

Wisconsin Football Media Conference

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Paul Chryst

Postgame Press Conference



Illinois - 34, Wisconsin - 10

PAUL CHRYST: First of all, congratulations to Illinois. They beat us today. Then it's we've got to -- no one wants to be where we're at, yet I told the team there's one response, and that's us continuing to come together. And we've got to make sure -- in my opinion, we've got to play better football, and we've got to get to where you're playing one team, the opponent.

I thought there was enough times, certainly three turnovers, and all three end up being big plays, giving them good field position. That makes it harder.

And the penalties, I'm anxious to see some of them. There was a lot of contact out there in the passing game, but certainly -- penalties are hard, when you give a team yards or when you take away yards, and that's where we've got to be better. I've got to do a better job.

At a time like this, it's going to take everyone. Certainly I've got leaders on this team that I believe in, and they've got a part, but everyone's got to own it. Everyone is a part of this whole deal. So we've all got to be part of the solution.

It's hard. I know our players. Any time you invest and put yourself out there -- and I appreciate that from them. And it doesn't always go your way. So we've got to help them. We've got to help each other. And come back and get another opportunity to play.

Q. You made some changes, staff changes in the off-season, not all by choice obviously with Gary Brown. But are you -- you're still struggling, especially on offense. Is your confidence shaken at all in the staff's ability, your ability to get this team up and running the way it should be? Are you concerned that your players' confidence is shaken at this point?

PAUL CHRYST: There's a few things in the question. Absolutely, do we want to be and do we need to be -- to give ourselves a chance to win, we've got to be playing

better certainly offensively. There's no doubt about it. You've got to score points to win, and we haven't been scoring enough, right? That's obvious.

And I think that we've got to do a good job. When you take a look at everything, and you're always going to look at everything. How are we coaching them? What are we doing? I think -- you know, it's unfair, and we've just got to play better, you know what I mean?

There are things where we didn't run the ball well today. We had a good first drive, and that was about it. Really when you do convert on third downs -- we weren't very good on third down. When you convert on third down, now you've got more offense.

So we just haven't been putting things together. That's something that, if we're going to be -- we need to be better, right? We've got to give our team a chance to win. You've got to play better offensively. I think we're all part of the solution.

Q. What were the biggest challenges with the way Illinois was playing up front gave to your offensive line? Like you said, you weren't able to run the ball, and then Graham got sacked six times.

PAUL CHRYST: It's a good defense. I thought coming into the game good defense, and they trusted their man coverage. Therefore, it allows you to get a hat -- extra hat down in the box, and they're going to gap it out. You've got some things that we've been able to do, and when you do that, they become big, but if you don't win your one-on-ones --

What's tough and what's awesome about this game is it takes 11 on every play, offensively, defensively, special teams. It really does. Every now and then you've got some guys that can erase a mistake. You can make up for something maybe. But all in all, it takes 11, and that's where we've got to be better. We're all 11 in sync, and that gives you then a chance.

Q. It appeared Graham got banged up a little on that second interception. He had his hand or wrist, I think, taped the rest of the game, non-throwing. What kind of



impact do you think that had on him the rest of the game, if at all, from your perspective?

PAUL CHRYST: I thought he dealt with it. I don't think that was the issue or the problem. And any time that -- everyone knows it. When you can make your quarterback uncomfortable, when you can get hits on the quarterback, when there's pressure, that affects it more than anything.

We had one early, ball pressure. I thought we could have gotten something different there. There's times when we were getting beat on it, and I thought that -- like I said going in, the majority of the game is going to be a man-to-man game, and you've got to win your one-on-ones, and then you've got to protect, you've got to win the one-on-one, and then you've got to deliver it. We didn't do that enough.

Q. The first half, I'm sure you weren't completely happy with, but during the game at that point, what's your message at halftime? Just curious. It seemed like the team was flat in the second half. I don't know if you're the type to scream when you don't like what you see, but I'm curious what the halftime was like for you.

PAUL CHRYST: You're at a moment right there. I sensed we were at a moment at halftime and how we come out and what's our -- how are we going to play this right from the get go?

Didn't get -- not a great way to start. They come down, and they drive and score, and then the fumble on the return. Certainly not what you want. Like you said, you're in a game, and that makes it -- again, turnovers, things like that make it that much harder. We've got to be better in that area to give ourselves a better chance.

Q. Do you think in the first half and even after that fumble on the kickoff return in the second half, do you think your defense held up for the most part and at least gave your offense a chance to maybe get something going?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I thought there was a stretch there I thought they were playing -- there was some drives -- and they made some plays, I'm not saying that -- but did a good job. I thought that's where we didn't complement each other, in my opinion.

Like I said, the first score was a short, short field off of the pick, and then I had another short field off of the second half return. I thought there was a number of times where they did a good job and stepped up. We've just got to play better football and better complementary football.

