

CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Ohio State Buckeyes

Chip Kelly

Offensive Coordinator

Press Conference

Q. Notre Dame mixes in a lot of man coverage, probably heavier than other teams you guys have played recently. Are you excited to get your receivers in those match-ups and see --

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, Al Golden does a great job with that defense. They mix and match their coverages. I think they're one of the top pass defenses in the country. And it shows.

I think they're well coordinated. Their front and back end work really well together. That's a challenge that we're going to have on Monday night.

Q. When you look back at the Texas game, what were they doing in your more technical eyes to kind of cut down on what Jeremiah was able to do; obviously Cornell got free, Emeka comes up -- what was successful about Texas' secondary?

CHIP KELLY: I think they rolled some things to Jeremiah to try to take him away, some bracket coverages and a guy inside, guy outside, guy over the top. And Will did a great job of diagnosing what they were doing. I think Cornell had a huge game for us.

And Will did a great job diagnosing what they were doing. I think Cornell had a huge game for us. Mek had five. Cornell had seven. I thought the tight ends, the combination of Gee and Will, did a great job. And then obviously the back out of the backfield.

So the beauty of what we have is we have more than one weapon. So I think the quarterback has to make really good decisions on what they're trying to take away and then adjust accordingly. And I think Will did a good job of that.

Q. Did you say you gave Will a hard time over the



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headset after he tripped on the fourth-down run?

CHIP KELLY: I could have.

Q. You don't have to tell me what you said. Do you normally lighten the mood? Is it always a play call straight in? What are the communications like? He can't respond.

CHIP KELLY: He can't respond, so I can say whatever I want. It's kind of like being married. It's reversed, reversed.

Q. Do you take that opportunity much to ever lighten the mood?

CHIP KELLY: It all depends on the situation. I can't really pinpoint one thing or another. It was huge probably for us, it was fourth-and-two. We had to convert, keep the drive alive. And I talked to him but it wasn't the next play. It was in between series and we had an opportunity to chat about that because we still had to go down and score.

Q. Big picture, are you happy with what's happened to Ryan Day after what he's gone through? You guys are friends. You're close. Can you speak to -- I know coaches sign up for the deal, but you've got to be really happy?

CHIP KELLY: I am. I think the one thing that, knowing him for so long, I'm not surprised. I told him a long time ago he was built for this. He understands the gravity of what you have to do to be a head coach here. I think he's handled it tremendously.

He's the same person every day. I think the consistency in how he shows up here every day and what his mission is, and how he drives this entire program -- coaches, people in the building, players, whatever -- is very evident.

And we get a chance to play one more game. And that's what the mantra had been since the last game of the regular season. We get to keep this group together. Everything he's talked about since that day we've done. So we've got to continue it.

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Q. It's a load off his shoulders. Did you see after --

CHIP KELLY: I do not sense any load off of his shoulders right now. Maybe ask me that question next Tuesday. But I don't sense any load off his shoulders right now.

Q. You mentioned the tight ends. You've been using the 12 personnel a little bit. What do you like about that? What And how important is that going to be against a physical defense like Notre Dame?

CHIP KELLY: I think it depends on how the other team deploys, when you put it in the game. There's always a response to, we put a personnel grouping in, they have an opportunity to match that personnel and have an opportunity to say, we're going to play it in this grouping. And do we think that match-up is favorable to us or is it favorable to them?

I think when you look at how Notre Dame does it, they're good. And I think that would be an interesting match-up, along with our 11 personnel and along with some of our other personnel groupings. And that's part of a game that goes on within a game.

But we'll see how they decide that they're going to handle it. And then if it's how we thought it was going to be, then maybe we'll continue that. But it may not be what we thought it was going to be, and then we say, all right, that's probably not a personnel grouping we're going to use today.

Q. You guys have been rotating Luke, Austin and Tegra at the guard spots (indiscernible) two games. I think Luke played every snap at left guard. Just seeing him with extended snaps how do you think he graded out?

CHIP KELLY: I think Luke did a nice job. I think the rotation part, Austin was banged up a little bit, so how much could we get from him? He's a warrior and gave us everything he had.

So those decisions on the reps of what we're going to do with those guys will be based upon where is our health when we get to next Sunday and Monday, when we start to talk about depth. But I thought Luke, with extended snaps, did a nice job.

