

# CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

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Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Chip Kelly

### Press Conference



**NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIP**  
ATLANTA 2025

Our job as coaches is to put them in position to make plays, but they go out play the game. That team in '10 was really special, and this team is really special.

#### Q. (Question about the Notre Dame defense)

CHIP KELLY: I think the cohesiveness of the entire group. All 11 play together. It's a really, really well-coached unit. The front six, so to speak, are really coordinated with the back five.

How they do it is a credit to Marcus and Al Golden, their defensive coordinator. They do a really good job. I think they all have understanding of if they are playing certain coverages, how do people try to attack that. I think they have answers for it.

I think it's the whole cohesiveness of the whole group that makes them a really special defense.

#### Q. (Indiscernible) talked about (inaudible) a lot of different (indiscernible). What do you talk about his toughness, the guys on the O line (inaudible)?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, it's really everybody. I would say it's probably the same thing for Notre Dame. When you're going to play this many games in college football -- it's 16 for both of us -- so we knew it would be a game of attrition.

They've lost some players. We've obviously lost Seth and Jimmy and a couple players along the way as well. So to win the whole thing it's going to take great team depth.

Our guys that are playing right now, there's not anybody that's 100 percent. That's just the nature of the game we play. But the toughness and the grit of that group, especially up front, has really shown through.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, it's always about the players. We had great players on that 2010 team. We have great players on this team. The credit goes to those guys. We're here because of them.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

CHIP KELLY: It's been a blast. I think we have an amazing staff. The guys you get to work with every day, you spend 16, 18 hours a day with this group of guys on offense with Brian Hartline and Justin Frye and Carlos Locklyn and Keenan Bailey and that whole group of guys that we spend time with, Billy Fessler, Riley Larkin. There's a bunch of guys, Tim Drevno, that we spend a lot of time with offensively.

And the players here are special. Getting an opportunity to coach them every day and be around them, they love football. They love being a part of it. And it's exciting to be around these guys every day.

#### Q. (Question about Jeremiah Smith)

CHIP KELLY: I think you have to take what the defense gives you whenever you play. And if they're going to try to take Jeremiah away, then we also have other weapons. I think Emeka is a great player. Carnell Tate is a great player. TreVeyon is a great player. Out tight ends really contributed a lot during the Texas game.

But Jeremiah, for a freshman to do what he's done this season is absolutely -- sometimes you just kind of, wow. And that's just the type of player he is.

We obviously have plans and thoughts of what we're going to try to do to get Jeremiah going. But we'll see how Notre Dame decides to defend us.

#### Q. (Off microphone)?

CHIP KELLY: I think they have a really good framework of it this time. When I went the last time, there was no conference championship. It was you finish the regular season and you went to the national championship. There were 37 days between each game. So there was quite a buildup.



For this group, because of the new playoff system, with 12 teams being in it, and this being the fourth game of a four-game stretch, no. Had to play Tennessee. Had to get up again to go play in the Rose Bowl. You win the Rose Bowl it gives an opportunity to play in the Cotton Bowl. Win the Cotton Bowl, it gives you a chance to play in this one.

I think it's been more of a weekly thing in terms of our preparation. It's usually about eight to 10 days in between games. It's been a different feel than having 37 days in between games.

These guys are focused exactly on what they have to do to win the next game. And they did it in the first three. It gave them an opportunity to play in this one. And it's going to be -- we're going to need everything we have and our guys are prepared to do that.

**Q. (Question about Jeremiah Smith)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I mean, I knew the first couple days you saw him running around out there that he was special. You factor in that he still should have been in high school, but it was evident very early when you watched Jeremiah running around and doing some things athletically that he was a special talent.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: It's been great. We have an amazing staff and the guys you work with on a daily basis. We have a great administration -- first Gene Smith and then Ross Bjork do an unbelievable job supporting the program.

And you get to coach some amazing players on a daily basis. That part's been a lot of fun. I've really enjoyed this last, I don't know how many months I've been here, eight, nine months, it's been awesome.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I was just saying earlier, it's different. When I went to the national championship, with the team I was on, with the national championship, before you won your last regular season game and then the number one and number two team got picked to go play, and there were 37 days in between.

And with this one, there was about two weeks in between our last regular season game and then our first playoff game. And there's about 10 days to the next playoff game and 10 days to the next playoff game.

It's kind of uncharted territories. We knew it was going to be a battle of attrition. We knew your depth would really truly be tested. And we tried to plan for that during the season.

We were a little bit more slowed down on offense. And there was a reason; we knew we were going to play in a 16-game schedule. You just can't run 100 snaps in every game during the regular season and expect to be fresh during the end of the season. We planned on that.

But it is uncharted territories. We're first ones to do it. We're as healthy as we can be going into this last one.

We've lost two really good players in Seth and Jimmy on the offensive line, but we lost them for the season. The rest of the guys are ready and rearing to go. So we're excited about the opportunity.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: It's been great. He's a great football coach. He's a great person. The whole room, we spend a lot of time together as a group. So it's Justin, it's Carlos Locklyn and it's Keenan Bailey, and it's Brian Hartline, and it's everybody.

