

CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

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Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Jack Kiser

Press Conference



**NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP**
ATLANTA 2025

JACK KISER: First game I played in was back in 2019 against Louisville on Labor Day weekend. It was a night game there and that was pretty cool and just a little 18-year-old running around on the field, it was pretty crazy.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Not as of late but he was always a guy in the locker room that was fun to be around, big personality, very competitive guy on the ping-pong table or pool table and a lot of fun. A lot of memories with him for sure.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I mean, weird things happen like that. Things work out and it's just cool, like, full-circle moment to see him doing well and being able to get on the field and perform at a high level, it's really cool to see. Happy for him. When you're teammates with someone, you go through a lot with them. It brings you pretty close, and so it's cool to see him doing well.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: They are just very talented. You look at every stage of their offense from the skill positions to up front, very talented, have a lot of guys, very explosive offense in general so it's going to be a big challenge for us for sure.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I haven't put thought into this being the last game at Notre Dame but it's special to know your last game at Notre Dame, you can't possibly play another game.

This is the National Championship, so that's really cool to think about. Just really proud of the journey this team has come on and to be able to get this point and to have an opportunity to go after one more game and compete one more time, it's a big deal.

Q. (Inaudible.)

Q. How unique has this season been, mentally, physically --

JACK KISER: This season has been unique. Every season is unique on its own but when you play such a long schedule, right, it's 16 games I think at this point. It's really grueling and it's taxing on the body and it's taxing mentally, emotionally.

But I think when you're with such a great group of guys who are all doing the same things and all in it for the right reasons, it's just something you do, right. So you don't even really realize the grind of a season.

But I've gotten really a lot better in taking care of my body, nutrition, recovery, the mental aspect, understanding where I need outlets, who I can go to, all kinds of stuff like that, that plays into being able to play in a 16-game season in your sixth year.

Q. How does it help you guys --

JACK KISER: Can you repeat that?

Q. Notre Dame, the history, what does that mean to you --

JACK KISER: When you think about Notre Dame you think about the history and tradition and the folklore of the program, and so as of late we haven't had that, right. It's been a long time.

So I think that's motivation for this team to get Notre Dame back to what it used to be, get back to the promised land, to the top of the pedestal. It's a lot of motivation for us to understand there's so much history and tradition behind us and knowing that we're not only playing for ourselves but we're playing for all that.

I don't think it's something that's verbalized and talked about but you see it all around the facility, you see pictures

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of Joe Montana, Manti Te'o everywhere, and you understand we are going down the same staircase, we're in this amazing stadium. How can you not just feel that in everything you do?

Q. How does it help you guys that you've played in this facility before?

JACK KISER: I think it's really cool. Obviously we've got to play Georgia Tech in this stadium and kind of eliminate that distraction in a sense that we are not going into this the first time and looking around and ooh'ing and ah'ing. We've been here, that's neat but at the same time it's a completely different game and different opponent. Just whatever you do in your normal preparation, your normal process, like you still have to go through all that, and so yeah, it will be pretty cool.

I don't know if we are in the same locker room or not but if we are, there will be some familiarity there and so yeah, it's pretty nice and we are certainly excited to be here.

Q. The preparation --

JACK KISER: I mean, everything goes back to your hometown and for me that's Pioneer High School, and learning how to run the offense and play defense against the wishbone and triple-option and all that gets you to this stage where you're playing in the National Championship for a team from India that that's 50 Myles way from my hometown. It's a pretty unique feeling and pretty special and to see myself grow all the way and become the player I am today it's pretty humbling and very exciting.

Q. What's your favorite play?

JACK KISER: Favorite play? I mean there's tons of moments I'm sitting on the bench where I watch Jeremiah Love or Riley Leonard do something crazy or insane and that's always been special. Me personally I don't know, I've been part of a lot of different plays so I don't know if there's one that sticks out at the moment.

Q. Favorite player?

JACK KISER: Player? I don't know, who is the best player in college football? Who is the best on the team? Yeah, we don't really know. I don't know. I tell you what, Jeremiah Love in terms of being in the video game, he's a cheat code. That's pretty awesome.

Q. What have you done with your NIL money?

JACK KISER: I haven't made any fancy purchases yet at all.