Q. They pride themselves on defense, ranked second in the country behind Ohio State. Just how big of a challenge is it? And when you have a defense you can be in a game can't you?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, obviously. I think both teams have

proven that, that's why we're here. But they do an outstanding job. They've got some real veteran leaders. Cross and Kiser have both been there, this is year six for those guys. And Watts in the secondary has been around a long time.

They've got depth up front, second level and third level. They're really smart. You can watch their communication that goes on during the play, and you can see how in tune they are to what the coaching staff is asking them to do.

So that's a huge challenge for us on Monday going up against a really, really well coached defense. They've got some really good players that have played a lot of football.

I think both teams have guys that have played a lot of football. And that experience has thrown through the playoffs.

Q. When you see Will make the mistake on the first drive in the second half, you're trying to get the ball to Jeremiah, is that an aggressive mistake for Will, and you're trying to get the ball to Jeremiah and trying to involve your best players? You're not excusing something like that, but is it almost, like, we're trying to get the ball there, you understand why (inaudible)?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, he just didn't see the linebacker underneath in the coverage. He read the top of the coverage really well. He didn't see the underneath part of the coverage. We discussed it just like we normally do between each series about what just transpired and what we need to do next.

The one thing about Will is he owns everything he does. Because if you don't own it, then you're going to make the same mistake again because you don't realize how you did it. He knew right away he just didn't see the linebacker.

He felt like the top of the coverage was deep enough and Jeremiah had pushed them off enough where he could throw the ball to him, but he didn't spot the underneath coverage.

That's something he'll learn from. And hopefully, the one thing I love about Will, usually he doesn't make the same mistake twice. So let's hope that he has that out of his system.

Q. Obviously came into the season, probably one of the best (inaudible). Leonard Moore stepped up really well. Curious thoughts on him and what that whole secondary has got.

CHIP KELLY: I think the whole secondary, you look at how



much man they play, and the reason they do it is because they can. And no one's really exploited that with them. So I think they all can cover.

So it's not like, well, just stay away from him and throw against this guy. I think all of them are really, really skilled. And I think how coordinated it is with the whole group, that they all have an understanding of where they're supposed to be, when they're supposed to be there. And they do a really good job of it.

So I know they did lose a corner early in the season. But they've seemed to just continue to roll on defense and the statistics will show you that.

Q. A long year, when you're (indiscernible) a game you know there's another game, seven more games down the road. This is the last one, win or lose. I'm curious does that change anything in preparation, play design, snap distributions? Is there anything different about knowing that you have no game prep after this?

CHIP KELLY: That's a good question. I don't think we've talked about that one yet. But we certainly don't save things going into games saying, hey, this is a really good deal, let's not run it because we want to run it three or four games down the road, because you don't know who you're going to have what you're going to do.

You make your decisions based on personnel available that week what's going to help you that football game. And those are the same decisions being made now.

So snap count going into a game, we don't really talk about that. The only time that ever comes up is when you're up and you're starting to think about substituting. So if the score is 42-7 in the third, what are we going to get Donny out and when will we get Seth out because you hate to lose a guy when the score is 42-7 in a game, because we do have multiple games to play after that. But that's the only time we've really talked about that.

Q. After the game, Ryan talked about that screen, said it was something so far from his mind he wasn't sure when you guys even practiced it. What went into the decision to dial that up there in that situation?

CHIP KELLY: Obviously there was 29 seconds to go in the first half and we were on our 25-yard line. So, let's see if we can get something here on the first play. If we can, then we'll get into two-minute mode. But if we can't then you'll probably take a knee go in at halftime.

We thought it was a safe play to run and see if we could pop something and obviously it worked. But it worked

because Tre is a pretty good player, so if you can get him into open spaces, like we did, he can stick his foot in the ground and get north and south really, really fast.

Q. How have you seen Jeremiah respond to the game he had? What do you think that says about his maturity at his age?

CHIP KELLY: He's been great. We practiced yesterday, and he was flying around excited about the opportunity to go play in the national championship.

He's always a forward-looking guy. What's next, what's the next challenge, and what do we get to do? That's kind of what his mindset has been like.

That does speak to his maturity because he's always, what's the next challenge. And I think that's one of the things I love about him.

Q. What was your reaction to Jack's touchdown?

CHIP KELLY: Just excited. I mean, in that situation, to be where that drive was -- you know, it's first and goal from the one after back-to-back penalties. You're in a one-score game. They're tying it up. And we're talking about when we get the ball back how much time is left on the clock and what can we do in regulation.

