

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

Monday, December 28, 2020

Arlington, Texas, USA

Michael Mayer

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with Michael Mayer.

Q. You have been super productive, 35 receptions for a freshman. Can you give us an example of things you did to be prepared when your moment arrived and you kept going?

MICHAEL MAYER: I think in terms of my production, the offensive staff has done a great job putting plays together that make me successful. I think Ian has done a very good job of getting me the ball. The O line has done a very good job of blocking.

I think in terms of my success is just a mindset coming in, when third down comes, all right, this is my time, is the ball going to come to me? Run the red route. How many steps am I going to take, that type of thing. And overall it's a team effort and everyone, including Ian the O line and everyone else, has done a very good job.

Q. When you were recruited as an Army All-American, all that, you expect to have freshman success. I'm curious, when did you feel like this is happening for me, I'm going to make this jump to this level this soon? And then also I was interested in just sort of like that third down drag route that you guys run all the time, if you're surprised that it took teams that long to sort of figure out that was something that you liked to take advantage of?

MICHAEL MAYER: I don't think there was just a certain time in my career here that I was kind of just like, okay, wow, this is great, I think it was more of come here and just work, work, work and put my head down and whatever happens happens.

And in terms of the second question, yeah, I mean that's been a very successful route all year long. It's something we've repped a ton of times. If it's going to keep working,



we might as well keep running it.

Q. What has gone into your and Ian's rapport and production on third down where he's looked more your way on third down than any other receiver?

MICHAEL MAYER: He trusts in me. We repped a ton of routes and catches in practice. And it's just the trust that the quarterback has in me to get the first down and run the red route and run the right amount of steps and things like that. So big-time trust he has in me.

Q. Wonder if you could talk to a little bit about the Alabama defense, what you see as the strength and their secondary? And the other question I have is when you came here, was there a particular player or coach who kind of took you under his wing to kind of explain, make things a little easier for you in the transition?

MICHAEL MAYER: In terms of the Alabama defense, they're obviously very well-rounded defense. They have quick linebackers. They have quick secondary. And they're very aggressive and they get a lot of takeaways.

I think it's just going to be about running the right routes, Ian trusting us and also protecting the ball. We can't give away any fumbles in a big game like this.

What was your second question again?

Q. About if any particular players or coaches took you under your wing to help you get acclimated when you got here?

MICHAEL MAYER: Obviously as a freshman you have a lot of things to learn, a big playbook, things like that. I think in terms of someone taking me under his wing, Coach McNulty has done a very good job of teaching me many things of the game of football, has been around the game of football a very long time, he's helped me with the playbook, he's helped me with just more of a "knowing football" type thing. And he's definitely helped me. He's believed in me since day one, and that's very important.



Q. Talk about the moniker Baby Gronk and how much that means to you to know, hey, here's a guy who knows you and knows what you're doing on the football field.

MICHAEL MAYER: Yeah, obviously the nickname Baby Gronk has kind of been pretty big this year. Obviously not a bad nickname to have. Rob Gronkowski is one of the best tight ends in -- pretty much ever. People around here always calling me it, always joking about it and stuff. Obviously a very good nickname to have. I'm just going to keep playing football.

Q. As a freshman, coming in in this bizarre year, have you felt like you've been able to get to know your teammates? And what has I guess been the obstacles, the struggles to sort of having like the camaraderie as one of the new guys?

MICHAEL MAYER: It's definitely been harder during this pandemic to meet people and to kind of become close with people. Like Ben said earlier, at our dinner and team meals we have a glass in between us that we can't really even hear ourselves talk to each other.

But there's definitely still been time to bond, even with masks on, social distancing, things like that, you can still talk and communicate and hang out with each other.

So I've been very lucky to come in and have Brock Wright and Tommy Tremble and George, the older people in our tight end room that have helped me out a lot and just became really close friends with them.

Q. The drag route we talked about earlier, obviously one of the reasons that's successful is because you're so good at running after the catch. When did you develop that talent and why do you feel like that is something that has come natural to you?

MICHAEL MAYER: I feel like in high school I never really ran that route that much. It kind of came to me when I got here. But I feel like the most important thing with that route is knowing if it's man or zone. If it's man you're going to have someone trailing you; if it's zone you're going to have someone sitting there waiting to give you a big hit. It's a matter of catching the ball first, turning your head and seeing where the person is.

It kind of came natural to me to run after the catch with that route because I started running that route in the summer, didn't really run it in high school, but I've become very confident with it here and it's been pretty successful. So...

Q. Wanted to ask you a little bit about growing up,

what other sports did you play and what other positions did you play that have allowed you to be kind of a well-rounded football player?

MICHAEL MAYER: I played football, basketball and baseball growing up, all three, all the way really until freshman year, and then I played basketball and football. But kind of growing up, grade school, I kind of wanted to play basketball in college. Didn't really know what I wanted to do.

But kind of coming into high school, getting a little bigger, growing, starting to get some muscle mass to me, I thought football would be the right sport for me. And so far it's been working out well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports