

Louisiana State University Football Media Conference

Monday, October 17, 2022

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Coach Brian Kelly

Weekday Press Conference



BRIAN KELLY: You know, certainly a great atmosphere at The Swamp. Our guys needed to think about the right things going into that game. I thought that we were confident. I thought they thought about how to win the game. I thought that they maintained that throughout the game even though there was some adversity. I thought they kept their emotions in check.

I think those are really important. I think I talked about those last week, when you go on the road you have to eliminate distractions, and from all the things that go on in pre-game, during the game there is a lot of distractions, and I thought they did a very good job.

I think the sideline was excellent. Guys really being positive with each other during the game. Those all go to getting through the highs and lows of the game when you're in the road and the crowd is involved in it.

So proud of our football team and the way they managed themselves and handled themselves in that situation. And then offensively we executed very well. Defensively we came up with some stops when we needed them. Clearly on the offensive side of the ball we've got to eliminate some mistakes up front. We've got to be cleaner.

And I think defensively it's pretty clear it's the big play, eliminating the big plays.

But again, execution-wise our best performance offensively, and then we'll look to build on that in terms of consistency of performance.

Then defensively cleaning up the big plays. I think that's it.

Special teams, I think we are all seeing the same thing. First play of the game we let the ball outside the defense. We have to contain it on a kickoff, and when I then we muffed a punt.

Those guys know they have to obviously be accountable and we've got to put them in a position to succeed. We'll keep coaching it, and we know we have to get better there.

So move on to Ole Miss. Obviously another top 10 team coming into the stadium. We're excited about the challenges. It's an outstanding football team, well-coached. Lane does a great job with obviously the offense, but overall a very confident football team. Been playing well. Undefeated.

It's an offense that is systematic in its playcalling. What they're trying to do, the pieces fall together quite nicely. And very talented. You know, the quarterback is a true double threat quarterback. Dart can throw it, he can run, he's complementary with two outstanding backs, big receivers, and a very balanced attack that can run it equally as well as they throw it.

So I have a lot of respect for what they do. Defensively they're in a three down defense. We don't see a ton of what they do. They do what they do well. You know, I think they get pressures. I think they're second in the SEC in sacks. Difficult sometimes to know where they're coming from. Have to do a really good job with protections, scanning, and taking care of our quarterback.

So excited to be at home. I know our guys want to obviously play well at home before our home fans, and again, look forward to another challenge for an SEC top 10 team.

With that, open up to questions.

Q. Start on a lighthearted note. Saw you on SEC Network this morning. Could you see Chris Dorian? How did you keep a straight face?

BRIAN KELLY: I could see him, yeah. Yeah, you know, I just --

Q. Did you know that was coming?

BRIAN KELLY: I had no idea. No, I didn't know he was going to dress like a clown. But I think if you keep betting, you get what you deserve there. Because I think he's 0 for 4. You know, in that situation I think Pete should just up the ante at this point, make sure there is no dress that he comes out in next time.

Then there won't be anymore betting.



Q. Not every coach probably would've played along. You seem like you're someone who's like, Hey, look this is a hard business and you make a lot of sacrifices. You can enjoy yourself once in a while. Is that the attitude you like to have?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think there is so many rivalries in this conference. This is another rivalry game, the Magnolia Trophy. Come on now. Come on now. Got me the first time. Not going to get me a second time.

Yeah, there is just so many different rivalries. Those two obviously have them. We saw Marcus Spears had a friendly bet with somebody. I was made aware of that. It's just there is such passion in college football, especially down here in the SEC. I love watching that, and so just makes sense to allow them to continue to have those kinds of inside bets.

I can play along for a few minutes.

Q. Brian, you coached against Lane Kiffin when he was at SC, you were at Notre Dame. It's been ten years. What's it like to coach against him? How much has he changed from then to now?

BRIAN KELLY: He's a creative coach offensively, and they always have been cutting edge in terms of what they do. Yeah, and he's a guy that gets his team playing hard. I mean, they play hard. Offensively there is always an answer to what you do in-game as well.

But I think more importantly, they scout you out. I mean, you better know your own self-scouting and where your tendencies are, because he's going to really dial in on if there is anything that you do -- if you do anything defensively, he is going to analyze that and have an answer for it.

You got to be very good at your self-scout.