And for that whole series of plays, just kind of watching them unfold and what happened.

But for Jack and the impact that he has on this program to see that whole thing kind of just -- it was kind of a storybook happening right in front of you.

But anytime our defense can score or we can return punts for touchdowns, offensive guys get really excited.

Q. How much, or if at all, have you watched last year's game against Notre Dame?

CHIP KELLY: We watched it.

Q. Is there anything that they did in their coverage of Marvin, because he only had three catches in that game, that would be applicable to how they might try to take away Jeremiah?

CHIP KELLY: I don't think we looked at it that way. But we looked at that game and we looked at every game they played this year. So they played man in every game they've played. It's not like they're doing something special in one game over another game.

And they played some good receivers. There's some teams they played that have some really talented receivers. They've done a great job against everybody, whether it's Louisville or SC, people who have thrown the ball all over the place, they've done a great job in coverage. And the numbers will tell you that. We've got to be prepared for all coverages.

That's the other thing, they don't just play one coverage. They're going to mix it up. They try to keep you off balance and keep the quarterback guessing. They bring different blitzes and attack your pressures in a really good matter.

I think Al's background as an NFL guy, being with the Lions and Bengals, has really shown there's a lot of NFL concepts he's running there.

And their players do a great job of adjusting on the fly, too, because people try to confuse them and line up in different formations and move and things like that, and they always seem to figure it out.

Q. There's a narrative out there that Ohio State wouldn't be here if they didn't lose to Michigan. I'm curious your thoughts on that, that the Michigan game woke you guys up or got you motivated or made you angry? Do you agree with that or do you think that's nonsense?

CHIP KELLY: I've learned a long time ago as a coach that I'm not into narratives. I think we live in a week-to-week world, and that's how we've always approached things.

And I think our week-to-week is just it's the beginning of the week and what do we do on a Monday? What's a Monday look like? What's a Tuesday look like? What's a Wednesday look like? How's your preparation? And then you go play the game.

And you've got about 20 hours to adjust to what happened, whether it was a win or whether it was a loss. And then you move on to the next game.

So the narrative part of it isn't something I think coaches really talk about that this set up that, set up this. You guys are the experts at writing narratives. We're just trying to get a first down. I don't look at it from that perspective.

Q. The decision to come over to Ohio State, just reflecting on that hindsight 20/20 and what you can say about this experience and the opportunity that presented itself from Coach Day?

CHIP KELLY: It's been awesome. And I think just really you think about, as a coach, the day to day. So your ability

to, what it's like every day you're in the Woody, and to be with this staff and everybody that's in this building. And then to be around the players on a daily basis, it's what's made this thing really special.

Excited that we get an opportunity to be together for one more week because this is an extremely close-knit group. I think the connection from the players to the coaches and players to players and coaches to coaches is really kind of special and one of the reasons we've had the success that we've had.

So we're going to enjoy these last couple of days here in the Woody and get on a plane and get to Atlanta and play a game on Monday night.

Q. On the Jeremiah Smith thing, I don't know if your game plan called for him to be an All-American decoy, or did Texas just do anything special to take him out of your offense?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, Pete and his staff did a really good job on the defensive side of some bracket coverages on Jeremiah. I think Will really recognized it. That's why Cornell had a bigger game. Our tight ends were really evolved. Emeka was really involved, and the running back was really involved.

That's the thing about here we have more than one weapon at our skill positions. So the quarterback has got to figure out what they're doing and then take advantage of it. I thought Will did a really good job of doing that.

Q. One of the things I wanted to know is about coach Brian Hartline. And it's obviously clear he's been exceedingly good position coach and asset to the offense. But one of the he has done really well is just develop these guys. Regardless of whether they're coming in as a four- or five-star recruit, he's sort of able to pull more out of them. Given you're around many types of position coaches in your time, what does Coach Hartline do that's so different makes him so good about specific aspects of his job?

CHIP KELLY: I think whatever the word is that's better than really, really good is what Brian is. He's as good a coach as I've been around in all aspects. He can do it all. He can recruit. He can develop players. He can put together a game plan.

His knowledge in the passing game is outstanding, and we really lean on him a lot in terms of what we're doing from a pass standpoint.

But his ability to develop players, what he demands from

him in individual drills, how he can explain to our players how you can apply to individual drills to the game itself and then watch that manifest itself is really special.

