you going to believe that? Are you really going to row the boat? Are you really going to think that he's like that all the time? Are you really? It's cold there 12 months a year.

Oh, really? Come over. That's why we had 16 commitments in June. They all got on the lake and realized this isn't what everybody else said. So, again, it's having those people who truly value their own opinions and don't let other people affect them. We're going to need a lot of people like that here.

Q. What are your impressions about California passing a law that they're going to start allowing paid players or athletes in the future?
P.J. FLECK: I think I just got, while I was here, I got a text too that a representative from Minnesota
said we're going to follow suit. I don't know enough about it, to be honest with you. We're game planning Illinois, and that is the truth. I haven't read enough about it. I know where college football is headed. Change is inevitable. Like I said yesterday, whether it's the forward pass or whether you start getting into whatever of college football, the change is inevitable. It's always going to change -- cost of attendance and systems, the air raid system, and all these things.

So change is inevitable. One thing I know about the University of Minnesota since I've been here, we're going to do everything we possibly can do to provide the most unique and elite experience -- academically, athletically, socially, and spiritually -- for our student-athletes. I know that for a fact. Now, what comes along with all the legislation? I know the University of Minnesota is going to work directly in tide with the Big Ten and the NCAA to provide that, the best opportunities and the best experiences our players can have in what they're allowed to do.

So I don't know enough about it, I'll be honest with you. That's where we're at. That's at least where I'm at. When I know enough about it, I'll give you an opinion. I just don't know enough about it right now, especially during the Illinois season.