

Wisconsin Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Brian Kelly

Postgame Press Conference



Notre Dame 41; Wisconsin 13

BRIAN KELLY: Excuse me for the sticky Gatorade haircut. This is what it looks like.

Well, great victory for our guys today. So proud of their resilience. You know, we knew what this game was going to be about. It was going to be close, hard fought, physical, whatever cliché you want to use. And it was all of that.

We were going to be challenged by their front, which we were. We knew we had to go and throw the football around, which that was the game plan. You know, come out, throw it and, you know, try to make some plays down the field.

We were able to put enough plays together through a variety of different things on offense, special teams, and then defense. Right? It's a complete game. And we were able to win this thing going away, you know, playing complete football. Defensively, taking the football away; special teams; and then doing enough, you know, on the offensive side of the ball to secure a really good victory.

So just really proud of my guys. They prepared so well for this game. And I'm not surprised by the win. You know, the outcome was a little bit different because of the interceptions late. But I'm not surprised that they won the game. So with that, I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Do you have any updates on Jack?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. It's not a -- we got clean x-rays. It's a soft tissue injury. And it doesn't even respond like a high ankle sprain. So we're pretty optimistic that we'll be able to see him back next week. So good news.

Q. When your team is able -- (no microphone) -- overcoming some injuries in the game, overcoming some injuries before the game. You have young guys step. What does that do now? What does that do

moving forward?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. We've been talking about just -- look, everybody's trying to, like, peg teams, like, early on. Like who are they? You know. We're still trying to figure out ourselves. Right? But everybody had us already figured out as to who we were.

And I just know that it's a resilient group that believes they're going to win. And that in itself -- when you have a group of football players that -- there's some talent on this football team. It's young. There's some inexperience. But there's such a strong commitment to their preparation. Like, they work so hard in preparing, and then they believe they're going to win.

Man, you put those things together. Now you've got to go make plays. But they just have a strong will that they believe they're going to win. Now somebody might come in and take that away one week. But we told them, listen, we're all in with this team in terms of preparing each week and taking our best shot.

Q. I think Botelho and Kristofic started. What went into those decision?

BRIAN KELLY: Kristofic didn't start, but he played quite a bit. He gives us a better match-up to the interior physicality that Wisconsin has. You know, Zeke is a really good football player. Doesn't match up great inside. Andrew's bigger. He's over 310 pounds. It was a better match-up for us to put Andrew in there.

With their multiple tight end sets, Jordan gives us a thumper on the tight end, a bigger body that we can use to match up with personnel. And he did a really good job. We would have liked to have played him last week, but he just -- he wasn't physically ready to go. He had been out for a couple of weeks. And he can add to our defense.

Q. Was there any sort of special set-up on the Chris Tyree return?

BRIAN KELLY: No. We went to a field return. So we were able to get him moving back to the field and caught a crease. And he used his speed from there. So we had



been going sideline return. Just didn't have enough working room. So Brian, at half, said, listen, we're going to try to go to the field. It's going to be an all or nothing situation.

When you go to the field, you know, you're stretching your blocking out longer. And you're -- that's where you tend to see a holding or something like that. But we were able to catch a crease. And the rest -- obviously, he's a very fast and talented player.

Q. Did that change things on the sideline at all?

BRIAN KELLY: Heck, yeah. And when they played "Jump Around," it seemed like we thought that that was our fight song, and we started playing better. I don't know. I got to check that with our guys.

Q. (No microphone)

BRIAN KELLY: So Drew Pyne is a great example of what is -- in my opinion, how we do our business in our program. Right? You know, we bring in a transfer. And he doesn't put his name in the portal. What he does is he says, you know what, I'm going to prepare myself to be the best version of Drew Pyne. And when they number is called, I'm going to be ready.

And I see that every day in practice. I mean, he gets 40 percent of the reps now. Not a lot of coaches do that. So 60 percent go to the starter, 40 percent go to the second quarterback. And he gets 40 percent.

Tyler was not getting reps this week because he had a tight hamstring, so we were able to focus a lot of the reps on him. And just -- when you see him prepare, you have that confidence that you can put him in the game.

As it relates to what we're doing defensively -- and I think I alluded to this when we've had our opportunities to answer questions about our defense was that we just needed to tap the brakes early on about our defense. It takes some time to get everything in, and there's layers to our defense. We played a lot of man early on. We've added some of our dime and nickel packages. And, quite frankly, we've got some guys making plays. I mean, Cam is a great example of it right? Cam gets called for a PI. He let's that go, which you have to at corner, and he steps underneath the same play for a pick.

So we're just developing. And so Marcus is getting his players to develop on defense. And we're adding some layers to that defense.

Q. You talked about the evolution of the team -- (no

microphone) -- who they are at this point --

BRIAN KELLY: I wasn't saying you guys. I was just saying we all have that tendency to do that.

Q. With that being said, you said you saw -- you had confidence you guys were going to win this game. Where does that come from, especially with a team that's younger, lost a lot of good players off of last year's team but had success now for a few years?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, it's the way they prepare, you know. So if I -- if I felt like their preparation wasn't at a level that would allow them to play well -- look, it's one thing to practice. You've got to flip it to a performance mindset. They can flip it. They can prepare and then flip to it performance. And that's a really good thing to do.

I've seen teams that can't get out of practice mode. And then they try to perform, and they look like they're still in practice. This group does a really good job of practicing and preparing. And they have a real good way about them of flipping it.

Now, we've got a long way to go still. But they're getting better each week. I just -- I'm having fun coaching them. They're not perfect by any means. But they're going to be better in November. And that's the nice part about it. And that's what energizes you as a coach. We're not a perfect team, but I like coaching them.

Q. You basically just answered the question there. But is it fun figuring out the team as it goes along? You said you're still trying to figure --

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, yeah. Like last year, we knew what we had. Right? We were a veteran team. We had some holes. Right? We hunkered down. We put three tight ends on the field. This is what we were. And, you know, kind of lived with it.

This is like we're trying to figure it out as we go. We're in no back one play, and then we score a touchdown. Next time, we're in three tight ends. We're trying to cobble it out as we go. And three tackles later on the left side. We've gone through three quarterbacks this year. We'll keep the continuity the best we can. But, like I said, we'll be challenged again next week against a really good Cincinnati team. We'll figure it out then too.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRIAN KELLY: We got better play. I mean, I wish he didn't stumble on the screen or he scores. But he comes right back and makes a shoestring catch that was a huge



play for us to keep that drive alive, which ultimately we scored a touchdown on. So he's a big play guy for us. We needed his performance. And we got the kind of performance that he's capable of.

There needs to be some consistency across the board at that position. But we'll get it. We've got to do a little bit better job of shaking some guys loose in other ways. But, like I said, we'll get back and figure out how to do that this week.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRIAN KELLY: I'm just glad it's over with, really, to be quite honest with you. Because, you know -- I'm proud of the accomplishment to the level of consistency and, you know, obviously, from a winning standpoint, you know, you have to have great players and great coaches and great support.

Father Jenkins hired me. He's still here. Jack Swarbrick has been part of that process of leadership for me. We're all together. So I share that with them.

But I get more joy in watching the development of a Drew Pyne go in there and Chris Tyree getting -- that's why I do this. You know, you don't do it for 31 years because you're trying to beat Knute Rockne's record. I mean, no disrespect to Knute. But I'm just glad it's over with and we can move on to trying to beat Cincinnati.

Q. Due to Tyler's hamstring injury, was he an option to bring in today?

BRIAN KELLY: He was not an option. We were going wildcat.

Q. You talk about how you get to this many wins and sort of making it up on the fly. Are those two things sort of tied together too? Like, do people look at this team and think, wow, this is not that Notre Dame team we know. This doesn't have the identity that we know. Is that sort of how you get to 106 or 5 (no microphone)?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. I think so. I think you have to -- you know, I think, you know, everybody has a process. Right? Everybody talks about process. I think you stick with what your process is. But you have to be able to change to who your players are and what their strength and weaknesses are from year to year and adapt. Like if you can't adapt to 18 to 21 year olds -- you know, my son is here today. He keeps me up with all the slang. I'll get something on a text, and I have to text him and go, What does that mean? You know, and so you have to adapt. You have to stay current.

Q. (Question regarding play calling.)

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. We're having lots of conversations. You know, and some of it is management. Like, you know, I thought our first series in the third quarter was not what I wanted. And so he gets it. Right? Like we needed to manage that first series in the third quarter better.

He's such a smart guy and gets it. And we have such a great relationship that, you know, he'll come back and -- you know, we'll manage field position better. You know, we punted it the next time and pinned them down there.

So sometimes it's just game management conversations that we're having. I'm not getting in the way of his thought process relative to play calling. It's really just about managing the game and how we manage it given the circumstances of the game.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRIAN KELLY: No. The plan was to get Joe in. Joe was going to play both the -- as the power tight end in our 13 package and he was going to play some tackle as well. And give Tosh a bit of a breather.

Q. Coach, do you anticipate having Tyler Buchner available for next week? And if Jack Coan is a go and he's healthy, does he remain your quarterback, or does Pyne have any shot at moving into that role?

BRIAN KELLY: I knew we couldn't get through it without a quarterback controversy. It just attaches to my shoe like nothing else.

Two things. I believe and feel really confident, based on talking to our medical people, that Tyler will be a go for next week.

Jack Coan is our starter. And so there's no question about if he's able and physically able, he'll be our starter against Cincinnati.

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