But I think Brian is an outstanding football coach. And really fortunate that I got a chance to work with him this year.

Q. You guys have been planning for 16 or 17 games since even before you arrived. When you did arrive, how quickly was that made to your attention in terms of like the running game? And how do you think Tre and Quinshon have operated in this split system, because they both look as fresh as they did against Akron?

CHIP KELLY: We talked about it from the beginning, what our long term was because of how long the season was going to be. And really didn't have any evidence at the college level because at the FBS level you've never played this many games because there was never a four-game playoff for you to get to the championship game.

So we talked about this being a long season and how do we do that. That was the reason they went out and recruited Q. And he got here before I got here. But how do you distribute the carries between those guys?

They're eerily close in yardage right now. I don't know the exact difference between the two of them. But it's pretty close. I know it was one yard going into the Texas game.

But both those guys are fresh. You're going to need all weapons. You're going to need all hands on deck. We knew this was going to be a battle of attrition, playing a 16-game schedule. Obviously we've lost a few guys in Seth and Jimmy, just like everybody else. But the core of our guys are still here, and they're going to be fresh when we play on Monday.

Q. On Donny, he did not allow any pressures against Texas. How much progress has he made since early November to now at left tackle?

CHIP KELLY: Donny has really been an unsung hero there in terms of what he's done because switching from guard to tackle is not as easy as I think maybe some people think it is. It's a totally different game. A lot of times you're out there on an island by yourself.

You're obviously also protecting the quarterback's backside because Will is right-handed quarterback, so that left tackle position is critical for us.

But from where he stepped in and what he did, he's been

outstanding. And I think he was the offensive player of the game, him and Tre, they shared that award this past week against Texas.

In this building we recognize what he's done and how he's continued to develop. But I think it speaks to his leadership and his whole mission of why he came back here and how unselfish he is. And that permeates through the whole offensive line and the entire offense. And I think we all look at Donny as the leader on this side of the ball.

Q. Talking about the fourth-and-two run earlier, how big was that play right before with G to gain a couple of extra yards? How big was that in the way you called the next play?

CHIP KELLY: It puts it in a whole different perspective. So, are you making -- are you punting, if you're incomplete on that? Or then if it's fourth-and-five it's definitely a different play call than what we had an opportunity to call. So when you get into fourth-and-two you have the ability to run it or throw it to potentially pick up the first down. That was big.

And I think sometimes you look at games and look at plays that are sometimes they go unnoticed. But his effort, because he got hit and the yards he made after contact to put it into fourth-and-two was huge. But that's G. And he's done everything since I've been here to just whatever it takes for us to win a game and whatever role you want me to play I'll play it. And, again, one of those senior leaders that's really stepped up in a critical situation.

Q. Last couple of games, the (indiscernible) Quinshon and yards after contact, he had a nice block on (indiscernible) TreVeyon. He was kind of ping-ponging off people on those touchdowns he scored. What does his physicality bring to your offense? And, I guess, what's it say about him that he's bringing that mentality even though he's not getting the ball 25 times a game?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, and I think he's brought it all year long like that. You look at the run he had in the Marshall game, with unblocked linebacker, comes to mind right away and a couple of the other physical runs where he set the tone. And I think our players kind of expect that from him, whether he's blocking or whether he's carrying the football.

But you've got to have a physicality. To win the whole thing, you're not going to win it by being a passive group. I think it just sets the tone and shows everybody else what those guys are going to do.

You look at his block on Tre's run on that play on Friday night against Texas was reminiscent of the block that Tre had for him against Penn State. I think it speaks volumes to both those guys that whether they're blocking for each other or they're carrying the football in a critical situation down in the red zone, we can count on their physicality and that they'll deliver a blow to the defense, whether it's as a blocker or ball carrier.

Q. When you just evaluate what Will's done this season as a whole, what's impressed you most about what he's done to get you guys to this point?

CHIP KELLY: I think his leadership and how he grew into that role organically. Honestly, almost everybody on offense besides Q and him were already here. So to come in and just go to work -- and I think the players respected his work ethic and the time he put in and they watched him grow and develop, and the football player he was when they first saw him in the spring to the football player he is now, you can see him growing in leaps and bounds.

He fit in great with all his teammates. But they noticed the things behind closed doors -- how hard he works at the game, how much he studies football, how he puts ourselves and gives us an opportunity because he handles a lot of checks for us and we do a lot of things at the line on scrimmage because he can have that on his plate. And he can handle it.