Q. What makes Coach Freeman so special?

JACK KISER: I think it's the way he approaches all his relationships. I think he pours in his genuine emotions and understanding and perspectives into his relationships. You don't like talk to him and walk away feeling like he just lied to you or he was someone different. He's just a very authentic, genuine person and I think you see that on sideline, too. You see his raw emotion come out. You see the way he processes things. He's not able to hide some of his emotions and that just goes to show that, yeah, he is a real person and he is authentic. He really cares about us players and he cares about this place, this program and just so fortunate to have him for sure.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I mean, I think there's always multiple ways to skin a cat, right, and certainly different ways of coaching a football team and different ways to run the organization but at the same time there's a lot of factors that go into us being here and certainly Coach Freeman is one of them. You look at the 12-team playoff, us having a hiccup early in the season and being able to grow and get better from that and look at this team being able to play complementary football throughout the playoffs and really lean on each other. There's a lot that goes into us being here in the National Championship but certainly Coach Freeman has a huge part in that.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Yeah, I think a lot of people know the video of him coming through the door and being in the locker room and the players realizing he's our head coach and you see that emotional reaction from the players.

And I think that just goes to show the type of person he is and before he was even a coach for everybody he was just a defensive coordinator just a linebacker coach yet he had this positive impact on the entire team, just the guy he was in the building and his ability to interact with guys in the training table or in the hallway resonated with the entire team.

And I think he continues to do that now with his open door policy and guys coming in, and the way he can challenge players, the way he can float around and be present in every room he's at, he does an amazing job of making sure that he has that relationship with each and every one of us.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I tell you what, I've always had my group of



linebackers and I've always been the younger one and had older guys and JD left last year and I was stuck in a room full of little teenagers it feels like.

But it's been the best thing for me, being the old guy, the uncle in the group and taking care of you guys and making sure you guys make good, smart decisions and just feeling responsible for you guys, it's been awesome and also kept me young in a spirit sense. You guys have taught me a lot of things and it's been an awesome, fun year for sure.

Q. Your sixth season --

JACK KISER: Yeah, it's funny you bring this up, one of my best friends is Alex Ehrensberger from Germany. And one of the first things we talked about was, Hey, do you know your last name actually means "Emperor, ruler" and that's a really cool kind of story.

But it is weird, like being a sixth year, being that Notre Dame is so long, you've seen how this program has grown over the last six years, and to know that you're in the National Championship now, and you feel like you have a part in that, and that's really cool.

So to know that Notre Dame is getting to the point where they are back on top and you had a piece in that, it makes you feel pretty special.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I didn't choose Notre Dame to come be a great football player. I chose Notre Dame to come be a great man.

And I think that's certainly been the challenge every single day is going to work whether that's in the classroom, community or on the field. We talk about the golden standard with Coach Freeman, and that's not just on the football field or in the meeting room; it's in every aspect of your life. How do you challenge yourself? How do you utilize unit strength and grow as a team? How do you propel that competitive spirit and use that for good?

And so yeah, that was a big reason I wanted to be a holistic person. I wanted to make sure I had the best of everything and I think Notre Dame can provide that.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: So I was a business analytics undergrad. So I took some accounting classes and was generally aware of what was going on but then you go into masters accounting and deep dive and you're learning all kinds of things.

It was a lot of work, and I just remember a lot of time spent on homework and reading and making sure I was going through lesson plans and meeting with fellow students and peers in classes and stuff and just trying to learn from them. And it was a great challenge. I learned a lot, and I'm very thankful and fortunate being able to have that opportunity to go and get that done.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Notre Dame preaches the 4 for 40. Four years for 40, for the rest of your years in the business world. And certainly we have alumni network to be able to talk and bounce ideas off people and understand what makes you successful in the business realm.

And so yeah, I mean, I want to play football as long as I can and see where that can take me but at the end of the day I feel very comfortable stepping into the business world and understand what that takes.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Back when I was a kid they had the video game, NCAA, and my brother and I would create a dynasty and go win a National Championship and it was the coolest thing.

To think you go to Notre Dame from such a small community, small town, and you work your way up the depth chart and you play now and now you're captain and all of a sudden you're in the National Championship getting ready to win and hopefully bring Notre Dame back to being a true dynasty in college football, it's just, what a moment, what a real understanding of where you are at in life and how fortunate and lucky you are.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Indiana has always been known as a basketball state. You know this, my man.

