

Wisconsin Football Media Conference

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Luke Fickell

Postgame Press Conference



Ohio State 24, Wisconsin 10

LUKE FICKELL: I don't even really know where to start. That's a tough one. It's a tough one in that locker room. It wasn't from a lack of effort. I think I've said that in the past. These guys have given us everything they can all week with the mindset and the mentality.

I thought we came out doing what we needed to do, to be honest with you. I thought we had a to weather a storm, make sure that first quarter we were in a good position. Just because of last year, because of some of those things that can creep into your head mentally about what has happened in the past, I thought it was really important for us to come out and play well, especially in the first quarter. I thought we did.

We go in at halftime, really kind of stress to them, Hey, get this thing to the fourth quarter, give ourselves a chance. We're in a good position. We get the ball. We've done a few things, but we haven't done enough. But we got to make this thing a war. We got to get it to the fourth quarter and see what we're made of.

I give those guys credit. I'm proud of 'em for following the plan and doing that, getting to the fourth quarter. Then the fourth quarter comes and we can't execute. We can't make the plays we need to make, the stops we need to stop. That's what it comes down to.

So kind of gut-wrenching for those guys and for all of us just because of all you put into it, what you built it up to be. Even after last week.

But this is tough one. Got to put this thing behind us fast and be able to move forward because I reminded those guys we got one guaranteed month left to us, four guaranteed games left to us. We have got to find a way to put this behind us and move forward.

Q. You can tell the emotions. A loss like this where it's so close, is it tougher than a lopsided one?

LUKE FICKELL: Yeah, I think in a lot of ways you got 'em to believe in the things we needed to do, even at halftime, to get them to believe in, Hey, get this thing into the fourth quarter, that's where we have to be at our best, what we trained for.

I give them credit, they did, they got us to the fourth quarter, then we couldn't get it done. We let them down a little bit. Maybe some situations I need to be more aggressive and some other situations we need to take advantage of some opportunities that we have just based on what kind of game it's going to be and what we're going to have to do to win the game.

So maybe I start to look at myself to say some of these decisions that maybe could have and should have gone the other direction.

Q. Special teams and field position can be critical. Those two punts, does Atticus have to do a better job not to give a short field to Ohio State?

LUKE FICKELL: We got to do a better job, too. Even the stop there in the second half defensively that we got, they still moved the ball and were able to put it in position where they downed it two or three times on the six yard line. With the defense they got, where we were within everything, just to put ourselves in that situation, that's tough. Then to not be able to drive it out of there and find a way to kind of flip the field on us.

I said it, the games that we've won, we've dominated and really kind of won the special teams battle. In the games we haven't, it's been either equal or neutralized. Even in some situations the field position battle has been won by them because of the way they punted the football and the way we haven't.

Q. Can you give us an update on Braelon? Did his injury affect your thinking at the end of the first half in terms of going for it on fourth down or no?

LUKE FICKELL: I don't have an update. No, I didn't even know, to be honest with you, whether he was down for a while or would he be able to get back up and play the next



play.

We made the decision or I made the decision in my head that we needed to get points. I put us in a bad situation, didn't call a timeout, then we ended up with a field goal we probably don't want to attempt at 54 yards.

Just be able to move the ball, especially at the end of the half. We had to get points, we had to get positive momentum going into the halftime, especially us getting the football.

So, no, it wouldn't have changed my mind, but I think those are the plays that in order to beat a team like that, you got to capitalize on in those situations. We just weren't able to do it.

Q. What did you see in terms of growth from week one start from Braedyn to now second week start?

LUKE FICKELL: I think you got to go back and really watch. The things I saw last week I saw again: poise and some things. But we'll have to go and see. We got to have guys step up. When things happen, we keep trying to -- we got to make everybody around us better. If that means that Braelon is down, somebody else has to step up. It doesn't fall on the shoulders of the quarterback.

I think he had to manage a lot more things tonight with some injuries.

Q. I imagine you don't believe in moral victories. You lost Braelon, Chimere. Did the performance tonight show you something about this group?

LUKE FICKELL: That's what's hard. I told them I'm proud of them in there for trying to execute a plan, meaning that, Here is what we're going to do. We got to play really well in the first quarter, get ourselves to halftime, let's make sure we can manage what it is we're doing, get this thing to the fourth quarter.

Then it doesn't happen, so they look at you like, This was the plan, coach. We got to find a way to execute. You put it on your shoulders a little bit.

We did have some other guys that stepped up. We had some situations, that's what I'm talking about with Braedyn, he had to manage some different situations with the guys we had, being a little bit more limited.

But that's the name of the game. That's the challenge I had I think to the guys last Sunday about as you get later in the season, you're going to have guys go down. We're going to have to have some of these guys that have not

played a big role play a much bigger role. It just happened to come true tonight.

Q. How much do game-changers make a difference? When you analyze games, teams, how much does that make a difference?

LUKE FICKELL: Players make plays. I mean, it's not hard to figure out sometimes. It's hard to stop. Yeah, they had two difference-makers that everybody knows about, but they were difference-makers again tonight.

Those are the things you got to find. When somebody goes down like Braelon, then somebody else has to step up. Hoping that you have some of those play-makers. Just haven't had the opportunities just yet.

But that's what we're going to have to find, find those guys that have the ability to step up when somebody else goes down and when they're number's called, they have the opportunity, the ball comes their way, can they make the plays.

Q. What is the biggest area of concern with your run defense so far this year?

LUKE FICKELL: I think it starts with leverage, then I think it goes into tackling. There's all different kinds. We saw earlier in the year a lot of space tackles that we weren't very good at. Maybe a little bit more tonight with some physicality on the tackling.

Actually the ones that hurt us, that's the big runs, I think we had some missed tackles or some bounce-offs, a couple of third downs where they throw a check-down, and we've got exactly what we want, and they find a way to get seven when they need seven or seven when they needed six.

But tonight was a tougher one to overload the box with what you had to deal with on the outsides, as well. It's a Catch-22. But we know that's where we've got to do a better job.

I know going into it not giving up the big plays was critical. If it was a methodical drive, I thought that is something that we're going to have to live with in some ways, then be able to make some plays.

We made enough minus yardage plays to put us in some really good situations, but in turn we gave up too many of those big plays.

Q. With Chim, he was officially questionable, was there any point you thought he could come back? How did you see the receivers?

LUKE FICKELL: I don't know. I didn't get an update on him. Go check on that here. So I don't know. Those guys had to step up. I don't know exactly. I don't know if Quincy got a little bit more of a role obviously. Bryson probably, you saw him a little bit, targeted a little bit more, which we need to do.

There's going to be other opportunities for other guys. C.J. Williams is going to have to step up, Quincy Burroughs, Vinny Anthony. There's going to have to be a lot of other guys based on where we are.

Q. Last week we talked about the bend don't break me policy for the defense. What can you take from your defense generating three turnovers?

LUKE FICKELL: They did a lot of good things. A lot of tackles for loss, minus yardage plays. The big plays are what we were I'm not going to say worried about but what we had to limit in order to be successful on a night like tonight, especially with the play-makers that they have.

We just got to keep looking at what it is we need to do. We're finding ways to create negative-yardage plays, but we're also unfortunately giving up some of the bigger plays. Sometimes in the past it's one on ones, they're going to make some of those. The run ones around the edge, especially the one that kind of put us in a really bad situation when it's 17-10 are the kickers that hurt.

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