I think his decision-making allows us to do a lot of different things both run and pass-wise in games.

So watching him continue each week to -- we can put more on his plate, so we'll never be a play behind because he can put us in the right situation, has really been a joy as a coach to watch him do that.

Q. When you guys lost Josh and Seth, most people probably thought you guys are in a lot of trouble.

CHIP KELLY: Was that the narrative?

Q. Yes, very much so. (Laughter)?

CHIP KELLY: Thank goodness we were just day to day.

Q. What did you do and Justin and Ryan and the players do to kind of get it together and not be a liability -- schematically, mentally, whatever it might have been?

CHIP KELLY: I think it's a combination of all of it. When you now have different players, different personnel pieces in there, what do they do well and how do we accentuate

that and how do we kind of protect maybe what a weakness is on those guys, because you've got two different guys in there.

So it wasn't at the same time with both those guys. So there was a transition there for a little bit when Jimmy went down and Donny moved out and Carson jumped in at guard and Seth was still there kind of running the show, and I think kind of helped us weather that storm initially.

And when we lost Seth, bumping Carson in and starting rotating to rotate the guards, it was a whole other thing. So kind of two separate things.

But I think Justin deserves a ton of credit for what he did how he worked with all those guys. I think they got a really good understanding of what we're trying to get accomplished, and I think our job is to try to put them in position to make plays and let them go play. And I think they've done a really good job of that.

So that speaks to the depth of this team. We knew it was going to be tested when you play this many games. But the fact that we could weather that speaks to really how that whole O line and the cohesiveness of the entire group.

Q. Following up on that, Justin Pratt told me one of the things that stood out to him was the way Will stepped up in a leadership way with the offensive line when Seth went down. You were out there on the practice field or wherever it happened and stuff. But what did you notice from that dynamic also, a quarterback literally taking ownership of a situation there and instead of hanging heads going the opposite direction?

CHIP KELLY: I think it's a good point. I think one of the things, Will is conscious of what's going on, he's very aware. So not only did we lose a great player in Seth, we lost a great leader in Seth. So there was a little bit of a vacuum from a leadership standpoint. So Will did a great job.

I think between Will and Donny, those are the two real leaders of those guys up front and bringing those other guys along with him. But that was evident to us after Seth went down that both Will and Donny kind of stepping up and filling that void of losing Seth because Seth was such a great leader for that group up front.

Q. The other thing, you were asked this a while ago, but I wanted to follow up on this aspect of it. What's it like as an offensive coordinator to be going into the last game of the year and all of your weapons are available to you it appears, and your offensive line has

found itself over the last four games? What is that feeling like as you sit in your office and look at your playbook, your pad or your computer, whatever you have your plays on, et cetera? Do you feel like the whole world's open to you to, create? What's that sense?

CHIP KELLY: You do until you turn the tape on and look at their defense and say, I don't know if that play is going to work against them, I don't know if that play is going to work against them just because how good they are defensively.

That's the one thing in our week of preparation and going into it, is just how much respect we have for Notre Dame's defense and what they can do and what they've done against everybody they've played.

You watch those guys play, as a fan of football, you admire how cohesive that entire group is and how hard that group plays. So, credit to Marcus and Al for how those guys got those guys playing right now.

Q. You seem to have had an answer. If people do take this away from you, you've got that. Do you feel like you've got that going, you understand what I'm saying?

CHIP KELLY: I understand exactly what you're saying but I don't know any coach that ever feels like that. I don't think there's any coach, six days before the national championship that thinks "I got this."

Q. Jeremiah Smith (indiscernible) Carnell Tate and Emeka Egbuka, for example?

CHIP KELLY: I know, and we're really, really happy that we have them. But we also have great respect for who we're going against and it's going to be a battle. And I think that's the great part of it. You have the two best teams in football playing against each other.

And it wasn't voted on that these two teams play, it was earned by both teams. It's an opportunity to go against Marcus and Al and what they'll put out there defensively and those players. You watch Cross and Kiser and Watts and the rest of that group play, as a fan I admire how hard that group plays on defense.

And if you're a competitor, that's what you want to play against. You really want to get an opportunity to play against the best. So we played two SEC teams and got an opportunity to beat them. We played the No. 1 team in the country and we beat them.

This is the next challenge. And the next challenge is an

outstanding Notre Dame team, and we're excited about the opportunity to go play it.

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