

CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Jack Kiser

Press Conference



**NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP**
ATLANTA 2025

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Not as of late, but he was always a guy in the locker room that was fun to be around. Like big personality, just very competitive guy on the ping pong table or pool table and just 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. I'm happy for him. When you're teammates with someone, you go through a lot with them, it brings you pretty close, so it's cool to see him doing well.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah, they're just very talented. You look at every stage of their offense, from the skilled 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: Yeah, it's hard because I haven't really put the thought in to like this being it, this being the last game at Notre Dame. But it is something that's very special to know that, hey, your last game at Notre Dame, like this is it. Like 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 to this point and to have the opportunity to go after it one more game and compete one more time, it's a big deal.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: The 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. Just a little 18-year-old running around on the field, it's pretty crazy.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I mean, this season has been unique. Every season is unique on its own, but when you play such a long schedule, it's 16 games, I think, at this point. It's really grueling. It's taxing on the body. It's taxing mentally, emotionally. But I think when you're with such a great group of guys who are all doing the same thing, so we're 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 better in taking care of my body and nutrition, recovery. Like the mental aspect, understanding where I need outlets, who I can go to, all kinds of stuff like that that kind of plays in to being able to play in a 16-game season in your sixth year.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think when you think about Notre Dame, you think about the history and the tradition and kind of the folklore of the program. So as of late you kind of haven't had that, right, it's been a long time. So I think that's the motivation for this team to kind of get Notre Dame back to what it used to be, get back to the prominent land to the top of the pedestal.

So it's a lot of motivation for us to understand that there's so much tradition and history behind us that we're not just playing for ourselves, we're also playing for all of that.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: I don't think that's something that's verbalized or talked about, but it's obviously all around us in the facility. You see pictures of the great players, the Joe Montana, of Manti Te'o, like they're everywhere. And



you understand, like, we're going down the same staircase, we're hitting the same sign, like we're in this amazing stadium. Like how can you not just feel that in everything you do?

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah, I think it's really cool. Obviously we got to play Georgia Tech in this stadium and kind of eliminate that distraction in the sense that we're not going into this the first time and looking around and ooooh and ahhhhing and we've been here. So that's really neat. But at the same time, it's a completely different game; it's a different opponent. So 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're in the same locker room or not, but if we are, there will be some familiarity. So, yeah, it's pretty nice, and we're certainly excited to be here.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I mean, everything goes back to my hometown, and for me that's Royal Center, Indiana, Pioneer High School and learning how to run the wing T offense and play defense against the wishbone and triple option. And all that gets you to this stage, right, where you're playing in the National Championship for a team from Indiana that's 50 miles away from my hometown. It's a pretty unique feeling. It's 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. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Favorite play? I mean, there's tons of moments where I'm sitting on the bench and I get to watch Jeremiyah Love or Riley Leonard do something that's pretty crazy and pretty insane, and that's always been special.

Me personally, I don't know. I've been a part of a lot of different plays, so I don't know if there's one that sticks out at the moment.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Player? I don't know. Who's the best player? On college football? Who's the best on the team? Yeah. We don't really know. I don't know. I tell you what. Jeremiyah Love, though, in terms of being in the video game, he's a cheat code, so that's pretty awesome.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: I haven't made any fancy purchases at all. So, yeah. No.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: I think it's just the way he approaches all of his relationships. I think he pours in his genuine emotions and understandings 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 the 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. He's authentic. He really cares about us players. He cares about this place, this program. And just so fortunate to have him, for sure.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think there's always multiple ways to skin a cat, right? And certainly different ways to coach a football team, different ways to run an organization. But at the same time, there's a lot of factors that go into us being here, right? And certainly Coach Freeman is one of them, but you look at the 12-team playoff, you look at us having a hiccup early in the season and able to grow from that, get better from that and then 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 at 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 kind of see that emotion, reaction from the players. I think that just goes to show like the type of person he is. Before he was even a coach for everybody, he was just the defensive coordinator, just the linebacker coach. Yet he had this positive impact on the entire team. Just the guy he was in the building, his ability just to interact with guys at training table or in the hallway, it really resonated with the entire team. So I think he continues to do that now with this open-door policy with guys coming in. 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 then JD Bertrand and Marist Liufau left last year, and I was stuck in a room full of like little teenagers, it feels like. But it's been the best thing for me, being the old guy of, 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, but I think it's also kept me young in a spirit sense, right. You guys have taught me a lot of things, and it's been an awesome, fun year, for sure.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah, it's funny you bring this up. One of my best friends is Alex Arinsberger from Germany, and one of the first things we talked about was like, hey, do you know your last name actually means like emperor or ruler? And that's a really cool kind of story, but it is weird.