I think our staff gets along really, really well. We've got a really good understanding what our system is and how we can use it to attack people. And it changes differently on each week because we face different schematic groupings every week. But it's been awesome. And I really enjoyed working with this group.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: If I was the commissioner of college football, what would I change? There's a lot of things that have gone on in the last couple of years. I think they're moving in the right direction.

I think the first thing I would change they should have a commissioner of college football. That would be the first thing I would change. It would not be me, but there's a lot of really good people out there that I think care very much about this game. But that would be the first thing I would change.

I actually would have a commissioner. That could be the final answer to everything that we need.

**Q. (Question about Nick Saban taking the commissioner job)**

CHIP KELLY: I think a lot of people, Gene Smith, he just



retired. But I think there's a committee of coaches. There should be a committee of administrators, The Gene Smiths of the world that understand that side of it, because that's different. Coaches may not understand that side of it.

There are some coaches that just recently retired. I think Nick, David Shaw. I think the world of David Shaw. Chris Petersen would be three coaches right off the top of my head. I think Gene would be a great administrator. I don't have a vote, but any of those guys would be good in that position.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I don't know if there's one. I just think the one thing about Will is he just keeps getting better each week. And the more reps he gets -- I heard him say it last week -- he just wishes he was here longer. I wish we could have had him for more than one year. I could have been around him more than one year.

He's awesome to coach. He really takes coaching really well. He's an unbelievably coachable guy.

But he also has -- there's so much give and take with us. Like, how does this feel for you? And it's because we trust him and I think he trusts us. And that part's been awesome.

And watching him grow as a player and as a person, how he turned into the leader of this offensive football team. He didn't force it early; it happened organically.

Especially after we lost Seth up front, more fell on his shoulders. He handled it well.

Every day he grows. He's got a great mindset. He's a life long learner. He wants to get better on a daily basis. That's what makes it fun to coach him.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: That's called life. I don't think anybody ever thinks that it's going to ideally be, whatever job you have. I'm going to do this because it's exactly how it's going to happen.

But I think most coaches and the friends of mine, we understand that this isn't a scripted deal. There's not a script that's already been laid out for everybody, and this is how it works out.

You get excited about the different things that happen. I think part of being a coach is you have to be a problem solver. There's going to be problems every day. And

there's some people that complain about the problems. There's other people that are, all right, that's why we're in this position; how do we solve this problem? And there's a million different ones you have to solve on a daily basis.

But that's the fun part of coaching. I think it's a different landscape. I don't think the game's in a better spot from where it is right now. I think the game of college football, you look at how many people are watching it and how many people are playing it, how many stories you can tell about some unbelievable players.

Look at the stories about the players just from Ohio State, and stories about the players from Notre Dame, the whole thing is pretty special. And we've just got to continue to always try to make it better on a daily basis.

**Q. (Question about going into a game how the defense reacts)**

CHIP KELLY: The game itself is situational. We have it, what are our first-and-10s, second-and-long, second-and-medium, second-and-short calls; third-and-short, third-and-medium, third-and-long calls; red-zone calls; coming-out calls.

We have it where we spend the entire week during the year, during the entire time during the week of really slotting what we want to do from a situational standpoint, so as the game unfolds, what situation are we in right now? Are we in a second-and-long or a second-and-short? Because how they deploy their defense on second-and-long and how they deploy their defense on second-and-short.

Sometimes it's the same but sometimes it's entirely different. You have to be prepared for that. We always look at it as the situation occurs, what are the best plays that we have in our system to try to run at this point in time.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: You can. But with this group we decided it's not the best thing for this group. We play a 16-game season. If you played 100 snaps through 12 games you're at 1200 snaps. I think we're at 700.

This game takes a toll on you. If you know going into it, it was a little bit uncharted territory; no one has ever played at the FBS level a 16-game season. What type of toll does that take on you?

To lead the country in plays snapped wasn't our goal. Our goal was to get to the National Championship game. So I believe besides the loss of Seth and Jimmy, that

everybody else is up and ready to go. So we're fresh.

The fact that we have two running backs that can rotate all the time so you don't have a bell cow and all of a sudden he's down, what do you do now? We've rotated our receivers; we have a bunch of receivers that can play. We have a bunch of tight ends that can play.

A part of it was the length of the season has changed. Before, back when I was at Oregon, you were in the regular season and then you go to a bowl game. We had 37 days off between the final regular season game against Oregon State and then our bowl game against Auburn. That's an entirely different thing.

You play your last game in the regular season. Two weeks later you're playing Tennessee. If you beat Tennessee you go to the Rose Bowl. If you win the Rose Bowl, you go to the Cotton Bowl. If you win the Cotton Bowl, you go to the National Championship. The whole landscape of the schedule has really impacted what we did on both sides of the ball.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Oh, yeah. Ryan talked to our entire staff about that. That's been on the forefront of our strength and conditioning program, our nutrition program, how our offense plays, how our defense plays, how our special teams plays.

That was an overall program decision from the head coach down of how do you handle this length of a season, because it hadn't been done before. It wasn't, like, hey, let's go call this guy because he did it. At this level it hadn't been done.

