

# University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

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South Bend, Indiana, USA

## Coach Marcus Freeman

### Press Conference



Notre Dame 56, Purdue 30

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, you know, as I told the guys in the locker room, this is why with you work hard. This is why you spend a lot of hours trying to come up with a plan that you're able to find a way to be victorious.

You got enjoy it and celebrate it. If you don't, it's going to be a miserable, miserable profession for coaches but also the game for young people.

So I told them, let's enjoy this thing, but it's momentary gratification. We understand this isn't the only reason we work for. We enjoy it in the moment, but the things that we desire are going to take delayed gratification.

Got to keep working and find ways to improve, areas to improve, and there are plenty of them, and get back to work for the next opponent here before we know it.

But again, wasn't perfect. You guys saw it. I saw it. There is work to do. There is things we got to continue to try to get fixed. We got to get healthy and, you know, we'll come up with the right formula to give us an tune to be successful as we get ready for next Saturday.

**Q. What was your message to the team coming out of the delay and the length of time it was; how different that whole period of time was I'm sure.**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I think it was different for each group. For the offense I think first four times they had the ball they scored and right before the delay we turn over the ball. I said, we can't have the detrimental mistakes, errors, no matter whose fault it is. We got to make sure we take care of the football. When we do and we're executing, we went 4 for 4 on touchdown drives.

And then definitely you got to do your job. You can't do somebody else's job. You can't try to make a play. You just got trust your technique and do your job and win that play.

I think sometimes they're getting frustrated about the last play that it affects the current play. You're trying to do something that isn't your job to do.

And then special teams, we got to -- the punt fake on us isn't something anybody was happy about. We got to be better. They got us, man. It was a good call.

You know, so that was my message for each group, for everybody, we got to go attack.

**Q. How would you assess the overall play of the defense? Gave up a lot in the first half; almost nothing in the second half.**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, I mean, just, again, as you look at the first half it's more so the explosive plays we got continue to try to decrease.

You know, I watched them burn the brake. Again, I can't remember every single one, but it was just -- it was actually -- here is what I remember: It was a marriage of the front end coverage. There is times in coverage if you're playing man or zone, if the quarterback can step up and scramble and extend plays somebody will be open.

When we do pressure and we bring five, we can't allow the quarterback to sit back there, especially in man coverage, or somebody will be coming open. We have to do a better job marrying up or coverage and our front and make sure if we're going to play coverage. We're going to play with seven guys in in coverage, then four guys are going to have to get some type of pressure on the quarterback, but also we got to understand, okay, we might have to cover a little bit longer.

If we're going bring five guys in pressure then we shouldn't have to cover that long because we have to get pressure. And so as you look at the first half, I think that was the thing -- second half the defense I thought after the two-minute drive which that's the one that really hurt me. Us, not me.

That drive, I don't think there was anything that we could -- we tried cover one, cover two, cover three, cover four. What happens is you start to panic. Okay, this coverage



isn't working. Let's try this. This isn't working. Let's try this.

Then you're doing nothing. You're doing nothing. They're going to make plays. They're going to make some plays. You got to trust, hey, this is our game plan, this is what we can do, and execute.

You got to trust your players to go out there and get it done. I thought after that they did a really good job to that last drive.

And I felt awful. You know, it's like the decision, do you go for it on fourth down and just try to extend the game, run out the clock, or do you punt the ball and give your defense a better chance.

I should have been smart and said, you know what, let's pin them back and make them go the whole length of the field. What I'm not upset about, I know I'm rambling, fourth and one and fourth and two and I said, no, I want to kick. Schmidty needs that. We got a freshman that hasn't kicked live. I know he didn't make it, but he's going to be better because of it, because he failed in this situation, because of that experience.

And so I don't regret that one, but I do regret not punting it on the fourth and four.

**Q. You had the -- it was 28-16 and then 35-23 again and then and you rip off 21 points in about nine minutes of game time. What's the significance of not only getting a win, but...**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, man, our offense was explosive, man. And I say that not like explosive they're getting big plays. They can if they need to. They're able to control the clock, the line of scrimmage. We did a really good job perimeter blocking today. That's detrimental to a defense.

I know the explosive plays are detrimental. A team what can just run the ball, ten, four, six, 12, I don't know, it's tough, man, on the defense.

For our offense to do and hand the ball to the official is something that I'm really proud of. We put a lot of work into it. We have to be able to do that if we want to have success this season.

**Q. A ton of new personnel particularly in your secondary tonight. How do you evaluate those guys getting their most extensive action to date versus continuing to have some issues in had pass defense?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, again, Lenny, Leonard and Devonta were both questionable going into the game. We knew that. Devonta practiced. We just didn't know if he was going to be able to play. They couldn't go.

But like we have a lot of confidence in these guys that we have on the field, Dallas and Mark and some of those young guys. But they got to go through the growing -- it is what it is.

Like, you know, there is not many freshmen that get a chance to come in and start -- play as a true freshman at Notre Dame. They got here in June and we need them and we trust them. There will be a time where Mark Zackery gives up a big play and next time knocks it down, and Dallas Golden will intercept the ball on a fade ball and next time catch it.

That's going to help them get better. What you never want is to lose. We know that. We don't do things to lose. But to gain that valuable experience and come out with a convincing victory like we did, as a coach you're like, okay, we got better in multiple ways today.

You know, that's a part of the growth that our team is going to have and these guys will have.

**Q. Earlier this week you talked about kind of searching for the answers that will lead you guys to playing well on Saturdays within practices. One, do you feel like you took steps in this area specifically defensively with the coverage, and did you learn anything extra tonight? Do you feel like you took steps with the coverage?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, well, you know, I think we did. We got better. In practice I think we're better coaches because of what I said in my press conference, to become more consistent you got to refuse to tolerate things that are below the standard. I think we were even more intentional about that this week, and I think our players understand that.