Q. This past game you fall behind 7-nothing. You got a third and long and Daniels make that deep through to Boutte. Are a believer in a play like that when you make it early on it does a lot for your confidence in terms of moving forward, if you don't make that play maybe you don't have the success that you had?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, look, we've been at this -- this had been the seventh game and we had been confronted with those situations and haven't made them, but I don't think that there was any hesitation that we wouldn't go back to it.

Those two have been working hard in practice and trying to

build that relationship where we find you, and if you remember in that situation, he kind of found some green grass and he was going to be the primary on that play, and Jayden got flushed out of the pocket.

But he kept his eyes looking for him, and it was really the first time when those two found each other, if you will, in terms of getting the ball. And then that drive, quite frankly, we had a lot of mistakes. We made a lot of mistakes. That drive ended up in the end zone because of those two guys. They made big plays, and that's what sometimes you need, is your big time players have to step up.

I think that was the first time this year that our best players stepped up to that level and made plays.

Q. Just after the film review, that's my question, do you feel like that was a step up for the entire team offensively or was it just the next step?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think it's got to be part of what we continue to grow towards. You know, there will be times where guys just got to step up and make plays. We had been kind of grinding it out. Like, you know, every -- we were trying to fight for every blade of grass, and sometimes you just got to make some plays.

The big touchdown throw to Jaray Jenkins. They jump offside, that's a part of our offense, take a shot down the field. Maybe earlier in the year we throw that out of bounds.

So just staying at it and being consistent with coaching it, and then telling our guys that, look, sooner or later we got to step up and make these plays.

They did it on Saturday. Now we got to be consistent. Can't do it one week and turn it off the next week and expect to win.

Q. Second top 10 team you guys welcome here in two weeks. Just what lessons can you take from maybe the last time you played a top 10 team here and just whether it's in preparation, in focus, mentality, just what kind of lessons can you take from the last one?

BRIAN KELLY: This team each week is learning so much and growing. Unfortunate they learned from the Tennessee loss, and nobody really wants to be learning lessons after a loss. But they learned a lot about intentionality and purpose in terms of preparation. We saw that during the week. It carried over to the way they played on the road.

I think then you win on the road in the fashion they did, you

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

build more confidence in your football team. So I think two weeks later it's, I don't want to say a different team, but it's a team that has confidence. It's a team that knows if they don't play clean, if they don't have an attention to detail, they'll have similar results they did against Tennessee.

So I guess what I'm saying is that it's not a different team, but it's a team that has grown from the last couple of weeks, and if they take that knowledge into their preparation this week and into the game and their performance, then we should have one really fine football team.

Q. Can you talk about what you saw from the DB room this past weekend and just how much they progressed in SEC play?

BRIAN KELLY: You know, I thought there were some good things, things that we got to continue to work on. Obviously big plays. We got to tackle better. I think it starts there. Obviously we gave up a big play early on right out of the gates. Got to stay on top of the coverage there.

So it's kind of a mixed bag right now. I would like to stand up here and tell that you everything is great and we're ready to enshrine them all into the College Football Hall of Fame. That's just not the case. It's a work in progress, and we got to continue to get better at both the corner and safety and nickel positions.

I think it starts with the fundamentals, leverage, staying on top of the football, and tackling. I don't want to make it simple, but it's not that hard. We have to get better in the fundamentals. If we do, we'll be better on the back end of our defense.

Q. Will Campbell received the SEC Offensive Lineman of the week.

BRIAN KELLY: Thank you for bringing that up. I appreciate it.

Q. When was the last time you remember in your career playing two freshman offensive tackles on the line, and why don't true freshmen typically play in this position?

BRIAN KELLY: I don't think I ever have, but I'm having a hard time with last week in memory. 32 years, 33?

I don't believe I've ever started two freshmen period on an offensive line, but to have two tackles in the SEC is quite unusual.

Again, I think I talked about this last week. It's not

necessarily the physical. They have the physical because you cannot play in this league unless you have physical traits. These guys are too fast, too big, too strong. They'll walk you back to the quarterback if you're not physically strong enough.

Emery Jones and Will Campbell physically have the traits to go in the weight room and be as strong as anybody that we have, and are able to move their feet to obviously get out and set these guys. They're going to miss a couple. We got beat inside on a couple of times that they countermoved us.

These guys are extraordinary in their ability to move on to the next play. They focus and then refocus. Their mental approach to the game is so far above any freshman that I'm used to having. They generally have that look in their eyes right about now that they're done.

These guys are anxious for more. That's unusual.

Q. Ole Miss runs that kind of Baylor offensive scheme, the old Baylor.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, there is a lot of similarities.

Q. I guess because they have so much success in the run game, what does that kind of scheme do that makes stopping the run so difficult?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, it's perimeter based. The ball is a trying to get out on the perimeter, but you now have a quarterback that's if you're spreading yourself thin on the perimeter, he strikes down the heart of our defense.

And then they have a great play-action game, and Mingo is 6'3", 6'4", 225 pounds. He's a matchup nightmare. When your safeties are dropping down, you're trying to load the box, you know, defend the perimeter, now they got one-on-one matchups that they can throw the football.

Auburn was trying to stop the passing game, and then they were a little soft to the run game. They run for 400 yards. You cannot win games giving up 400 yards rushing. Well, you can, but you're playing the game up and down the field.

So it's just an offense that has been set up obviously to force the ball outside, but they have a quarterback now that can run it so effectively as well. They threw the ball last year because they had a great quarterback in Corral. This is a different quarterback.

That's what Lane does well. He's going to set his offense based upon who the player is. It's not about plays, it's

about players for him, and he changes based upon who he has. He has a quarterback that's a really a dual threat.

Q. Coach, Ole Miss' run game has gotten a lot of the credit this year. Ran over 400 yards last week. What you have seen out of Jaxson Dart?

BRIAN KELLY: He's a pure -- I mean, if he was in a different -- and I've played against him in a pure passing spread offense. I mean, he's a beautiful thrower of the football. He is California, you know, throw the football, I mean, he has all those traits.

But he is also athletic enough and can run that they've put him in a system where he becomes a dual threat. We played Hooker. We played Richardson. We're going to play Jefferson. These are big bodied, thick, physical quarterbacks, right, that are not -- look, they're all really good quarterbacks that can throw, but they don't throw like this kid.

This kid has the ability to drop back 50 times if they wanted to and throw the football.

Q. About Josh Williams, just an incredible story, a former walk-on.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah.

Q. In a performance where Jayden Daniels had six touchdown, six straight offensive touchdowns in the first six possessions, why was it important to give the game ball to Josh Williams for his play?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, so the theme all week was attention to detail, and so his attention to the smallest of details in that game helped us win. I wanted to make sure that that kind of was followed up with the game ball.

We ask our back to chip a lot off those defensive ends to help those young tackles we just talked about. He's not 6'2", so when you talk about him having the chip, he's got to leave his feet to chip.

But he was outstanding at it. He stopped the charge of defensive ends. Caught the ball coming out of the backfield. Picked up blitzers. Actually picked up the defensive end by himself a couple times when we missed a slide. Ran the ball coming out in the third quarter with authority that gave us great momentum.

Just a little bit of everything. All the little jobs that you ask them to do, he does them. Sometimes he does them for the first time. Over 100 yards was the first time for him, so we wanted to reward him in kind.

Q. Jack Bech and Armoni Goodwin, status this week?

BRIAN KELLY: Jack is day to day. Got the same back situation which is an L5. It's cranky. Hopefully we get him up and going. He's a tough guy. Hopefully we can get him loose enough where he can play.

And Armoni, we'll practice him on Tuesday and see what we can get. He wants to play. Our doctors have cleared him. We'll see what kind of volume we can get out of him, and hopefully it goes well during the week.

Q. And then when you talk about just the chunk plays on defense, giving those up, how do you clean those up? Is it as simple as tackling like you said?

BRIAN KELLY: You saw it, right? We tried to punch the ball loose twice on Richardson. You got to tackle him. That's a commitment. You got to go and wrap him up and bring him down on the ground. So that was tackling. We gave up the big play pass where we just need to stay on top, and we did not.

We gave up run after the catch, and, again, that was a tackling situation. We just have to be better at tackling. I think if we start there and really focus on just doing our job we're going to be much better at the defensive end.

Q. I guess I hadn't watched in detail every game how you've been in the sidelines, but it looked like you had a little cheat sheet or note set with you. I was wondering what went into that?

BRIAN KELLY: Situational football. Mostly situational calls. Just Mike called a great game I thought. I'm just looking at situational calls and just reminding the quarterback, talking to Mike, talking to Matt, mostly on situational calls.

Q. Couple things: Do you mention to the team at all potentially tying for the west lead this week? And also, the Brian Thomas catch that was overturned, have you gotten a sufficient explanation for that?