You kind of pick the brains of some people that have been through it at different levels and put together a plan for ourselves.

**Q. (Indiscernible) offense has been on fire. (Inaudible) what's it like looking to know I've got everything in front of me?**

CHIP KELLY: I think your confidence as a coach is based upon the players' preparation. And they've been unbelievable in this run up here and going into Tennessee, going into Oregon, going into Texas. It's how prepared are they. And I think they've done a great job.

We talk about being the most prepared and the least distracted. And they've done that for three straight weeks in terms of these last three games. And now that's the challenge again as we finish up this last one.

We have a practice today. We have a practice tomorrow. So we're still working the game. And we'll work the game right up until kickoff. And then we'll work the game while the game's going on.

It's really the players and how dialed in they've been in this stretch that we're on right now.

**Q. What are one or two things they do well that you'll have your eye on come Monday night?**

CHIP KELLY: I think they just play together as a group. They really, truly understand what the D line needs from the linebackers, what the linebackers need from the secondary. They all work off of each other. It's a really well-coordinated defense. A lot of credit goes to those players.

You have some older players like Kiser and Cross and Watts at all three levels that have been around for a long time, kind of the coaches on the field, so to speak.

I think Marcus, being a defensive guy, and Al Golden have done a great job with that entire group. The cohesiveness of the entire group I think is something that's really special.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I think how well they do it. I think some people, just do this. They cut routes. They coordinate. They handle motion really well. They can double people at times. They can have a free player. They can drop a lineman into coverage even though it's man coverage. It's not just they play man this is what they do.

It's not just one style. There's a lot of different leverages that they have. They understand how people are trying to attack them and they can make adjustments within the scheme.

It's a really, really well-coordinated operation where I think it's not doing them justice if you say, well, Notre Dame just plays man. No, they play a lot of combinations of man.

They can double people. They can have extra eyes in the backfield. They do a lot of different things within their scheme. And that's what makes it so hard. That's why they've been so successful.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: No, not that style. Maybe on third down a little bit, did some things from a third-down standpoint. Did a little bit of what we've seen on tape from these guys. But





not to the level in how well they do it. And then how well-coordinated it is.

And to the extent of it. So there's a reason they're here. And that group leads them. They're as good a defense as there is in the country.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I just think our players are really focused on what the next opponent was and what we had to do to win that game.

So we talked about being the most prepared and the least distracted. They did a great job of it in the Tennessee game. That gave them an opportunity to go play Oregon. Did a great job when we went out to the Rose Bowl and play in the Cotton Bowl against Texas in a really great environment. They did it again. And we've got two more days until we tee it up again and try to finish this thing off.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: No, I think our philosophy has always been a week-to-week thing. But based upon who you're playing, so what are the keys to playing Iowa? Your focus is on beating a really good Iowa team against Phil Parker who is one of the best.

And then your keys are on facing Indiana and what Curt brought in with a new defense and what their challenges are because Iowa's defense and Indiana's defense are different. The same thing with Tennessee's, is different than those guys.

It's really who you face each week and then what -- the only one that was different for us was that we played Oregon twice. So we had seen them once before.

But besides that, it's always kind of a new challenge. And you start from scratch each week and say, all right, we watched the last game, we grade it. And on Sunday we move on to the next opponent. And then we start from scratch when we move on to the next opponent.

And it's, what's our base run game this week? It may be totally different than what your base run game was last week based upon who you're playing from a personnel standpoint and a schematic standpoint.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I'm not a noise guy because I don't rate it or pay attention to it. I think most of the coaches that have been around as long as I have have learned probably

no reason to.

We always talk about praise and blame is all the same. Don't lead it when they're saying good things, don't read it when they're saying bad things. What really matters is, are you following the vision that you have for your program? And you're working tirelessly every day to do that.

That's what I've seen Ryan do. I've seen him do it from afar. Now I've seen it up close for the last nine months. I think he's held fast to what he believes we have to do to be successful. And it's paid off until this point, in terms of where we are. But we've got to go finish the deal.

But it will always be process-oriented. I think most coaches are. The results, I think, give credence to your process. That's the way you gauge, is your process working. That's the most important thing, the day-to-day.

Everybody sees what happens on Saturday, but what happens on Monday has a direct impact on Saturday. What happens on Tuesday has a direct impact on what happens on Saturday.

Really our focus is in the details on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, leading up to the Saturday. And then the Saturday just validates, was your process the right process or should you tweak it and how do you tweak it moving forward, because you can't stay the same.

You have to adapt or you're going to die. And I see that from him. He works tirelessly every day on how do we get a little bit better today than we were yesterday. And we've always kind of followed that mantra.

**Q. What's the ceiling (indiscernible)?**

CHIP KELLY: The ceiling? It's as high as he wants it to be. I think he's a tremendously talented player. He's got a great work ethic. We're excited about him. He came in early, so he got spring ball with us. Did a really good job in preseason camp.

His reps come down a little bit because Will's a starting quarterback. But between Julian and Lincoln and Tavien, the three quarterbacks we'll have during the spring, the ceiling for all those guys is really, really high.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: I think just consistency on a daily basis and how they try to get better, how they can embrace the process of, can I be a little bit better today than I was yesterday and continue to do that.