Like being a sixth year, being at Notre Dame 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're back on top and you had a piece in that, yeah, it makes you feel pretty special.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. 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. That's not just 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 and 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: Yeah. 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 the master's accounting and it's a deep dive and you're learning all kinds of things. And 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 the 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 for being able to have that opportunity to go and get that done.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I mean Notre Dame preaches the four for 40, right? Four years for the 40 rest of years in the business world. And certainly we have the 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: Yeah. I mean, back when I was a kid, they had the video game NCAA, right? And my brother and I would create a dynasty and go win a National Championship, and it was the coolest thing ever. And to think that you go to Notre Dame from such a small community, small town and you work your way up the depth chart and you're playing now and now you're captain, and then 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, what a moment, what a surreal understanding of where you're at in life and just how fortunate and lucky you are.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I mean, Indiana has always been known as a basketball state. You know this, my man. But if you look at this team, we got some dogs from Indiana. You look at Drayk Bowen, you look at Tae Tae, you look at me, Ashton Craig. Like we got some guys from Indiana that know how to ball, and I think it just goes to show that like if you really love the game and you put the work in, we can take a place in South Bend, Indiana to the National Championship. We can do something special. So that's the message is put the work in, really love the game and it will be good to you.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: I think you look at how we play the game of football, right. It's very complementary. The offense can lean on the defense, the defense can lean on the offense, and our special teams is going to make plays and create sparks in the game. And I think that's just the way we play

the game, and if you want to call that the will to win, like I guess that is. If you want to call that a lot of talent, which I think we have, then you can call it that. But I think it's just the way we play football with the understanding of what we need to do, what the keys to victory are. I think that's what makes us ultimately successful.

But, yeah, there are certainly some really talented players on the team. If you look at Jeremiyah Love, like I don't understand how you couldn't say he's extremely talented.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think it's his message every single week is that's our brand of football. We gotta play together. We gotta trust each other. You gotta have that unit strength. And so how we can pour that into a football game, that's how we do it and just understand and lean on each other. The offense is going to have some plays that they want back, but 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 we can each continue to have the opportunities to be successful.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I mean, 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 having the opportunity to play in two National Championships and not winning either of them, and like he still feels that. So it's a huge opportunity, but at the same time, it's the same football game you've been playing since second grade, right? It just comes down to the Xs and Os and executing and doing your job on any given play and being able to reset and do it again for 60 full minutes, or maybe even more. So, yeah, we heard that from him, and I think we're just really excited to have this opportunity to go out there and compete.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. It's cool seeing everybody rally behind me, seeing like spirit day and everybody wearing jerseys at the school and just to know how many Notre Dame fans there are now that I don't know if they were Notre Dame fans before. But it's really cool to see them rally behind.

And, honestly, it's across the whole state of Indiana, it's been really special this year just to see the buy-in and just all the presence and 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 the same

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

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I remember winning state championship in high school and thought that was the biggest thing ever, right. 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 the opportunity to go win a National Championship, it's a huge opportunity. It's just a very cool moment and something you think about and you're very fortunate to be a part of.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think 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, like we got very fortunate with where our byes came into play. And then conference championship weekend, we considered that our bye week, right. So we didn't have to -- yes, we played first round, but like we took advantage of that.

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 then Coach Freeman and the coaching staff understanding what we need as players and how we can make sure that everybody is feeling great by game day, like that is what is most important. And I think we've done an amazing job to be able to make sure everybody is at their peak performance when it matters the most.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: I get told my numbers every once in a while, but like that's not my job. I don't really know what I'm looking at. But like I'll see occasionally what my speed was or how much my mileage was or what my jump was in the weight room, stuff like that.