Q. What were your thoughts on the defensive pass interference calls and what your guys could have done better there?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, I'm anxious to see it. There was a lot of pushing and shoving and grabbing. Saw it on both sides, and so I'm anxious to see it.

Q. Paul, a lot of your guys talked about responding and bouncing back after last week. Are you disappointed in how they came out at certain times? Just how do you feel about how they responded to a bad loss last week?

PAUL CHRYST: I think that it's -- I think there's always -- you know, the response -- you can have some guys that respond well. It just doesn't go the way you want it to go, right? You still get to and have to play the next game. So I think that those are all lessons that you've got to learn. The game forces you to learn.

Just because you may have understood it and know what the response has got to be, you still have to then go out -- the thing that's awesome about this game is it is a team game, and that's where you're going to win as a team and you're going to lose as a team. I think there's an energy in that. There's an accountability to that. It's got all of it put together.

So I think that we've got to rally as a team, and that's where we're at right now. It's not going how anyone would want it to go, but the response, and it's a continuing response, has got to be strong.

We've got one way to go. We've got to learn from all the things that happened, but we've got one way to go on that, and that's to go forward.

Q. How do you think practice went this week, and why do you think that translated to what we saw today?

PAUL CHRYST: Each week you've got to play -- you get to play a game, and I thought there were some moments in practice, like every week, that was good, and there's some things in practice that you're glad it's practice and you're glad to keep going.

Then you get to play the game, and you play it together. Obviously we didn't do enough today to give ourselves a chance to win.

Q. Paul, where are you at emotionally right now, would you say?

PAUL CHRYST: I've been around this game for a long time, and I think it's one of the things you respect about the game. Do you want to be better? Absolutely. And you just want to focus on the things that you can do to help move the needle, help our players and assistant coaches.

We knew going in -- and been fortunate to be around and having coached a long time -- it's never easy. So I didn't think it's going to be easy, and yet I believe in this group and I like this group. I appreciate where they're coming from and how they go about it. I look forward to each day I get to be with them.

We get to be together again, and we've got to roll up our sleeves and continue to go to work.

Q. You mentioned response. If you look at the first early few minutes, touchdown drive, you're up, your defense forces a punt. You start from your 3, but you're in decent shape. Do you think that interception turned the momentum in Illinois' favor? And do you think from that point on your players, at least some, weren't able to respond and swing it back in your favor?

PAUL CHRYST: There's no question I think that was one where the -- not just the pick, but the yards after on it. All of a sudden it goes where we're backed up and we throw the pick and the good return after it, and now it's a short field. I think that does.

We've got to be a team, a group that, okay, when that stuff does happen, we've got to answer it. And I thought there's another time we came back, and the offense answered a score with a score. That's what you -- that's kind of how you have to play, complementary.

So I think there will always be, in every game we play, there's going to be those momentum swings. I think that's part of what good teams can do and teams that, if you want to give yourself a chance to win each and every Saturday, you've got to be able to handle those ebbs and flows and those momentum swings.

There aren't many games where the momentum isn't going to shift, and that's where an individual, a group, a unit, whatever that may be, has to kind of seize that moment. Okay, we've got that moment. Here's how we stop the momentum. And we certainly didn't do it enough today.

Q. I know it's tough right after a game, but is there any update you can give for guys like Hayden, Keontez, or Isaac?

PAUL CHRYST: Our trainer came by real quick and said

Keontez was back on the field, so I'm hopeful, but I don't know. Certainly Rucci and Isaac, I don't know exactly on that one.

Q. Paul, with some of the penalties and special teams miscues and drops and things like that, do you attribute that to a lack of focus? Or just what's your take on that?

PAUL CHRYST: I didn't think that -- okay, big miscue was the drop on the kickoff return. Not one part of me believes Isaac is just I'm going to go here, I'm just coming out, I'm just going to show up, and didn't know they were going to kick to me. I'm not buying that.

There's a guy that, boy, I appreciate everything he does, and it's the first one I remember him dropping.

And I understand what you're asking, but I don't believe -- I think every guy takes the field with the right intentions going in. Does that go back to our guys pressing? I don't know that answer, right? I think there's a fine line there, and I think that you've got to be able to certainly play the game, and when it comes your way, you've got to be able to seize those moments.

The fine line is those who press are guys that want to do anything they can for this team, and that's always a little bit dangerous because you still have to and you get to play the game. It's a reactionary game. You've got to be in position so when something comes your way, you're ready to take advantage of it.

So I don't know, and to be fair to our guys, I'd want to see everything before speaking on that, I believe. But I do know some of those that stick out to me like that, you wish it wouldn't happen, and no one more so than the individual that it happens to, but they do.

And every time something like that happens, we still always have -- I think there was a response off of that, but it makes it harder. It sure makes it harder.

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