It's not going to happen overnight. Nothing happens overnight in this sport. It's long, arduous process of sticking to the fundamentals so you don't have to think about it when you're out there.

There's more things to think about -- processing what the defense is in, what's my reads, all those things -- than to what's my process of how am I throwing the football. He's done that so far. I'm really excited about his future and Lincoln's and Tavien's.

**Q. Let's go way back. (Inaudible)?**

CHIP KELLY: Just an unbelievable competitor. Always prepared. He knew what the defense was going to give him every week just because of his preparation. A great leader. I think the players on the team always looked up to him just because of his work ethic and his competitiveness. There was no task too big or too small.

He was probably more athletic than people gave him credit for. Ran the ball really well for us. But he was tough, hard-nosed and competitive.

**Q. Did you always see him as a coach then?**

CHIP KELLY: Yes, he's always been that proverbial coach on the field, whether it was being the point guard on the basketball player or the catcher on the baseball team, or the quarterback on the football team that's always kind of been his MO.

I don't think anybody that's known Ryan since he was a little kid in elementary school to junior high to high school to college is surprised that he got into coaching. I think he was kind of destined for that.

**Q. (Question about the Michigan game and how do you get over that game)**

CHIP KELLY: I think it's anything. You move on. You learn from what you did in that game and then move on. It's the same thing when we lost to Oregon in the regular season. We lost 32-31. Everybody could have done something better in that game coaches -- I could have called a better game.

I always look at what my impact is. I think every person in our program looks at it the same way. It's, you lost two games in the regular season by four points. But what do you do when you win and what do you do when you lose is really the same exact mentality.

You come in after you beat Iowa 35-7. You don't say, hey, we've got this in the bag, let's go. It's what did we do well

in the Iowa game and let's continue to do that. And what do we need to correct after the Iowa game?

The approach has always been the same. And the consistency in terms of that approach has always been the same.

**Q. (Question about handling pressure by Will)?**

CHIP KELLY: Will's been awesome. Will is one of those guys that's improved from game one against Akron to now. And probably the only negative on Will is we weren't around him long enough.

He's unbelievable to coach because he's so coachable. But he's really sharp and he'll come back with his own ideas: Have you thought about it this way? And we'll throw those ideas around.

His work ethic is off the charts. His mindset in terms of being a quarterback and wanting to get better. Like how important Tuesdays are to Will is really important because it's important to the starting quarterback it's going to be important to the rest of the team.

He's been great in terms of his development. But that's the intrinsic motivation that he has.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: There's a lot of things that are different. It's just different. But I don't have the time nor do I sit back and think, like, well, what about this, what about that, because everything's coming at you.

You're getting ready to play Notre Dame and watching Notre Dame film, you're not sitting there in your office saying, geez, wonder what it would be like to be a head coach again. I'm just not wired that way. Whatever the challenge is that's presented itself to you this week is what that challenge is.

**Q. (Question about big picture stuff as a coach).**

CHIP KELLY: It's been fun because of the guys you get to work with. Our offensive staff is amazing. The players I get to coach are amazing. I think it's the people you work with, not really the job you do.

**Q. (Off microphone) in your mind, what happened to keep you guys together after Michigan?**

CHIP KELLY: I think Ryan did a good job, met with the players. They talked through it. They had a players-only meeting with the head coach. I think they understood what

was presented, what's ahead of us. I think that's the big thing.

So when you look at the game against Michigan and you can say that, it could be one of two things. It could be your tombstone or it could be a stepping stone. And Ryan and our players turned it into a stepping stone to put us in a position to go play Tennessee.

If you beaten Tennessee you get an opportunity to going to the Rose Bowl and play Oregon. You beat Oregon you go to the Cotton Bowl and play Texas. If you win that game you get an opportunity to be here.

Their mindset, and I think Jack said it himself, what are our options after that game. Our options are, let's get into the tournament because we knew we were still getting into the tournament, and then what could we do in the tournament.

I think this team has shown what type of football team it is. It's shown its resiliency. But I think it's really their mindset, are we going to use that last game as a tombstone or are we going to use that last game as a stepping stone. They obviously used it as a stepping stone.

**Q. Did you change any play calling?**

CHIP KELLY: I think our play calling is a week-to-week thing. There's not a trend that goes on each week, I think. When you face Indiana is different than when you face Tennessee. And that's just the nature. I think everybody you face is like that.

I think that's part of how you adapt. What we run against Notre Dame isn't going to be what we ran against Texas because Notre Dame and Texas' defenses are different.

**Q. (Question about experience in the game, what will it take to get the players)**

CHIP KELLY: I think it's different because we've been in playoff mode, we've been in this since we played Tennessee because it's really like the NCAA basketball tournament. It's survive and advance.

If you don't beaten Tennessee, you're out. It's not like, hey, when we get to the national championship we'll then talk about this.

We've been talking about what are the important things that we have to do to beat Tennessee. What are the important things we have to do to beat Oregon. What are the important things we have to do to beat Texas, so that we have an opportunity to play Notre Dame.

Our message isn't going to change. Our message is, we want to be the most prepared and the least distracted. As you get moving up in these games, you go from the first round to the Rose Bowl to the Cotton Bowl, to the National Championship, all of a sudden I think the distractions become bigger, and you have to learn how to deal with the distractions.

Like, this media day is different than the Rose Bowl media day. And rightly so. But that doesn't change the most important thing for us today is we have meetings coming up. We have a walk-through coming up. Then we have practice coming up. That's the most important thing we've got to do today.

And our world is a Thursday because it's Saturday but our game isn't until Monday. So this is our Thursday mindset. What's our Thursday mindset going to be like when we get into the meeting rooms when we get back? What's our Thursday mindset going to be like when we get on the practice field today?

**Q. You talked about bouncing back (inaudible)?**

CHIP KELLY: I don't think you can pay attention to the sky's falling. When you look at each game, what did we do well and then what do we have to correct? And I think whether you win or lose, that has to be your approach.

Because I think sometimes when you win it's even tougher because, ah, we won, don't worry about it. That will come back to haunt you.

I think what Ryan did, and he set the tone for everybody, is that we were really consistent in our approach of how we do things, because if you're not, then you're saying how we do things is wrong to begin with.

So I think as a group they understood the one thing about this group was everyone takes ownership. So you have to take ownership as coaches. What did we do wrong in terms of putting them in position to make plays. Then they take ownership. Then everybody kind of, all right, now we learned that, now let's move on, who is our next opponent.

We found out after the championship week that we're going to play Tennessee. Now what's our prep for Tennessee look like, and can we just focus on Tennessee?

And there was never any talk about, if we beat Tennessee then we play this team, then we play this team. No, it's just Tennessee. Once we played Tennessee -- it's really you listen to the basketball coaches talking, it's survive and advance is really what it turned into for us.

But I think it was our ability to stay present and stay in the present moment, address what just happened and then say, hey, what's our next option. And our next option is we're still going to be in the tournament. We have an opportunity to play Tennessee, and let's get our focus on Tennessee and where we go from there.

**Q. Obviously it's Michigan/Ohio State (inaudible)?**

CHIP KELLY: Not if you're in Michigan and Ohio. Maybe if you're from outside, and I've only been there a short time, but maybe it is Michigan/Ohio State. And then --

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CHIP KELLY: I know that. And I think he's done a great job with them. I think he understands the weight of what this job is. And it's different. Being the head coach at Ohio State is a lot different than being the head coach at a lot of other schools at the FBS levels. That comes with the territory.

He's shown who he is. And I think he's done an unbelievable job in that situation, and he'll continue to do that because he's been -- the one thing he's been, through this whole process, is consistent.

And I think the players really -- you can talk all you want, but they're going to observe how you act and how you react. And how he's acted and how he's reacted to everything has been extremely consistent.

Our Tuesdays are our Tuesdays. Our Wednesdays are our Wednesdays. And they're intense. And it doesn't matter what's in front of us. It's about being really good on that day.

It's the same thing today. We know we play in two days against Notre Dame. We don't give that whole "we don't know what day the game" -- we know exactly when the game is, we know exactly when the kickoff -- we know all that stuff.

But the game doesn't matter right now. What matters is Thursday. We have meetings coming after this. Then we have to have a really good Thursday practice because we're not done. We still have two really good big days of prep that are really important for our success on Monday night.

And so I think our players are really focused on that, too, because that's what the head coach -- not only does he say that, he actually lives that every day.

**Q. (Question about factors of success against Notre**

**Dame)**

CHIP KELLY: Notre Dame won't give you anything easy, so you have to execute. You're going to have to make contested catches. The quarterback is going to have to be really accurate with the ball. We'll have to protect against a really good pass rush.

You're not going to outscheme Notre Dame. And I don't think when you get into the college football tournament you're going to outscheme anybody anyways. It's about players making plays.

That's the big and most important thing is who executes the best, like, who makes the contested catch, where is the location of the football. Is it on the back hip and he is going to catch and fall down, or is it on the front hip and he can catch and run? Are we going to give the quarterback time where he has a clean pocket where he can make those throws? So it's really about execution.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: He's done that all year long. The opening drive in Iowa was a 12-play drive for a touchdown. He's been pretty sharp and each week he's gotten better.

But I think he's really smart. He's pretty accurate with the ball. I think he's second in the country in completion percentage. He's done an unbelievable job of really understanding our offense and adapting to what we do. And he deserves a lot of credit because he's worked extremely hard at it.

**Q. (Question about Notre Dame's secondary)**

CHIP KELLY: I see length. They're not small guys. They've got some height and some length to them. So they'll match up, because our two outside receivers, Cornell and Jeremiah are tall also.

I think they do a great job stay on top of routes and they do a great job with their technique and fundamentals. They're aggressive with their hands. They can stop your releases and make you work hard from a release standpoint.

