

CFP First Round: Notre Dame vs Indiana

Friday, December 20, 2024

Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

Notre Dame Stadium

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Mike Denbrock

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame 27, Indiana 17

Q. Mike, you ran a lot of pistol. You were trying to do some screen stuff. I don't know if Riley Leonard was as decisive running the football as he normally is. What were you trying to do with what you were running?

MIKE DENBROCK: Yeah, I think coming in, they were a defensive unit, obviously, that had done an incredible job all season stopping the run. Their scheme in some ways, at least from our film study, was predicated off where you put the back in relation to the tight ends and where you move the tight ends and how you shift around and different things, so we were trying to throw them off the scent a little bit by being more in pistol and not having a clear answer to what side we were running the ball to or what type of scheme we were going to use. We used pretty multiple schemes out of the pistol as well as out of the shotgun.

I thought it gave us an opportunity to be a little bit more versatile, maybe take some of their stunting and movement out of the game, which it didn't. That was a miscalculation, obviously, because they continued to do it anyway.

But proud of the kids on offense and proud of finding a way, making enough and doing enough with obviously the support of an unbelievable defensive unit that had our backs all day.

Q. All year you've talked about how explosive Jordan Faison is. You got him a little bit more involved tonight, or at least Riley did. Was that part of the plan?

MIKE DENBROCK: Definitely. He's a guy for us offensively that's got to touch the football. I called the same play a couple different times hoping they would get into the coverage that they ended up in when we made the explosive pass down the field. I was right on some of them and wrong on some of them, and I thought their defensive



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coordinator did a really nice job of trying to keep me off balance.

They're a talented defense, and as I said, really, really proud of the way our guys hung in there and battled and just believed, and the result was obviously what we were all after.

Q. Mike, Riley has talked a lot this season about taking what the defense gives him. How did you feel like Indiana was defending the passing game, and how was Riley able to stay patient and keep chipping away until he got a big one at the end?

MIKE DENBROCK: Yeah, really with their coverage scheme, they force you to be patient. I thought we tried to really program in the prep time that we had the idea that we were going to have to use the backs and the tight ends and drop the ball down and take what they were allowing us to have. Then when it does present itself, we've got to be able to hit some shots down the field, and fortunately for us, the game really kind of played out that way.

Q. Coach Freeman was talking about getting into a scratch-and-claw game besides the long one Jeremiyah had on the offensive line in the run game. It feels like it's been a while since you were in a game like that. How did you feel like the run game responded?

MIKE DENBROCK: You know, I thought we had our moments, and I thought they had their moments. That's indicative of a very well-coached defense and some guys that are veteran in the scheme that they run. So they're able to be really, really multiple.

I thought they won some battles, but thank the good Lord we won a few of ours, as well.

Q. One of those battles that you won was that early one with Jeremiyah. The line really opened some big holes there, especially I think Anthonie Knapp kicked his guy out. How important was it to send that kind of physical message early on?

MIKE DENBROCK: I mean, you're backed up on your one



and a half yard line and you call something that you hope is protected on the edges and the guys understand and do a nice job of executing, and here comes No. 4. Anthonie Knapp did an unbelievable job. I thought the tight ends did a nice job of wiping out the front side of it. We did a good job of building a wall on the backside, which is something we spent a lot of time working on over the course of the last two weeks, and if you give this guy an inch, he's going to take a mile, and God bless him for doing so.

Q. At this point, how do you explain or describe what Jeremiyah Love does week in and week out?

MIKE DENBROCK: Yeah, he is the engine that kind of sparks this thing to go in a real positive direction. Every week he seems to find a way to make an explosive play, hurdle somebody, run for 98 yards. What do you want? It's kind of dealer's choice, and I'm honored to have him around.

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