

# Wisconsin Football Media Conference

Friday, October 23, 2020

Madison, Wisconsin, USA

## Paul Chryst

### Postgame Press Conference



Wisconsin 45, Illinois 7

THE MODERATOR: We can go ahead and get started with some opening comments from coach.

PAUL CHRYST: It was good to get the season started obviously. Appreciate all the work that went into it by everyone: the players, the coaches, administrators, everyone that allowed us, doctors, to give us a chance to play.

Certainly was different tonight with no fans in the stands. That's obviously one of the best things we've got going here at Camp Randall. It was fun to play. I thought the team did a great job of getting ready. I loved their energy throughout the game. Obviously a number of guys did some good things that gave us a chance to win.

Graham was really good in his first start. It was fun having Jon Dietzen back. Defensively I thought we played really well. I thought it was a good plan. Cut guys loose. It was good to get going. It was a good night.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

**Q. Was the plan with Graham initially to ease him in with some shorter throws? In general, what stood out of to you about his performance in his first start?**

PAUL CHRYST: I thought he had good poise. I thought he saw the field well. You never know quite how someone's going to react in their first start. I thought he was himself. And that you appreciate. I thought there was a good plan for him by the offensive coaches. He was able to execute it.

**Q. How surreal was the atmosphere, to be playing with no fans? It's not something you can really expect, but how was it out there?**

PAUL CHRYST: Obviously it was really different. But I think the game itself, talking to the players, it felt like a game as well, right? No doubt it was different, but like I

said, I thought the guys handled it well.

There was good energy on the sideline, good energy exchanged, different units coming in. I think this team enjoyed the opportunity to play, enjoyed seeing each other, get their chances to play. When guys made plays, celebrate it.

No doubt was different, but nonetheless it was fun.

**Q. About a couple sequences. Getting the turnover against Illinois early to get the short field, then the way your offense responded after the defensive touchdown by Illinois. Address the importance of those two sequences.**

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I thought those were big, right? Have a ton of respect for what Illinois has done, especially defensively, there takeaways. Kind of talked about that, that if we can win the takeaway, turnover battle, that was one of the games within the game. To get that one and get it early, to have the field position we had...

Then for the offense to finish it, I thought it was a heck of a catch by Mason. That in itself was a big sequence, right? Obviously getting the takeaway, then capitalizing on it.

The fumble by Ferg and the return by them, you've got a chance to answer them, right? It's how you respond. I thought they responded a number of different ways.

I thought defensively we had a couple times where they were getting a drive going, yet I thought we responded and had some key fourth down stops. That's a big part of it. I think if we can build on that and grow from those things, adversity is going to come your way, but it's how you respond that matters most. I was proud of the way that different situations, this group tonight, responded.

**Q. The last sequence, Ferguson had the fumble, came back with the nice catch and the touchdown on the following drive. How do you think he responded to that adversity?**

PAUL CHRYST: I didn't hear the last part.



**Q. How do you think Ferguson responded to the adversity?**

PAUL CHRYST: I thought he did respond. I thought that was a nice play by Graham and Jake. I thought there was good timing to it. Where I was at on the field at the time, obviously knew the call, where it should be going. I thought there was anticipation and some trust by Graham. Gave him a nice play.

Ferg responded. I thought he did some things in the run game. I talked earlier about the group being able to respond. I think you bring up a really important point: the individual has to respond.

Same thing happened to Dean Engram, he got called for holding on a punt return. He had made a couple plays on special teams later. That's the response you're looking for, right, and appreciate as a coach.

**Q. Rushing-wise, wasn't as efficient as you have been in the past. What was working, not working, in the rushing game?**

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, we knew it was going to be a tough, tough defense to run the ball against. Certainly we're trying to try on some things. We'll certainly go back, look at the film. A few times it felt like we were off on a couple things. We had a couple jet sweeps that could have been big plays for us. First one, we kind of overran it. Second, (indiscernible) would have been big. Feet went out underneath him. You're going to look back at it and certainly knew they weren't going to just give you those yards, right?

I don't know that we did everything in our power. You got to execute, right? I think it was one guy here maybe, one guy there. I think there will be a lot of good learning from it.

It's a good defense. I thought we kind of got into it. The run game was big. We got into some situations, too. We had a couple first downs. Two of the sacks were on first downs. We got a sprint-out, should be a pretty safe play, we take a sack there. Right around midfield, we take a sack. That puts a lot of strain on a lot of things.

Obviously there's areas we did really well. We got to build on that. There's got to be some things we got to clean up.

I do know watching some of the action that went up front, we had some guys play really well. There will be stuff we can build on certainly, but areas we got to improve, no doubt.

**Q. How do you think Illinois played you guys from a**

**coverage perspective? Do you feel they challenged your guys to throw the ball a little bit, leaving the corners on an island at some points?**

PAUL CHRYST: They were fairly consistent to kind of what we thought they'd be. I think they do a great job. You look at it, and they tackle well. I don't know how many missed tackles they had. I do know there's a couple times, back was one-on-one with the safety, they did a good job. I think there's some things we can look at. How do we get better in that area?

I thought they did a good job. Every defense is going to challenge you. It's what they did. I thought we were able to take advantage of some of the things. A couple of those touchdowns in the goal line, commit to that, we're able to really do a nice job of coming up with a couple things there. The touchdown to Danny before the half was big.

That's the game you play, right? There's the game within the game. Certainly they had their number of plays that were good. We found enough plays that we were able to be good on.

**Q. What did Garrett Groshek give you tonight and what you expect from him the rest of the year?**

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I thought Grosh, best thing, who we want him to be, right? Made some plays. I think good patience in the running game. He was physical. I thought he did some good stuff obviously in the third downs, things that you don't always see in a stat sheet. That is kind of his game, right?

He's obviously a big part of this not just offense but team. I thought it was a good start for him. Shoot, he's on our punt team. He does a ton of stuff for us. I thought Grosh got off to a good start.

Every one of us will find things we can do to get better and need to get better at. But you're also grateful tonight for all the efforts that went into earning this victory. You appreciate that tonight and get moving forward tomorrow.

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