Q. Do you ever look at it and say I need the day off?

JACK KISER: No. That's not my call. For me, 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 say, hey, maybe we do this today or we pull back a little. But at the same time you gotta go out there and play football and it's not always going to be the best thing for your body at times, but that's what you have to do.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I gotta get to Monday. I gotta get there first. But if you would have told an 18 year-old committing to Notre Dame and 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, the 70th game is going to be the National Championship, I would have said you're lying. And just to 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, the people that are along from the ride." So I think of Riley Leonard, I think of Rylie Mills this year. Obviously Coach Freeman has been here the last three years and to be with him for that -- or four years. Yeah, four years with the DC. And then you think about the players you played with way back when, right, Drew White and Bo Bower and all those guys. And it's funny, like I had a FaceTime call with Coach Lee last night and like getting to reconnect with him. Just like you think about the journey and the people you've done it with, and that's the most important part of it.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. It's important to stay in the moment, but it's also important to understand what the opportunity you have that lies ahead, right? But we've talked this week. Like we've been playing the football game since second grade. Like every Saturday, Sunday, Friday, whatever it's been, like we've gone out there and just kind of did our thing and relished in the opportunity to compete, the opportunity to go out there and play a snap and get a tackle or score a touchdown. So this game is no different in that aspect. The only thing that's different is what happens after the game. And so 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 then we'll move on there. But we still have a lot of time before we even get to kickoff. So that's what is important right now is just winning every single moment that can give you an advantage going into the game.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah, you can tell he's played a lot of football. He's very experienced, 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 the quarterback can do it all. And he certainly can and he's going to put his team in positions to win the ballgame, and that's going to be a big challenge for us as a defense.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think when you look at this team and you look at 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 have the opportunity to challenge themselves and go out there and do something special. But I really think like a key moment in that game was when Steve Angeli comes in and is able to organize the drive and go down there and kick a field goal and then for the team to realize, hey, it's a one-score game. Like our offense gets the ball coming out halftime, they're going to go down and score a touchdown and it's going to be a 0-0 game, like restarting the clock. Like that energizes the unit. That energizes the whole time to be out there, and it gives a new sense of confidence, right. So I think that was such a key aspect of the game that I don't know if a lot of people realize. I think a lot of people realized the thing about the kick or the interception but Steve Angeli's key role there was huge.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think every game we talk about starting fast and staying fast the entire game, and so, yeah, 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 like not every time you get down points like that you're going to have the ability to claw back and win a game. So we gotta make sure that doesn't happen.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: No. We just talked about their season, our season, how proud he was of me and the guys that he helped recruit and coach on this team. You look at X was on offense, but he was still part of it. Rylie Mills, Howard Cross, and so there's some cool names out there that he's a part of to bring him to Notre Dame. So we just talked about that and just how proud he was of where this program has come and obviously seeing us succeed.

And then I kind of shared like, hey, like I remember when you said this in a defensive meeting and when this was always our message every single week, like and 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, 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, because it can be a circus at times, so you gotta just 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 the thought into that, but it's just 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 on 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: Yeah. 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. But I think that just 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 helped build a culture in the locker room that's so resilient and a brotherhood that's so bonded. It's been such a fun year to be a part of. It's been an amazing six years to be a part of this university, and, yeah, I just, for sure, don't want this to end and very grateful for Coach Freeman and everything he's done for this place.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think obviously you're going to look at games and you're going to try and learn from them just like you'd look at any other games this year and learn -- try to pull something from the game. I think that's what this team has done really good this year is like when we've had moments where it wasn't a success, we've been able to learn from that and grow from that. So 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. This is a new opportunity. This is the 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're certainly excited to go out there and

be able to compete on Monday.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: That's a crazy stat when you think about it, 70 games. Like hopefully that's never broken, not for my sake, but for the sake of like we don't have to go through another pandemic or have to go through any of that. So I tell people I cheated all the time because I did have that year. But at the same time, it's just a credit to all the people that have helped me do it, to make sure my body is healthy enough to go out there.

And you think about the sports staff and the training staff and the performance team, to be able to be there and make sure I have all the resources needed. You think about my teammates in allowing me to go out there and be trusted. You know, they're trusting me; the coaches, they're trusting me to go out there, step foot on the field, compete. There's a lot of people that kind of go into the 70-game benchmark. A lot of people played a factor in that, and that's what I'm most thankful for.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JACK KISER: Yeah. I think when you start the season out with a big win against Texas A&M at night, and there's a lot of just noise around the program, right, and sometimes you buy into that noise. And then week two you stumble against a Northern Illinois team and you kind of realize that like sometimes you just don't know how to handle winning, and I think we learned that the hard way.

And we certainly have grown from that moment. I think guys have really understand that it's going to take more every single week to elevate, to better your process, to challenge your preparing every single week, what can you do more, what can you do better, what can you enhance. And I think this locker room has really challenged each other to do that every single week. And so it's been a blast to see this locker room grow, to see the coaching staff and the players gel and understand and have this symbolic relationship, this symbiosis type of thing.

So, yeah, like as a locker room, I think just growing 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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