There is still areas we got to improve at. It's just going to take time. There is no perfect answer or I promise you we would do it. It's going to take time and getting some of those guys back. We know that. We're going to need some of these younger guys, too.

Like I said I think earlier, what we can't do is panic. And I'm talking to myself, too. I can be the first one to get frustrated and say, what are we doing? Let's change the call. No. You can't panic. You got to trust the game plan that you have and trust the guys you have out there, and understand their offense is going to make some plays;



continue to believe in what you see.

**Q. How difficult is it to try to adhere to an identity when that panic starts to set in, and what would you say the identity of that Notre Dame defense is right now?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I think we've always been a defense that wants to be attacking, wants the ability to stop the run. I've always said we got to be able to play man coverage, but know that zone has to be something in our package.

So that's just who we are, what I believe in. We're going to play with great fundamentals. That's important. So is that still our core identity? Absolutely. We will never stray away from that. But we got to continue to work at it and work at it. The outcome will be better. They're getting better. We're getting better. The outcome will be better as long as we're committed to putting the right work in.

**Q. CJ only threw 12 passes but only missed on two of them. Wondering what did you see from him during the week and what you saw from him tonight in terms of his progress and where you feel like this is headed with him?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Just the guy has been different from the minute he walked on campus. Like he is an ultra talented individual and ultra competitive individual that uses that competitive spirit to prepare. When you add all those things together you get an output that you seen in three games. I've seen it for a year and a half.

But, yes, he's blessed talent, but the competitive spirit that he has and work that he puts into it, I see him preparing -- he goes to class; after class he's spending time studying film. I see the guy getting better. He has a high ceiling and is right now playing high and he's got way more to go.

I mean, that's a credit to the preparation and the work he puts into it.

**Q. Following up on the young DBs, did you see something in their play tonight that led you to believe, wow, when we're healthy there is something here that we can use? Specifically with Dallas. Nichols you don't see a lot of freshmen. Nichols, what gave you the confidence that he can handle that?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Well, I think Dallas is a guy that since he got here in June he's played boundary corner, played field corner, and now he is playing nickel. He doesn't bat an eye and doesn't complain and say woe is me. Yes, coach. Teach me. Make me better.

He's blessed with a skillset that very probably few people have, but he also has the mentality of he wants to be coached and he wants to be better and wants to find ways to improve.

And so he is on the bumpy road like we all are, right? But because of what he did today, because of the work he puts in, the good and the bad, he's at a higher level on the bumpy road, a higher place.

And so that's what young people, that's what I, that's what we all have to understand, is that the discomfort, the struggles, at the end of the day they make you better, you know.

I talk about the pain that you feel after loss is there for a reason: To make you uncomfortable so you do the uncomfortable things to make it go away. It's no different than Dallas Golden gets beat on a ball. It stinks. It's uncomfortable. Put the work in to make sure that doesn't happen again, and that's what he's going to do.

I was really happy. I told him when he made that interception, that's delayed gratification. There is a lot more to come.

**Q. Jadarian being able to do what he does on nine carries tonight, what good things did you see from him tonight and what does it mean for your offense when he's running like that?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I'll say this every time you ask about JD: Yes, he is talented but he's the most unselfish individual, along with others on our team. That's what I want to point out. Not his great play. Not his touchdowns. But that guy, that individual could have the ball be on the field every single play. What does he do? He says, coach, if you want J-Love in there, put him in there. When I get my opportunity I'm going to make the most of it.

If we have a team of unselfish individuals like that and they continue to be selfless and sacrifice, we'll be pretty special. But that's what I always praise about that guy. That's the trait that I want our players to emulate. Not the talent, the touchdowns. It's the unselfishness that he displays.

**Q. Looked like on defense there was still a little talking after the play, guys not being on the same page. Where do you feel like that confusion or lack of clarity is coming from and how can you get it fixed?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I don't know. I don't know if there was confusion. It wasn't much confusion when I was on the headset with them.



It was, you know, maybe a couple times somebody didn't do exactly what they're supposed to do. I don't think they're confused. That's what I want to make sure I say.

We just aren't executing at the level we want to. But it isn't like our guys don't know what they're doing. They know what they're doing. We got to continue to execute at a higher level.

Maybe what you're seeing is frustration. And I don't want our guys to be animated. I don't want to be animated, but I am too sometimes. I got to be better as the leader and they got to be better, because you can't let your frustration when a team is moving the ball turn into actions that look like you're blaming somebody else.

**Q. Every team is different. Needs different sort of buttons from the head coach and levers to pull from the head coach. Do you get a sense what this team needs from you that's maybe a little bit different from the previous ones?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: You know, I think after two losses, they probably needed something a little bit different than after one loss and before the season. You know, there was times of challenging them. There was times you challenged them as individuals to put the team -- it was a realistic understanding that stop making yourself feel better by saying we're four points away from being 2-0. Or we're close. We're 0-2. You have to say that to them so they embrace it and understand the work they have to put in.

That's what they needed at this moment: To be challenged and understand hey, our backs were against the wall. How are we going to fight and get out of this. What leadership is realizing what each team, each player needs at the moment. We'll see after I watch the film and we get back together on Monday what this team needs.

**Q. Jordan Faison, other than being healthy this year, had the ankle last year, what are you getting from him that's different? Where can that take the offense?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Consistency. He is two Cs: Competitive and consistent. You know he's going to be exactly where he's supposed to be. He's going block exactly who he's supposed to block every opportunity he gets.

That gives a quarterback confidence that, hey, I know exactly where Jordan Faison is going to be. If I decide to throw it to him it's probably going to be a successful outcome. That's a credit to the way he works and prayers. He's a consistent competitor.