

# CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

Saturday, January 18, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Notre Dame Fighting Irish

## Mitchell Evans

### Press Conference

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: I feel like the confidence and the brotherhood we've built throughout the year, I feel like as a senior, this is the team that's been the closest. You can feel the love that is between one another.

And just the grittiness of this team. This team's tough, gritty. We've been through a lot together. I think when you've been through a lot, you're going to remember the most about that. And just, obviously, this being my senior year, my last year, this one kind of means more a little bit. So probably that.

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: It's kind of, obviously, just playing a Natty itself is a pretty surreal experience. But playing Ohio State, the state that I'm from, it's kind of like a full circle moment. It's surreal to me.

I still feel like it isn't real yet until I get the pads, suited up, and I'm out on the field. But it's a full circle moment to be able to play Ohio State in the National Championship game.

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: I personally wasn't an Ohio State fan growing up. But, yeah, being from Wadsworth, Ohio, you're pretty much deep in Ohio State country, Ohio State territory. Everywhere you go, you're going to see an Ohio State flag in somebody's front lawn. Go into restaurants, there's memorabilia, whether it's a jersey, shoes, you name it, something in there of Ohio State.

So hopefully, I'm trying to turn that tide, put some Notre Dame stuff in people's places. Some people are texting me, hey, man, I'm rooting for Notre Dame. Some people text me, say I'm rooting for you but rooting for Ohio State.



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It's one of those type of feelings. Yeah, I'm pretty much deep in Ohio State country where I'm from.

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: Oh, yeah. Like my high school football coach, Justin Todd, he just texted me. His wife made cookies for the game. It's got my name and my jersey on it and it's like a separate cookie. And then the rest of the cookies, Go Buckeyes, Go Buckeyes. I'm like, all right, one of those ones.

But, yeah. I mean, trying to -- my family is fully converted Irish, Go Irish type of people. So it's been awesome. But they were before full Ohio State fans so I've got some people converted, but I'm working on the rest of my city where I'm from. It's going to take a while, but hopefully this game will convince a lot of people.

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: It still doesn't feel real, like I said. I don't think it's going to feel real until I put on my pads and my jersey and take the field for the first time, walking out like, wow, this is the National Championship.

I see the 2025 Natty logos everywhere. Like, yeah, we're here, but I won't feel real until it happens. It's truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. This being my last game in college, let's go out with a bang. No better way to do that than to win the National Championship game.

#### Q. (No microphone).

MITCHELL EVANS: Obviously, Notre Dame, they say, hasn't won anything significant since the '80s, whatever. But we're on a roll right now so I think Coach Freeman's got this program going in the right direction and the right trajectory. I'm excited to see what the future has for Notre Dame. And obviously, you know, I'm always going to be a fan, rooting for the Irish as my time finishes up here.

Coach Freeman's got this place going the right way. And to be able to play in the Natty after three years, it's really remarkable.



**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Riley came in as a transfer from Duke and all that stuff. He kind of fit in right away with brotherhood. That's the kind of thing we take pride in. Notre Dame is truly unique. The brotherhood separates us from other schools. He kind of fit in right away.

To see him performing the way he has this season is truly remarkable. I'm glad he's on our team. We don't have to prep against him. He's meshed well with all of us and is truly one of the boys. He's a good guy to be around. On top of that, he's a phenomenal football player, great leader of this offense, great leader of this team.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: I just kind of try to stay in the moment and not really try to focus on a lot of stuff and do my best on the field, best in the classroom, whatever that may be. Just kind of try to keep myself centered and stay focused on the task at hand. Just try to lean on people when I need it the most and learn from the best and reach out to people to see how I can get better and carry on that kind of legacy.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Oh, 100 percent. I would do that too. I don't have the basketball gene in me. Eli is a freak of nature. Where is Eli? He's over there somewhere. He can dunk 360. You might be able to get a two-handed dunk out of me, but Eli is definitely a better basketball player than me so that's fair.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Obviously, I am not the best real ball player, as Garrity would say, but I'm the best mini hooper on the team, by far. Hey, new year, 3-0. So I would definitely say off to a great start this year.

There's a lot of prep that goes into that, you know. Every time we have meetings, we've got to get a game in. So a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication. A lot of the hard work you don't see. Even when we don't have meetings, I'm in the dark working. You don't see that.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: My favorite? Where's Jack? Jack has all the nicknames. I don't even know.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Chevy Malibu, yeah. I don't know.

Probably Maserati Mitch. I don't know. Got a nice ring to it.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: I felt like this off-season, there was something different about the team, the way we've kind of connected and worked together. Like the brotherhood and the culture of this program is something we can take pride in and what we lean on in those tough moments. Especially after the NIU game, that was a tough time for our program, but I felt like our team kind of came together and came closer in that.

And so when I kind of felt that energy and kind of felt that presence in a room and in the football team, I felt like something was special about that team even more. I'm like, all right, this is a team that's going to go far. Then to go on to next week and handle business the way we did, it's like we're on the right path. We're not going to shy away from this.

