

# University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 8, 2025

South Bend, Indiana, USA

## Coach Marcus Freeman

### Press Conference



Notre Dame 49, Navy 10

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, you know, obviously proud of the way our guys battled. It's always a great challenge when you get ready to play Navy just because of the uniqueness of their schemes on both sides of the ball. It is difficult to prepare for because it's not something you see every week and it's a good team.

I just thought our guys truly prepared the right way, had difficult practices, which is important, and really bought into what we were trying to get them to do, and went out there and performed well.

You know, as I told them in the locker room, you feel good now that you got the outcome, but the struggle of the game is no different than the struggle of a week, no different than the struggle of a season. You just got to continue to stay in the moment, continue to struggle in the moment, and, you know, the journey will be a sum of those moments.

So with that, I'll open up for questions.

**Q. Really clean game; 500 yards offense. Not a single penalty. Couldn't have been a comfortable week for your team; certainly wasn't comfortable weather tonight. What do you attribute that to, and how you to make sure you propel that forward?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: You know, I give you all similar answers for a lot of these questions. How do you get that outcome? You're focused and locked in on play one. I try not it to give you guys the same answer, but it's true. I don't want to make up some different formula.

You practice really hard on Tuesday, you prepare, put the work in, you do that all throughout the week, and then you really lock in and focus on play one. You try to win that play. Then you do it again play two.

And you know what? Sometimes the outcome is going to be no penalties. But we have to continue to just evaluate the mistakes, evaluate the penalties from the previous

week, make sure we don't tolerate below standard performances in practice or in a game, and then you get pretty good results.

**Q. Is there anything Jeremiyah Love can't do after that touchdown run tonight?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Jeez.

**Q. Is he a Heisman Trophy candidate in your mind?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: In my mind yes, he is. There is no question about it. You talk about one of the best players in the country, if he's not one of them, then, you know, it's hard to believe how many other players are that special.

He's a special player and he had a great week of prep and, again, continues to do things that you haven't seen but things you know -- you're not surprised with Jeremiyah Love.

**Q. Going against that team and that offense, how critical was it to get off the field defensively on those first couple points, no points and then how many of a tone did that set?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, it didn't feel that way. I think we forced two punts the first two drives but they had some success. We felt like they were moving the ball. But it was critical not to give up points as you just mentioned.

But just felt like we had to be a little bit more aggressive, like both sides of the ball. The O-lines had to play on the other side of the line of scrimmage, and I didn't think we were doing that early defensively.

They settled down. Coaches said, okay, here is the couple things we want to be able to try to do and our guys started playing aggressive, but to keep points off the board was critical.

**Q. Seemed like this was another night where (indiscernible) really loading the box and trying to key in on ya'll's running game. You alluded to how big CJ Carr's downfield passing is for your offense as a whole and it manifested tonight. As that's developed this**



... when all is said, we're done.®

**season, how big is that?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, not only is it that he can throw the ball, but you got a quarterback that that you can work on a game plan and say, hey, here is a couple different options if you don't think we're going to be able to run the ball and they're going to load the box. Okay, just he goes out there and he is the conductor and he does it.

He puts our offense in that position to be able to execute those plays. If we're not in the position to do that, you never get the opportunity to throw them, so it all goes back to the way he prepares. I was telling some of the coaches the other day, he's not preparing really any differently now than last year when he was redshirting.

He does things that I see in his preparation that not everybody sees and I'm like, that's just who he is. That's his standard. That's his routine. That's what produces great performances and that's what helps him continue to improve.

**Q. Coach, looked like an intentional heavy defensive line rotation early, all the way through almost. That's not something we see against Navy offense. What did you see during the week to...all those new guys...**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, I mean, it's just, again, a unique week. It's a unique week, and how do you put the best guys out there to perform really what you need them to do. It's hard when you haven't played against that type of offense to simulate the speed, to understand -- the guys that have played against it know we can't simulate it in a practice, but can adjust pretty fast in the game.

Some of those guys that haven't, it takes a while. So we wanted to make sure we're not keeping the same guys in there that might not have played against that triple option offense before.

**Q. (Indiscernible.) Was it intentional for the matchup or did CJ's progressions bring the fields...**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I think a little bit of both, but the execution was what matters, you know. The decisions are decisions. The execution was great and I'm glad they were connecting.

**Q. Coach, during pre-game warmups, Marty Biagi was filming the kickers and looking a lot at the mechanics. How much that was the focus this week? I know you said the results was a balance with the mental side of things as well.**

MARCUS FREEMAN: You know, how do I want to phrase

that? I think desperation probably causes you to seek even harder to find answers. We all look for answers. I'm going to go watch the film and say, okay, how do we get better. That's what we do.

When you're at a point where it's the performance we had last week, I think it creates a little bit of desperation to say, okay, let's exhaust every avenue that we can. So if that means filming a guy in pre-game warmups, it means that. If it means meeting with our sports psychologist.

But the best thing is buy-in from our kickers, especially Eric, as much as it's been from the coaches. If you have coaches that want this and are desperate, but you got a player that says, I'm not invested in that, then you won't see the elevation we need. I mean, you truly see buy-in from all parts.

**Q. And then just seeing the progression and the overall cleanness of the game from last week compared to this week, how satisfying is that?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: It's always satisfying after the fact. I keep saying that. It's satisfying now. In the moment it's every play your stomach is struggling. We keep putting in the work, right, and that's what it's about, and you're going to continue to improve the performance on Saturday.