BRIAN KELLY: No, we won't talk about tying for the west. I think it's too early to talk in terms of that. I think there is just too much football left to be played.

What we're going to talk about is how we play better at home in front of our fans against a top 10 team. Our focus will be on ourselves more so than what that means. Then we get a week off to kind of assess. Then we'll kind of put the next four weeks kind of in perspective and maybe start to talk about it from that sense.

I have not. There were some things that happened in that game that just -- my biggest concern is that we're just slowing the game down. Look, we got to pay the bills. I get it.

It's four, three, four, three with timeouts. That's not going away or we're going to be obviously not paying anybody anything.

But to stop the game for so many reviews and most of them to be the play stands as called, it just takes away the flow of the game.

Hopefully it's something we can look at at the end of the season. Maybe it can be instant replay on scoring plays only or change of possession. If you feel like it's egregious, throw the red flag out there.

But it just seems like we're slowing the game down. That will be a topic that we can have after the season ends.

Q. It's a little layered, but can you explain how you all go through the play call operation? Does Mike have complete autonomy? How involved are you and were you more involved Saturday than prior weeks?

BRIAN KELLY: Mike calls all the good plays. (Smiling.)

I call all the great plays. (Smiling.)

So it comes down from Mike, and Cortez obviously has him on the sideline, but they're going through our signalers. So I'm hearing them. I'm just making -- look, there is a couple voices. One, obviously is enough. You can't have three or four voices when you're getting the play and getting into a flow.

The one thing -- and I've been a play caller. You can't get a million suggestions going. You got to let a play caller go. For me, I'm reminding him on whether we're going for it on fourth down and what we need to go for it on fourth down, how many yards. Hey, we're going for it on fourth and three here. You can run it twice. I'll give him suggestions like that during the series.

And other than that, kind of allow him to keep in the flow of the game. I'm reminding him of time and timeouts and really time management issues more than anything else.

Other than that, playcalling is -- it's an art and a science, but you can't get in the way of the art of it.

Q. Coach, wanted to ask you about a couple of your specialists. Ramos, I know he only tried six field goals

all year, but that seemed to be a pretty big kick for him.

BRIAN KELLY: No doubt.

Q. And then Bramblett I see is averaging almost 46 yards per punt, so if you could talk about those two guys?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, thanks for asking the question. Damien Ramos, let's put him in that situation. I mean, it's loud. That's a big kick, right? That ices the game. He nails it. Snap was great. Hold was great. The execution was -- we've seen that has to happen, too, right? Just go back to the first week. So the execution was great, kick was great.

But he has been consistent since we put him in in camp. We've tried to simulate those with loud music, and he's been spot on. We felt really confident in that situation.

And Bramblett, a you saw we made a bit of a change where we directionally kicked a little bit, and he was outstanding. We were pushing that ball closer to the sideline to squeeze our coverage teams into a better location.

He's capable of ticking it 50 plus every time. We don't want to stretch our coverage teams quite as much. So directionally he was outstanding.

Q. Just two quick ones. Does it feel like the season has flown by to you? Secondly, facing another fellow analytic-minded coach, do you have to prepare your defense any differently to expect maybe not necessarily the unexpected, but to be on the field longer?

BRIAN KELLY: Yes. Yeah, we look at all those numbers, and there are some similarities there in terms of making sure our guys understand they'll be on the field for most of the fourth down situations that will be occurring.

So we've already had that meeting with the coordinators. Yeah, I'm enjoying the heck out of it, so when you're enjoying what you're doing, it doesn't seem like it's -- oh, my God, it's October? It just feels like this is what I wanted to do. It's flying by.

Q. Hey, Coach, with Ole Miss' defense, what are some strengths they have and things you guys will have to look out for?

BRIAN KELLY: It's hard to know exactly where the birds line up all the time. It's three down, it's three, three, three, four. They're playing with nickel and dime, some invert.

You don't know where some of the pressures, they're striking from the field, from the boundary. You got to be on your toes. This is a week where recognition and understanding where it's coming from is going to be really important.

So quarterback has to be on it. He is going to have slide the right way. Our backs are going to have to go coast to coast in some of the read progressions. There has to be better attention in that regard.

Sometimes when you're in four down you know where the overload blitz is coming from from four down situations because you got to tip it. So you got to lock in on safeties. You got to look for the tells. This is a week where you really got to do a really good job against them.

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