I know, yeah, we had that embarrassing moment, but we came together as a team and we just got to work hard the rest of the week or the rest of the weeks coming forward. As the season went on, we built more and more trust together, and now we're here.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: I don't know. South Bend is a special place. If you ever get a chance to step on campus, you'll feel that connection of what kind of brings people to it. That's how I kind of got hooked on this place.

Growing up, I never knew much about Notre Dame. But then as I was getting recruited and all this stuff, my first kind of steps on campus, I was like, wow, something feels different about this place. That's kind of what attracts Notre Dame tight ends, Notre Dame people.

I kind of answered this earlier. Notre Dame is in the north. Gritty football, hard-nosed football. That epitomizes the tight end. Gritty football, tough guys. It's not easy to play the position. You kind of do it all. You've got to be able to catch passes and run routes. You've also got to be able to block big defensive ends, big defensive linemen and get down in the trenches with the big boys. I feel this place kind of attracts those kind of people.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Favorite tight end of all time. Probably just Gronk. I mean, he's just a gritty guy. He plays football insanely well. On top of learning personality

just through the media and all that stuff, he's a great guy to be around, great culture guy. Great guy to have in the locker room. I feel like you need to have all those kind of qualities to be well known. So definitely Rob Gronkowski.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Notre Dame player of all time. Oh, my gosh. I don't know. I've played with a lot so somebody I played with? I don't know. I feel like that would be cheating if I did somebody I played with. I'm going to try to go not somebody I played with and not a tight end. That's not fair. And not Rudy. Okay. Let me think. That's a hard question.

All right. I'm going to probably shock you on this one, all right? Harrison Smith. So I tried to go defense because I'm an offensive guy. Just this kind of -- I don't know. There's something different about him. He's a good player. Good legacy at Notre Dame and obviously has had a phenomenal career in the NFL. Definitely a Hall-of-Famer.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: NIL purchase? Oh, my. I haven't bought -- I'm more of a saver, to be honest, but I did splurge once. I took my girlfriend and I to Jamaica over spring break. It wasn't that expensive, to be honest, but we did that. So probably that. Probably that or -- yeah, probably that trip to Jamaica.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: If I could change one thing about college football, what would I change?

I don't know. Maybe -- that's a hard question. I don't know. I don't know. I don't really know how to answer that because there's a lot, I feel like, but I don't know.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Oh, that would be a cool loophole to have in there no matter what happens, yeah.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Yeah, obviously, I got recruited by Coach Kelly and his whole staff. And then after that season, is like -- after the regular season, going into that bowl game, it was like, okay, what's going on?

He leaves and, you know, who's going to be the head coach? What do I do? I'm a young guy. Do they bring in somebody? Will they want me? I kind of remembered why

I came to this place. I didn't come for a specific person. I came because it's Notre Dame. I kind of remembered why I came here and kind of leaned on that and kind of trusted the process of whatever was going to happen would happen.

When we were sitting in the locker room after the team run and Coach Bayliss said here's your new head coach, and it was Coach Freeman, I'm like we're fine. Why did I even question what was going to happen?

Coach Freeman got named head coach, yeah, this is exactly what I wanted. And then he brought in the right people. And, yeah, in year three now playing in the Natty, that was the right call.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Obviously, coming out of high school, I wanted be able to go to a university that had everything that -- obviously, good football. Notre Dame has that. Good academics. Notre Dame has that because, personally, I was thinking football will end for me one day, whether it be maybe in college, maybe I don't make it to the pros or maybe I have a two-year career in the pros or maybe I have a 15-year career. Whatever. But football is going to end one day, and I feel like Notre Dame sets you up the best for that the post-NFL career with the network it has, the people you meet here, and the brand that it is.

On top of that, the best chance to win a National Championship game. Notre Dame I felt like was the best opportunity for that. Now to be able to see it come to fruition on Monday night is kind of special.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: I don't feel the locker room felt like that. I didn't shy away. Coach Kelly left, whatever, and now we can't win a Natty, I didn't feel like that. It's remembering why you came here and trust the process. Because Notre Dame will make it right. And now we're here.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Who nominated me? All right. Let me take off this. Give me a second. Oh, 176.6. Guerby got me.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Superstar X Factor on Madden? The game? I don't know anything about the tag traits, but we can go forward. All right.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Well, one thing I feel like the NCAA game got wrong about me is my speed. I think I'm definitely a 99 speed overall kind of guy. My speed is definitely an X factor. And I feel like spectacular catch. If you can go over 99, that's what I'd be. So speed and spectacular catch.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: Yeah, I kind of feel like we've taken that mentality as every game this year, everyone has counted us out, whatever it may be, for the big one. And we're kind of viewing it as, you know, same old -- we're confident in our ability. We're confident. That's kind of what really matters. And, yeah, we're going to handle business.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MITCHELL EVANS: I mean, personally, I feel like obviously we don't really need any motivation because it's the National Championship game. It's kind of what you've worked for. But we're all kind of confident in our ability. And as a team, as a brotherhood, we've had great, great, great practices going into this game. That's what we kind of really rely on is great practices, great prep. We've had those. So we're pretty confident, as you should be going into this game.

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