**Q. You talk about not beating Notre Dame, those kinds of the plays, like almost none of that tonight. Interested how you go about not tolerating that during the week but also like the older players, do you see them not tolerating it more now? Like do you see them sort of the picking up your messaging?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: It's habits, right? Depending on who you are as a person you'll tolerate certain habits from yourself first or you won't, right? You'll choose to do hard things, choose to say this is the standard way of the doing things and you do them, or you don't.

And then if you care about the person next to you, it could be your wife, your kids, your teammates, you're going to hold them to the standards that you believe they should be held to, too, and they'd probably tell you, hold me to these standards.

When you talk about what you're willing to tolerate, number one is what you're willing to tolerate from yourself. You're going to cut corners, do hard things, continue to find ways to improve about. There are answers everywhere and the power in the answer comes from the importance of the question.

And then two, are you going to hold your teammates

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

accountable? Am I going to hold the coaches and players accountable? Are they going to hold me accountable? To me that is where you see the most elevation, is continuing to say, here is our standards and tolerate nothing below it.

Now, people do go below it. I tell our players all the time, people do fail, but are you willing every day to continue to put it out there, learn, be vulnerable, right, and not be one of those people that stand behind and say, I'll let them do it because I don't want to fail in public. I don't want to fail in somebody's eyes.

So that's what I continue to preach to our guys. We got to be those guys.

**Q. Do you feel like older players are picking that up more? Because I think last year's team, like you guys have a ton of guys who just would hold other people to the highest standard. This year's leaders maybe had to grow into that a little bit more?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: No, I mean, I wouldn't say that. I think we got to continue as coaches to show them what the standard is and show them, hey, here is -- that's not as easy as saying, okay, go out there and practice hard. I am going to hold you to that standard. Practice hard. No.

It's sometimes when you fail, all right, here is what we're going to do. He asked about the kicker. Okay, here is the things we think it's going to take to improve. We need you to meet with this guy this many times, watch this this many times, do this.

So you're going to hold yourself accountable and we're going hold you accountable, so that's kind of what I'm talking about. It's not just like why don't you always hold there people to the standard. I know that is what some people were saying that.

Well, there are certain things you got to fail at to say, okay, we need to reevaluate our process in this area.

**Q. Coach, building off Tyler's the question about Navy, box at the top of the run, obviously had to hit your shots downfield early, but you also didn't abandon the run game. What did you see from those guys, the blocking, aside from Jerimiyah's incredible in both getting big plays and being overall more efficient in the second half?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Yeah, they kept battling. Those guys up front handled some new looks. I always say that. We get some new looks, I think we are able to show them some things, and then really specify what we wanted to do against the different looks.

Like we always have a plan, but we have to be able to say, okay, this is what they're doing to us in these formations. Here is the runs and the schemes that we think will work. I thought our coaching staff did a good job of doing that and implementing it to the prayers.

**Q. On I defensive like rotation, I don't think we saw Boubacar tonight. Was that injury related or just felt like others were better options against the option?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: No, it wasn't injury related. It was just more this game right now, probably not his strong suit. Now, probably some third down situations we could've, but, no, it was not injury related.

**Q. Coach Jaiden Ausberry tonight looked like he was born to play against that offense. Why was he such a good match and what did you see from him during the week that reinforced that?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: We saw a lot of it last year. We decided to put him into that whatever the rover -- whatever spot we want to call it, that safety-ish spot. It's a unique skillset because he can play inside linebacker, linebacker, body.

But in Navy week we ask him to be almost a safety, like a nickel type player, sometimes be in the middle of the field, play man to man on the slot. So it takes a unique athlete. He gets to walk around the linebackers' room and say he's the best athlete. It takes a unique athlete to do that.

We had proof last year and we knew he would do good this year.

**Q. I know you have a lot of respect for Navy and what they do. It seems like since you've been here both as a coordinator and head coach, you haven't treated that offense like it's the monster under the bed. It's something you've been really aggressive about. How have you been able to have that kind of pervade into your team and be aggressive?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: You lost me at the monster under the bed. You got to rephrase that for me.

**Q. Okay. So a lot of times I've seen over the years Notre Dame kind of tepid going into the Navy game because the offense is so unique. You also respect it, but you're very aggressive with it. How are you able to impart that to your team?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: I've seen defenses play fit ball and you know that's not my philosophy. I want to play football.



I want to make sure our guys are being aggressive.

But we have to be sound, right? I think that was just kind of a philosophy that I've come to from my years at Cincinnati to my years here, that just playing one defense versus the triple option, I wasn't a huge fan. That's me. That's my opinion.

I want to still be aggressive and play football. I don't want our guys parallel and just playing at the -- just playing football. Give them some different looks, be able to change up timing of the dive, pitch -- the dive QB and pitch phase.

Again, I think keeping them off balance offensively is something I believe in.

**Q. You mentioned earlier living in the moment and struggling in the moment. Why was struggling in the moment important today, especially in a game that was pretty much over in the third quarter?**

MARCUS FREEMAN: Why is it important? Because it's got to be who you are. Like you thought it was over in the third quarter. I hope not anybody in our football program thought it was over, right? I thought that play in the third quarter, whatever play it was that you might have thought it was over is the most important play for this team and who is on this field and who called that play to execute so we can win that game.

That's how we have to be. We can't relax, right? You won't -- why do you have to struggle? Because you can't grow if you don't struggle. We can't get better if we go into a Tuesday practice and it's not uncomfortable. You're not getting better. I tell them all the time. We can structure this thing however you want it. If you're not uncomfortable, we're not getting better.

That's why you have to struggle. That's why you have to struggle. Whatever it is your routine is, your process is, it has to include struggle if you want to grow from it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports