

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

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Arlington, Texas, USA

## Liam Eichenberg Notre Dame Fighting Irish

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with offensive lineman Liam Eichenberg.

**Q. Ian Book running the football obviously has been a big part of your offense. Clemson flattened out their pass rush against him, which made some running lanes difficult. How can you guys, as an offensive line, assist when a defense does that? And also, how can you take advantage of how Alabama has struggled a little bit on third down this year?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: I would say the biggest thing is just staying on our guys, regardless of folks who are in there running around. We just need to finish our blocks, block until the ball is thrown. It's tough knowing when the ball is thrown at times.

But I think Ian is going to do a good job sitting in the pocket, throwing the ball, like he's done all year.

We're excited about it. Alabama has a great defense, great defensive line, and it's going to be a good challenge.

**Q. Other than the obvious answer of "everything," where does the offensive line maybe need to be better against Alabama than the last time out against Clemson?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: You know, we need to run the ball. It didn't show up in the last game. They showed us some looks that we weren't ready for, we weren't prepared for. And we took bad approaches.

This week our coaching staff has done a better job at preparing us, I feel like. And for the future practices as well I feel like they have a good plan.

And they're showing us a lot of looks that will potentially show up. And Alabama is a good defense. They're going



to line up, hit you in the mouth, and it's the type of football we like. We're excited about it. They're a very talented defensive line, great linebackers. It should be good.

**Q. I know that the media, a lot of us are so obsessed and focused on the last time Notre Dame played Alabama. I was curious how old were you? And Coach just said you have really upgraded the physicality on the offense and defensive line since then. Do you remember watching that game? Could you speak to that?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: I do not remember watching that game. If I'm being honest with you, I couldn't tell you how old I was. I just know that it was a tough game, I guess you could say. But it's a different year, different teams.

And I feel like the offensive line has come a long way since then. Nothing against those guys. They had a lot of great players. I do know that's when, I think, Coach Hiestand just got here, and the culture wasn't fully there, I guess you could say. I feel like what we've built over the past couple of years will help us during this game specifically.

**Q. Wonder if you could talk a little bit about losing Jarrett Patterson and what he brought to the offense and what he's now bringing to the offense differently as somebody who is standing and watching and helping out?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: Jarrett is the best center in the country, if I'm being honest. It sucks, to be honest with you. We miss one of our best players. You kind of get in the groove with things. He calls everything out. He's very vocal at the line, does a good job communicating.

But at the same time, Josh has stepped in. He's doing well. I only expect him to improve every game from here on out. I'm excited about it. I'm excited for him.

And it's tough. It sucks seeing somebody be injured, walking around with a boot, being on a scooter, because I know he would do anything to be out here. It's just a tough situation for him, but at the same time he's at practice. He's helping. He's coaching. He's giving advice. And



that's what you need from somebody of that caliber.

**Q. The last Alabama-Notre Dame game was mentioned, and there were other instances where maybe Notre Dame didn't perform up to its standard and on the big stage. How motivated is this team to change that narrative?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: In past years I'm pretty sure Alabama got blown out by Clemson. I'm pretty sure other teams have been blown out as well in the playoffs. I'm not specifically concerned about that. This is a different year. This is a different team. We're taking it one game at a time. I personally don't care about the past, if I'm being honest with you. I'm just focused on this week and preparing the best we can to attack this opponent.

**Q. What does it mean to you to be an Outland Trophy finalist? And I think we've gone all season without asking you about the jean jacket that you rocked in your season photo shoot. What's the story behind that?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: With the jacket, I mean my roommates and I were just messing around and we actually brought in some taxidermied animals that hang in our house, and we tossed on some random outfits -- I put on a jean jacket and they put on some lime shirts.

But my jean jacket has definitely been used more than the Hawaiian shirt pictures, I guess you could say. It's not my preference, to be honest. But it's whatever. As long as people get a laugh out of it. I wasn't trying to be serious.

In regards to the Outland finalist, I was excited but at the same time that's not my end goal, I guess you could say. I want to win a National Championship with this team, with this program. It's been a long time since we've been in that position. And Coach Kelly has done a great job these past years getting us to this point and this team just needs to finish it. We need to finish what we started.

But at the same time, I'm the finalist. It's a great honor. Quenton Nelson was a finalist the past couple of years. That outcome is -- a lot of people argue about that. You probably know where I stand on that. But I'm excited.

**Q. How instrumental has it been to have a guy like Chris Watt helping the offensive line this year? What have you learned from him as a guy who's in your shoes not too long ago?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: It's awesome to have a player who played here and understands the program and he was in our shoes. Played in the NFL. I feel it's tough for coaches

at times who didn't play at this level or in the NFL to completely understand what is happening on the field.

Coach Quinn does a great job with everything, and Coach Watt adds experience in there. Coach Quinn has been coaching for 30 years.

It's nice to have Coach Watt who's been in the NFL, understands footwork, technique, and he also played for Coach Hiestand, who's one of the best in the country, one of the best offensive line coaches. Personally I think will go down as one of the best ever. So it's nice having Chris Watt. He's a great guy. But at the same time, he's honest, he's demanding a lot, and that's what we need.

**Q. Both Tommy Rees and Ben talked about situational execution being a problem early in the Clemson game and something that's been a point of emphasis in practice. For the offensive line, how do you guys improve on that, getting ready for Alabama?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: Coach Quinn talked about being a situational player, I guess you could say. One of the best compliments is he's a great situational player. And for us it's understanding certain looks, certain blitzes, what formation they'll be in, what defense. A lot goes into it, what's down and distance and are we going to run the ball, pass the ball.

I feel we've taken more time out of this week, the offensive line has spent more time looking at situational plays, I guess, and downs.

So it's just one of those things that you have to ante up on, because the last game it didn't work out well. And we're looking forward to it against Alabama, and practice has been more consistent. And there's a lot more loud periods in regards to third and long and third and short, red zone, stuff like that.

**Q. I'm wondering, obviously this is a very unusual year. After a game, let's say after an afternoon game, you guys win. I would imagine you see families normally, you go out, hang out with your friends. Can you give me an idea of what was a post-game like this year compared to previous years?**

LIAM EICHENBERG: Yeah, pretty -- a lot going on after the game. I pretty much go home, lay on my couch, watch the game two or three times, and then probably go pick up some food. I would talk to my parents for like 30 minutes outside, spaced out with masks on. They'd leave. And I'd go to bed, pretty much.

It wasn't anything crazy. We can't really -- I mean, we

sacrifice so much. And for me, as a fifth-year in my final season, a lot on the line for me personally. I just can't risk getting sick, I guess you could say. Along with that getting others sick.

A lot of guys on this team, even younger guys, have done a great job at sacrificing and understand the protocol and the guidelines that we need to follow. But there really hasn't been much, and lucky for me a lot of people I know aren't here. So it's been easy.

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