They're really well-coached, and I think they've got a really good understanding not only what they're supposed to do on a play but where everybody else is, so where their help is coming from.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, it's very coordinated. I think the front and the back relate really well to each other. There's no





weakness. I think they've got veteran players at each level. Cross has been there for a long time. Kiser has been there for a long time. Watts played a lot of football.

I think at the D line level, at the linebacker level and at the secondary level, they've got a veteran that I think really leads those guys, but I think how well-coordinated they are is the one thing, when you first look at the tape, that you gotta give credit to Marcus and to Al for watching that whole operation work.

**Q. (Question about veteran players and younger players)?**

CHIP KELLY: His physicality jumps off the top. Hard-nosed football player, will really thump you. You've got to make sure you get a hat on him. He can key and diagnose plays really well. But I've been really, really impressed with watching him on tape.

**Q. You've been around a lot of players. What sticks out about Jim's defense?**

CHIP KELLY: I think with Jim's defense, he makes it really simple for the players. But when you go against it, it's complex. We go against it every day in practice.

We also go against it through spring and through preseason camp. He makes the complex seem simple to the players and they can execute.

I think they have a lot of tools in their toolbox. They can do a lot of different things, present a lot of different looks to you. And he understands the skill sets of the players that he has and puts them in position to make plays, then they go out and make plays.

Really impressed with everything that him and Larry and James and Matt and Coach Walt have done. I think they do a heck of a job. I do know I do not enjoy going against him.

**Q. Does he get enough credit for the year-to-year improvement that Ohio State has made? When he got there, a lot of criticism about the secondary in top categories --**

CHIP KELLY: I wasn't here a couple years ago. I have no idea what they were saying about them, nor do I listen to what people say about people. I don't really have an answer on that one.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I think our players are dialed in and

understand what we need to do to defeat the schemes that we're playing; but to be 42-0, that means our defense is dialed in also, we're not letting people score, our defense and offense feed off each. Say we kick off, can force three-and-out, short field when they punt it, now we have an opportunity -- I think they work together as a group. But the credit goes to the players in that situation.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: Trying to call good ones. That's the first philosophy. Everything we do is situational. I don't think you can script the first 15 plays because you don't know what situation you're going to be in.

So say, hey, my first 15 plays "I'm going to throw a bomb," we had a pick on the 15-yard line. So you're on the plus 15. You're not throwing the ball deep. Then I think you go to your red zone plan.

So every situation on the field is mapped out for us. What's our third and short plan? What's our second-and-short, second-and-medium and second-and-long plan? What's our coming-out plan? What's our red zone plan? It's more situational for us, is really what our philosophy is.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: Postgame quirks? I don't really see him postgame. He hustles off to the media and most of us are back to our families as much as we can. I don't know if there's any postgame quirky can give you on that. I apologize.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: He's a huge family guy. Where he's been, his family. I've known his wife for probably as long as I've known Ryan. They both come from amazing families back home. That's always been the biggest fabric for him is family ties.

And him and his wife and his kids -- Ryan and Grace and Nia -- and that whole thing, and his father-in-law, Stan, his mom, Lisa, the whole group, it's one big extended family. He's all about family. And I think that's really where his inner motivation and what drives him is that love for his family.

**Q. (Question about changing position)?**

CHIP KELLY: It's a credit to the type of person Donny is, one of the true leaders on our team. Not only does he lead with his words, he leads with his actions; if that's what you

need me to do, that's what I'll do. And he wasn't concerned with draft stock, draft status, all those other things.

And I think because of his approach, how he's done it, it's actually probably improved his draft stock and his draft status.

But Donny is all about winning. And Donny is all about -- he truly cares about the brotherhood, truly cares about his players, and if this is what you need me to do to help us win, then I'm in.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: It does, it really does. No question.

**Q. (Question about game against Texas and expectations)?**

CHIP KELLY: We expect that every week. I don't think there's ever a game you go into and say this is going to be a cake walk. I think we always plan for our opponents.

We don't fear them but we respect everybody. And I think this Notre Dame defense, once you turn on the tape, it's going to be a dogfight this week.

And I don't watch the other side, so I don't know what's going to go on Notre Dame offense versus our defense. But I know our offense versus their defense is going to be a dogfight, and we've got to be the most prepared as we are for any game this entire season to go against this group.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I have. I watched last year. I watched the year before. When you have this amount of time, you watch every game humanly possible.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: They did. That's the unknown. You don't know what they're going to do. Marcus and Al do such a good job with that whole group. But I'm impressed. Both corners are tall and long and they do a great job in single coverage.

And then when you can add Watts in there as a safety over the top, he's as good as a safety as there is in the country. I know Ryan Clark from -- he played at ASU, so I faced him for three years before I got here.

He's new at Notre Dame. I'm new here. Was really

impressed with him at Arizona State. I think he's done a great job at nickel for them.

And when you have someone like Kiser, who is a six-year player that I'm sure he has every answer to every formation check, and it's just innate for him because he's been there so long. And he's that truly coach on the field.

So I think the veteran leadership with Cross up front and with Kiser and Watts is special, but I think that secondary is really well-coordinated.

I think because they played it so much, they know how people are going to try to attack it so they have some answers for that. I think that will be the game within the game, where are they leaning. They can double anybody they want. But they can't double everybody. If they do, it's a penalty. They've got too many guys on the field. We saw that before against some teams sometime during the year.

But I don't know, I'll tell you what, it was a unique message with our players, you can't stop us with 11. You had to stop us with 12.

You saw the final results of 11 versus 11. So that was a message to our team for the week leading up to the Rose Bowl that I think resonated really well with our guys.

But for them, I think how well-coordinated they are. You've just got to be impressed. As a football guy, you've got to sit back and say, wow, that's pretty good. They do some really good things. It's going to be a heck of a match-up on Monday night.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I love Jack. Jack's awesome. As good a person, player, I've ever been around. The one thing that I don't think people really know about us is how athletic Jack is.

He was a high school quarterback. I saw some highlights of him playing basketball. But he warms up before the game, I would say he's in the top three or four of our team, including the quarterbacks, on throwing a ball.

And he jokes, do you need a quarterback? He rips off a 60-yarder. Usually guys say that, it kind of comes out like this (motioning). But not with Jack. He's a great athlete. He's Ohio State. He truly bleeds Buckeye blood. And it's in him and his approach to everything on a daily basis is as good a teammate and as good a leader I've ever been around.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I've been impressed with Jack for a long time. Maybe I think the rest of the world is seeing what we've been seeing. But I think that combination of Jack and JT is as good as it gets.

We had to face him in practice every day. I know how good Jack is. But iron sharpens iron. I think Josh and Jimmy and Mel (phonetic) and Donny (phonetic) have gotten better because they have to go against Jack and JT every single day.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: No, it is challenging for anybody to come in new. I think the one thing with Will is Will's authentic. He did not come in on day one and say, hey, I'm the leader of this team, let's go. He came in saying, I gotta learn this offense, worked extremely hard learning the offense and how was he going to fit in.

That was the most important thing for him: Not how am I going to fit in, just how do I learn this offense so I can be the starting quarterback. He went out and earned it. He didn't earn it through the springtime. We didn't name a quarterback after the spring.

Then halfway through preseason camp it was evident to all of us that he was going to be the guy. And then every day, his goal is to get better every day. And he's done that. It's kind of grown.

I think his leadership has really started to show up probably when Seth got hurt and then we lost our lineman up front. We had already lost Jimmy. Seth was really our leader up front.

Then we lost Seth, and it was really Donny, Emeka and Will were the real three leaders left on the offensive side of the ball.

You've seen him grow. I think each week he's gotten better. He does a great job protecting the football when we've needed him the most.

His play in the Tennessee game, his play in the Oregon game, his play in Texas, and those plays he made on the final drive with his legs and with his arm, I think all the players really appreciate that. But I think the big thing with Will, he's authentic. What you see is what you get. He really wants to be better every day. Like some people say that, but he really wants to and goes out and tries to do it every day.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: I think it all depends on the individual. So what's the makeup of the individual. Sometimes the transfer thing is a home run and it works. Sometimes the transfer thing, it doesn't work. But I think it's really the match-up and is it a good match for the school and for the player.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CHIP KELLY: My favorite quarterback in the room? Depends on what we're doing. I think all of them have a unique skill set in terms of what we're doing.

But there are three quarterbacks that will ride and die with the quarterback coach. And maybe if we're late for a meeting, we'll be late for a meeting together. And there was one that just -- he didn't even come get us. We're still a little mad about him.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: Just amazing consistency. Like Carnell, I think to be a great receiver, you have to be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there with separation and catch the ball. And Carnell is there every single time.

If Carnell is supposed to be 18 yards on the left hash, when you look up, when the quarterback gets to a second read, Carnell is at 18 yards at the left hash. There's just a consistency to Carnell.

He's an unbelievable ball tracker. So there's really a huge catch radius in terms of what he does. And there's a toughness to him.

A lot of our blocking schemes, he's our flank or our Z. He's involved in a lot of digging out safeties, digging out linebackers.

And Carnell, even though he doesn't look like it, he's probably our most physical blocker out there. So there's just a consistency to CT that I think sometimes you take for granted. But he's always where he's supposed to be and gets the job done.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I mean, he's a starting wide receiver at the Ohio State, so I think that's a pretty good deal. And he's just such a competitor that he wants to win, and he wants -- that's the most important thing.

I think he's not a guy about how many catches am I going to get. You can be that guy, but all those guys that are about how many catches I'm going to get, they're at home right now. They're not playing for a National Championship.

I know what Carnell wants to do is win a National Championship with his brothers. He cares extremely about the guys on his team. I think it's part of this whole team. It's a really, really unselfish football team. What do we need this week?

And in the Texas game we needed Carnell. He was our leading receiver. In the Northwestern game he was our leading receiver.

So, how defenses are going to try to defend us you need all weapons. And how does it work out on Monday night, I don't know. But I know I'm extremely grateful that we've got Carnell, J.J. and Meka out there.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: I would hope every receiver has that mindset. That's probably not the case, but other teams have played us in man. J.J.'s biggest plays in the Oregon game, I think people don't understand football because they were against zone.

J.J. ran a post route on a middle safety. It wasn't a man-to-man coverage and no one was running with J.J. because it wasn't man coverage. People are, like, how do you play -- I think two of his touchdowns, they were zone coverages and he exploited them.

Sometimes people get caught up in that, like, how do you play this guy man. Sometimes he's more dangerous against zones than he is against man because there's more space to the defense.

I think maybe they'll think they'll be closer to routes. But I think you have to prepare for all. You just can't go into a game say they're going to do this or do that. I think you've got to have an answer if they're going to do -- and they do other things.

It's not like they just play man the entire game. They do a good job in cover 3, good job in cover 4, good job in cover 6. They're good in all aspects of their defense.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: No, I think it really is you've got to be good versus it all because there's not -- if it's zone he's going to have a great game, if it's man he's not going to have a

great -- he's been good against both in the three games leading up to this and really the entire season.

You don't complete 74 percent of your passes if you're only good versus one coverage. And Will does a really good job of pre-snap, understanding his reads; post snap, understanding if there's any change in the coverage; and then understanding if it's zone, the ball's got to go here, if it's man, the ball's got to go here.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Yes, there's less administrative things. There's less overall. Like, I don't have anything to do with the defense. I don't have anything to do with special teams.

Obviously as the head coach you're involved in offense, defense, special teams. I recruit a position. I recruit a side of the ball. I don't recruit on the defensive side of the ball. The head coach has to recruit on the defensive side of the ball.

So just what my focus on is more and position-specific quarterback than having to deal with the whole program. Those are really the biggest differences between being a coordinator and being a head coach.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: I enjoy it because of the people I work with. I don't think it's a job title. I don't think this job title is better than that job title.

I think it's because of who you're with every day. And the staff we have is amazing on the offensive side. Players we have on the offensive side are amazing. To get to be around those guys for 14, 16, 18 hours a day, you better enjoy who you're working with.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: I love both places. They're different. I'm not a comparison guy. The Teddy Roosevelt line of, "comparison is the thief of joy." So I think every experience you have is special.

The people at Eugene are truly special. Their belief behind that university and the support that university has -- and I met some amazing people that are still really, really close and dear friends today. I'm so excited that I have that opportunity to spend six years there.

And then everywhere I've been has been a unique experience.



I've always approached it that way. I don't compare if I was in Eugene to when I was in Philadelphia or when I was in San Francisco or when I was in Los Angeles or when I was in Columbus, it's just enjoy where you are and the old adage be where your feet are.

I've had an amazing time from my time starting at New Hampshire to being with Jimmy Margraff at Johns Hopkins University to where I am now. I think every day is, I get to do this for real. It's pretty good. It's a lot of fun.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: My wife's alma mater.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: Did they feel bad for me the four times I lost before that game? Probably not.

Every time I've gone back to Eugene, the reception has been amazing and the people there are amazing. It was really just maybe ironic that we had to play them in the Rose Bowl because we actually lost to Ohio State my first Rose Bowl there and then got a chance to win a second one against Wisconsin there.

But I think that's just part of the ongoing story, but there are never any ill feelings. That's a special place and a special time.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: No, I don't put it that way. I got to see Hroniss Grasu, one of my former players pregame. I got to see Jonathan Smith pregame, Kenjon Barner, guys that I had an opportunity to coach.

And people like Ed Maletis, who is a great friend and a big booster there before the game started. I got to meet Sabrina, Hroniss' wife now, but one of the Oregon legends. That part was really cool. But once the game starts, it's the game.

**Q. (Off microphone)**

CHIP KELLY: That's a long question. Why Ohio State? I think my relationship with Ryan and knowing that if I wasn't going to be a head coach and I was going to work with somebody, my pre-existing knowledge of him and what the day-to-day would be like.

And I had been with him, coached him as a player and coached with him at a couple stops, at New Hampshire

and the NFL, together. So that familiarity, and I also knew a couple other people that were on staff.

Then the type of players were always recruited to go to Ohio State, those are the guys you want to coach, that love playing football and love each other. So that part was really, really fun.

And then for us, it's every game is a different week. So we look at what we did in each game we've done all season long, whether we win or lose, how do we improve on our weaknesses, how do we get better at that, how do we continue to do things better. And it just goes from week to week to week.

So I don't look at it as a single blip. I know a lot of people do. Only look to one game during the regular season like the other 11 don't matter, I get that. If you're in Ohio, you understand that. That's just part of the nature of being in Ohio.

But for us, there's an approach to what we do after every game in our after-action reports of how do we correct this. Because if you win and you don't address those things, they're going to come back to haunt you also.

So I think the credit goes to our players being able to focus and stay on task that, in days gone by, if you lost that last game of the year, you didn't go to the Rose Bowl, and it was it, it was over.

Now, with this College Football Playoffs, there's another opportunity ahead of you. I think that's the difference, and it's because the landscape of college football has changed and your opportunity to go compete in a championship even though you lost the last game of the regular season is a really big deal.

Our guys approached it that way, and because they approached it that way because they've taken that mindset, we're here right now and we've got two more good days of prep and then we've got to go get ready to play a really good Notre Dame team.

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