

CFP Semifinal at the Rose Bowl Game presented by Capital One: Alabama vs Notre Dame

Monday, December 28, 2020

Arlington, Texas, USA

Kyren Williams

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

THE MODERATOR: We will continue with running back Kyren Williams.

Q. In order for you guys to execute what you want to do this weekend, how important is it for you guys to be able to run the ball effectively? Simple question, but nonetheless. And then, secondly, after such a great season, all of a sudden nationally people seem to think you guys are maybe the biggest underdog of the bowl season. How does that make you guys feel? Is that motivating for you?

KYREN WILLIAMS: To answer your first question, it's been our bread and butter all season that we have to establish the run. We know as an offensive line as running backs and as quarterbacks and wide receivers that we have to be able to go in there and run the ball. No matter what it is, by any means we have to run the ball, establish our physicality early in game and allow them to react what we do.

We can't be behind the chains. We know that as an offense. Running the ball is our biggest focus this week for sure, being able to establish the run.

And being the underdogs, it's motivating. Not everybody in the world believes in us. And it's okay because we don't want anybody to believe in us besides us.

As long as we've got us as a team and the coaching staff, as, like, everybody else in the building believes in us we know what we can do. We'll go out there on Friday and do what we do best and play to the Notre Dame football standards. Being the underdog is nothing new to us. We're just going to keep proving to the world who we are.

Q. Given what you know about your offensive line, what gives you the confidence that -- they may have struggled against Clemson, but they're going to be



better against Alabama?

KYREN WILLIAMS: I never lost confidence, no matter what game it is. Clemson or Syracuse, it doesn't matter. I always trust my O linemen. I know they're going to give me their everything on every down. I'll do the same for them. It's the mutual bond between us that they're going to have to kill us to stop us.

So to feel like that with the offensive line is huge. And I know they feel the same way, and come Friday that we're just going to leave it all out there on the field.

Q. I wonder if you could tell us, what it was like having to navigate through this kind of squirrely season with the pandemic, what adjustments you had to make and how it's all played out for you?

KYREN WILLIAMS: As we all know, the pandemic hit unexpectedly. We weren't even able to come back to campus. Kind of what Tommy was talking about, we had to hold each other accountable. Put in our work in separate places so when we come back here as a team that we're all ready to go and ready to attack this season.

So I feel like this pandemic has helped us a lot. It helped us become closer in a way not being able to see each other every day and still knowing your brother is out there wherever he is at in the world putting in work so we can come back this season and be where we want to be, and that's in the National Championship.

So I just feel like that helped us a lot, helped us with team chemistry, and it held a lot of people accountable.

Q. You really literally hit the ground running, and I'm just curious, give me some specific examples of things you were trying to do this season as a young player that has led to this success.

KYREN WILLIAMS: I told myself after I got redshirted that I wouldn't ever be in that position again and I had to work out of that position. So I was able to change my body, get my mind right to come back here. And just all I did was work. All I knew was work.



I just knew with that work I put in that it would pay off sometime. Like you said, I came out this season just full force, ready to go. And I really feel like that it kind of boosted our team chemistry because the running back position, it was kind of skeptical this year coming in, not knowing who our starter was going to be and who was going to be the running back.

So I feel like just coming in and proving to my teammates that I'm going to work to get better and they seen that and I really feel like they looked at me differently after that.

Q. I'm a little bit familiar with your background, but could you real quick go over your recruiting, how you got to Notre Dame? Even what you guys ran at Vianney, is that right?

KYREN WILLIAMS: Yeah. So to come to Notre Dame, it's really cliché but really for me it really makes sense. Being at Vianney was a Catholic institution and coming here there wasn't a drop off in knowing things in the religious aspect. I didn't really feel uncomfortable about that. Going to mass every Friday was something we did in high school.

But coming here was nothing different. It felt like home and I felt like this is the place I need to be in and here I am and here I am to stay. So, I'm just happy to be here and blessed.

Q. You've talked about your sort of redshirt season quite a bit and how it helped you grow, and Jordan Johnson, another St. Louis guy, you guys trained with the same guy. What has this been like for him? How have you sort of helped him go through a season that, as good as the team was on a personal level, probably didn't go as -- like he would have expected when he showed up?

KYREN WILLIAMS: I'm close with Jordan. Known him since I was in the second grade. Played Little League together, and all through high school competed, played against each other.

And with him being here, it's one of the things that keeps him level-headed, just knowing he's redshirted and not going to be able to play, that it doesn't matter. As I always tell him, a year can change your life. I really believe that. He really believes that. So with work comes success.

Like you said and like I said before, all we know is working. And Jordan knows if he keeps working, he's going to be where he wants to be in the future. And I know for sure that he's going to -- all he's going to do is work to get there.

Q. Playing off a little bit of a question you got earlier about sort of all that went into playing this season. Was there anything that you missed, anything that you just -- sort of in your personal life that you had to give up that was maybe tricky, that you had to become accustomed to?

KYREN WILLIAMS: Not being able to see my family. Because last year, being redshirted, I didn't travel. So I was able -- my family was able to come up here and see me whenever that I wasn't able to travel.

So knowing that I'm not going to be able to see my family until the season's over, that's been the biggest impact for me because my mom and my sister, they're the two most important people in my life. Not being able to see them for at least nine months, not being able to go home. Because I'm a big homebody. So not being able to go home has really affected me. But that's the sacrifice we have to give up to be where we want to be.

So I'm willing to give up anything for this team and for the success of this team.

Q. I wanted ask you about Coach Lance Taylor, running backs coach, being from Alabama, how has he helped you become a starter? Can you mention any funny anecdotes about Coach Taylor?

KYREN WILLIAMS: Coach Taylor always pushed me from the first practice I've been here, always pushed me to be better at who I am, because he knows there's more, there's more that I have in my game that I haven't even showed.

So I know from being here from the spring and being -- not even being recruited by Coach Taylor but meeting him before -- after I got here, he really took me under his wing and showed me the ropes of everything, and I really appreciate Coach for that.

And I don't really have any funny stories, but after the Duke game, me and Coach Taylor sat down, first thing he told me when we watched film, he said: You could have played better.

That's the mentality I have. I like that mentality. I don't want to ever be satisfied. I always want to go for more. And Coach Taylor he really knows that in me, and he pushes me every day to get there.

Q. We know the pressure that Alabama's offense, the ability to score a lot of points, can put on defenses. How much pressure does that put on the opposing team's offense to have to answer?

KYREN WILLIAMS: I don't think it's much pressure. We just play the game and stay true to who we are as an offense that we'll be able to complement our defense and give them more breathing room for -- more breathing room to make plays.

So I don't think it's much of a pressure thing more than it is being on our technique and being true to who we are and playing sound football.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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