

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

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South Bend, Indiana, USA

Coach Marcus Freeman

Press Conference



Texas A&M - 41, Notre Dame - 40

Q. What do you see from that side of the ball and why is it not living up to recent standards?

MARCUS FREEMAN: It's not good enough. Not good enough in the run and pass, not good enough getting pressure on the quarterback. We had some unexpected injuries but it doesn't matter. You're on the field we've got to put you in position to make plays.

We didn't play well enough -- I thought the second half we came out and played better. We started the second half better, but I put them in a bad situation. We didn't convert the fourth-and-one offensively. They got the ball, I think at the minus 49 and ended up getting a field goal. But then the last three, that series and the two series after that, you give up another field goal, and then TD at the end of the game.

So it's a lot of work. It's not good enough. I haven't watched it. I can't tell you specifically who, what scheme. I'm not blaming anybody. We gotta do better it's not good enough.

Q. You knew how hard these first two games would be. But how do you compartmentalize 0-2 with the talent you guys have and a whole season ahead of you and where do you go from here?

MARCUS FREEMAN: You gotta go to work and practice and get better. We're 0-2. So what do you control? You control getting better and getting ready for the next one. I can't sit here and dwell on being 0-2 as much as I need to dwell on how do we find ways to improve. That's what I need to dwell on is how do we get better. How do we evaluate what we're doing, why things are and aren't working and how do we attack them and get better?

So we're 0-2, lost to two good opponents. We're guaranteed 12, that's what we always say. We've got the next one coming up soon.

Q. What did Tyler say happened on the PAT?

MARCUS FREEMAN: I didn't talk to him. I didn't ask him. I was trying to get ready for the next play.

Q. I didn't know if you saw him after the game. You talked about after the Miami game, you said all our goals are in front of us. Now that you're 0-2 and you don't have the conference affiliation, are your goals still in front of you?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Sure. We've got to focus on getting better for the next week. The future is uncertain. I don't know what's the playoff number. It doesn't matter. We need to focus on getting better and getting ready for next week.

Q. How frustrating has it been that the pass defense just couldn't sort of come through tonight? Why did A&M have so much success there?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Probably multiple, different things. Early in the game probably playing -- we were playing a little bit more zone and not getting enough pressure on the guy and some guys were running free, made some big plays. Kind of attacked Mark on the one, (indiscernible) games. And he's got to learn. That's it. We've got you out there for a reason. Go out there again. And if they throw a double move on you, go make the play. You've got to learn sometimes by losing.

But I don't know specifically like why all the pass yardage was happening. I know there were some big plays. That's the number one reason -- it is the explosive plays. Why were there explosive plays? I'm sure it's about pressure, I'm sure it's about the coverage. There's probably a lot of reasons. I'll let you know when I see you guys on Monday. But it wasn't good enough with the standard.

Q. Was DeVonta Smith able to play?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Injured. I think he got hurt. He was sore but I think in pregame warm-up he rolled his ankle or something like that.

Q. With CJ Carr, what's the difference between stuff



you can live with that you just have to with a young quarterback versus the upside that you sort of see flash from time to time?

MARCUS FREEMAN: You've got to live with the tipped ball that turned into a pick. I don't know if it's his fault or the O line's fault for letting the D lineman get his hands on it. But I thought he played really well. There's nothing that I can think of off the top of my head where I say you've got to live with that.

He did a heck of a job tonight. He led our offense, protected the football. Was putting the ball in great places for wideouts to make some plays, protection wise. That's a tough defense and they did a good job protecting in third down. He's playing well man.

Q. As you evaluate your defense moving forward, is there any chance that you would change how it's called? Like, who calls it?

MARCUS FREEMAN: No, no. It's not the call. It's the execution, and I've always believed that. I think sometimes calling things -- I've been a play caller -- at times can be overrated as much as it's the execution of that play call. So that's what we've got to evaluate.

Maybe we'll look and say we probably shouldn't have called this in that situation. There's things you always look at. At the end of the day, why aren't we able to execute in a way that we believe we need to and should? That's the question we've got to get answered.

Q. The targeting ejection on Don, did your guys upstairs have an idea if that was warranted and just how difficult was it to overcome that?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Is it warranted? They called it. They said he ducked his head, lowered his head, led with the crown of his helmet. I can't -- that's a great explanation. That's the definition of targeting. I don't know if I saw it from my point of view, but they got a different point of view. So it's not the reason we lost.

It's frustrating because that led, I think, to a field goal, that drive. I think that led to a field goal, and that was 15 yards that we didn't want to give up.

But it doesn't matter. Like, you've got to -- he's out, Don's out, next guy in, execute. That's got to be the mentality. It's not if Don didn't get ejected for targeting we would have stopped them on it? No. This is what happened. How do we make sure we get it done with whoever is in the game.

Q. The direct snap that you went to, seemed to work a

little more as the game went on. What about this game made that a good fit and that's something you see moving forward?

MARCUS FREEMAN: We're just trying to look for a way in versus challenging all things to get some rush yardage. It wasn't just short yardage, it was mainly short yardage, but you can get the ball into J Love's hand and let him go to work and do some things. We'll see if we expand the package, we continue to use it.

I always believe in fix the things that you're not having success in and you enhance the things you're doing well. We did that well, for the most part, so I'm sure we'll find ways to enhance it.

Q. As the pass rush kind of struggled to get pressure on Reed tonight, did you try anything or try anything different to create pressure and why did you feel like it wasn't getting home?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, we threw all the calls that we have that we think will try to create some pressure and force the quarterback to go to a place we want him to go. There was times towards the end of the game I thought we did a better job at that.

But we get beat with an explosive play because we bring six and we're playing zone behind it, we don't get enough pressure; the quarterback extends the play. It's like you've got to be very strategic in terms of rush and coverage work together. If you're just worried about the rush, then you're going to fail at the coverage aspect. If you just want to drop eight and cover all the areas, then you're not going to get a great rush.

So we have to get better at both rush and coverage. And I don't have the answer for you right now like what specifically we're going to do, but we have to get better and we have to identify what it is.

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