But if you look at this team we have some dogs from Indiana on it. We've got some guys from Indiana that know how to ball and I think it just goes to show that if you really love the game, you put the work in, we can take South Bend Indiana to the National Championship and do something special. That's the message, put the work in and love the game and it will be really good to you.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I think you look at how we play the game of football, the offense can lean on the defense and the

defense can lean on the offense and our special teams is going to make plays and create sparks in the game and that's the way we play the game and if you want to call that the will to win, it is.

If you want to call it a lot of talent, which I think you have, you can call it that. But it's I think the way we play football with the understanding of what we need it do and the keys to victory, I think that's what makes us ultimately successful. But there are certainly some talented players on the team.

If you look at Jeremiah Love, I don't understand how you can't say he's extremely talented.

Q. What's been Coach Freeman's message to the team moving up towards this game?

JACK KISER: His message every single week is that's our brand of football and we have to trust each other and have that unit strength. We can pour that into a football game and lean on each other.

The offense is going to have to plays they want back and the defense is going to have to step up. Defense is going to let something happen and we have to make sure the offense is right there to help us out and make sure that we can each continue to have the opportunities to be successful.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: He mentioned just when you have an opportunity of a lifetime you have to act within the lifetime of the opportunity and he talked about being and having an opportunity to play in two National Championships and not winning either of them.

Like he still feels that and so it's a huge opportunity but at the same time it's the same football game you've been playing since second grade. It comes down to X's and O's and executing and doing your job. We heard that from him and I think we're really excited to have this opportunity to go out there and compete.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: It's cool seeing everybody rally behind me, seeing spear day everyone and wearing jerseys at the cool and knowing how many Notre Dame fans there are. I don't know how many fans there were before but across the whole state of Indiana, it's been really special this year to see the buy-in and all the presence of fans and it's been really cool to see that relationship that you can make with people just because you're from the same area and same

background and same mentality and so yeah it's been really cool to be that Indiana kid on the Fighting Irish team.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I remember winning the State Championship in high school that thought that was the biggest thing ever, like how could you not be more proud of doing that and to know that now you're playing for another Indiana school, and you have an opportunity to go win the National Championship, it's a huge opportunity and just a very cool moment and something you think about and you're very fortunate to be a part of.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: We've been very strategic on load management and we prepared for this off-season and this summer understanding that this was a possibility.

And then you look at how our season was really structured, we got very fortunate with where our byes came into play and conference championship weekend, we considered that our bye week, so we didn't have to -- yes, we played the first round. But we took advantage of that.

And so I think just like the way our strength staff and our performance staff has really been able to incorporate the sports science part of it and Coach Freeman and the coaching staff understand what we need as players and how we can make sure that everybody is feeling great by game day, that is what is most important. We've done an amazing job to be able to make sure everybody is at their peak performance when it matters the most.

Q. Your numbers --

JACK KISER: I get told my numbers every once in a while but that's not my job. I'll get told every once in a while what my speed was or my mileage, what my jump was in the weight room and stuff like that.

Q. Do you ever look and say, I need a day off --

JACK KISER: That's not my call. My mentality is every single day I want to go out there and do as much as I can, and it's the coaches that, hey, maybe we do this today or we pull back a little.

But at the same time you've got to go out there and you've got to play football and it's going to not always be the best thing for your body at times but that's what you have to do.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I've got to get to Monday. I've got to get there first. If you would have told an 18-year-old come into Notre Dame, showing up, early enrollee, that, hey, you're going to be around here for a long time, you're going to get the opportunity to play in 70 games, and oh, by the way, that 70th game is going to be in the National Championship, I would have said you're lying.

And just understand that this has been an amazing journey, and I heard a quote the other day. It's not about the journey or the destination but the people you do it with and the people that are along for the ride. I think of Leonard and Mills this year, and Coach Freeman has been here the last three years and to be with him for that, and four years with the D.C. and then you think about the players you played with way back when, White and Beau Bower.

I had a FaceTime call with Coach Lea last night and getting to reconnect with him. You think about the journey and the people you've done it with and that's the most important part of it.

Q. It's human nature to look ahead but how hard has it been to not look too far ahead?

JACK KISER: Yeah, it's important to stay in the moment but it's also important to understand what the opportunity that you have that lies ahead, right.

But we've talked this week. We've been playing the football game since second grade, every Saturday, Sunday, Friday, whatever it's been. We've gone out and just did our thing and relished the opportunity to compete and go out there and play a snap and make a tackle and score a touchdown. This game is no different in that aspect.

The only thing that's different is what happens after the game. And so you know for us it's making sure that we just execute and take care of the keys to victory and what goes on in those 60 minutes and we'll move on there. But we still have a lot of time before we even get to kick off and that's what's important right now is winning every single moment that can give you an advantage going into the game.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: You can tell he's played a lot of football. He's very experienced and can make every throw possible and has the weapons to throw to and then you also look at his athletic ability to pull the football and run and extend plays, it creates a lot of challenges for a defense when a quarterback can do it all. He certainly can and he's going

to put his team in position to win the ballgame and that's going to be a big challenge for us as a defense.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I think when you look at this team and the resilience of this team, when you have a first half that doesn't quite go your way, naturally everybody is going to be hungry to get back out there and to have the opportunity to challenge themselves and go out there and do something special.

But I really think a key moment in that game is when Steve Angeli comes in and able to organize a drive and kick field goal and for the team to realize it's a one-score game. The offense gets the ball coming out at halftime, they are going to score a touchdown and it's going to be a 0-0 game, like restarting the clock. That energizes the unit and the whole team to be out there and it gives a new sense of confidence.

I think that was such a key aspect of the game that I don't know if a lot of people realized. I think a lot of people think about the kick or the interception. But Steve Angeli's key role there was huge.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Every game we talk about starting fast and staying fast the entire game. And so I think last week you watch the film and you realize that maybe we didn't start the way we wanted; and how that's very important going into this game, is not every time you get down points like that you're going to have the ability to claw back and win a game.

We have to make sure that doesn't happen.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: He just talked about -- we talked about their season, our season, how proud he was of me and the guys he helped recruit and coach on this team, X was on offense but he was still part of it, Mills and Howard Cross. There's some cool names out there that he's a part of bringing to Notre Dame.

And so we just talked about that and how proud he was of where this program has come and obviously seeing us succeed and I kind of shared, Hey, I remember when you said this in a defensive meeting and when this was always our message every single week. I still remember that. It's come almost full circle, and so it's been really cool to like get to talk to him and share those thoughts and perspective. It was a really cool phone call last night.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I think you keep it normal with the guys around you, right, with your teammates, understanding that we've been playing this game since second grade and it's not going to change. It's going to be one play, one life and it's going to be executing when it matters and doing your job and relying on the guy next to you. That's how you keep it normal. It can be a circus at times. You have to eliminate distractions when you can and be in the moment when it matters most.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: I don't know. I haven't really put thought into that but it's pretty special to know that my last game at Notre Dame is going to be in the National Championship. That's what you come to Notre Dame for is to have the opportunity like this and the chance to compete for a National Championship.

And to know that you've done everything you can up to this point to put us in a position to go out there Monday and compete and know that's going to be the last time you wear that gold helmet, it's pretty special.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: It's funny, I saw a Tweet or something, it was like Notre Dame went from the most hated team in the country to the most liked team in the country. I think that goes to the leadership that coach Freeman has and his genuine authentic character and the values he has, the amount of buy in and just the way he's immersed himself in this university's culture and build a culture in the locker room that's so resilient and a brotherhood that's so bonded.

It's been a fun year to be a part of and an amazing six years to be part of this university. For sure don't want this to end and just very grateful for Coach Freeman and everything he's done for this place.

Q. Talking about last year's game but what is the biggest takeaway?

JACK KISER: I think obviously you're going to look at games and you're going to try to learn from them just like you look at any other games this year and try to pull something from the game.

And I think that's what this team has done really good this year is when we have had moments where it wasn't a success, we've been able to learn from that and grow from

that, and that's exactly what we have to do as a team, as a defense, as a program from last year.

But at the same time, this is new teams on both sides and this is a new opportunity and an opportunity to go play in a National Championship game. Like I don't know if you can be more motivated by anything than just that fact right there and we are certainly excited to go out and compete on Monday.

Q. (Inaudible.)

JACK KISER: Sometimes you just don't know how to handle winning and we learned that the hard way. We certainly have grown from that moment and guys understand it's going to take more every single week to elevate and better your process and preparing every single week, what can you do more and better and what can you enhance.

I think this locker room has really challenged each other to do that every single week. It's been a blast to see this locker room grow and to see the coaching staff and the players gel and understand and have this symbolic relationship and this symbiosis type of thing.

And so yeah, like as a locker room, I think just grown together and knowing and pushing each other to elevate every single day and that's how we've gotten to this point.

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