

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

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Nick McCloud

Notre Dame Fighting Irish



THE MODERATOR: Joining us now is graduate student Nick McCloud.

Q. Kind of a two-parter here, how are you looking at and just feeling about the chance to get some one-on-ones, I would assume, with someone like DeVonta Smith? And second, what do you think allowed you to acclimate so quickly as a grad transfer coming into a program under some pretty unusual circumstances?

NICK MCCLLOUD: Well, for the first question, just being able to compete with somebody like -- a player like DeVonta Smith and the other great players they have is just a great opportunity. I love to compete more than anything. So that's just first and foremost, is just being able to have the opportunity to be on that platform and compete with those guys.

And as far as just coming in, being acclimated to this program, I just think the way I was raised, the way I was built, along with having captain-like experience coming from NC State was really what made the adjustment kind of easy for me.

Q. When you turn on the film and start evaluating wide receivers, what do you look for? And are there a couple of traits in DeVonta Smith's game that puts him in an elite category of wide receiver in college football?

NICK MCCLLOUD: For me personally, just playing in (indiscernible) as I do, just seeing how guys get off the ball on the releases, their quickness, speed, all that. But as far as DeVonta Smith, like you said, when you put on the tape, you can tell he has all the intangibles -- release of speed, ability to go get the ball, run after the catch, everything.

I think that's what kind of puts them into the category that

he's in as an elite guy, is for the fact that he has all those intangibles, because a lot of guys they may have one or two but they don't have them all. But he definitely has them all.

Q. So you're a graduate transfer, everybody's mentioned. What was your first impression of Notre Dame? And what's your impression on the program Coach Kelly has built here at Notre Dame?

NICK MCCLLOUD: Just my first impression on the program, I just knew it was a historical program before I got the opportunity to look deeper into it. That just, off the top, just triggered me to want to come here.

And as far as the program that Coach Kelly has built, I learned a lot more about it, like, whenever I got here on campus, I finished -- because I didn't get to come visit during the pandemic or whatever. But just all the traits, man, that he tries to instill on us on a day-to-day basis, it just speaks volumes of how he wants the run his program. So I love it.

Q. Can you talk to me about what's it like for you to be able to play in the Rose Bowl game? And also what set of challenges does Alabama's offense present for your defense?

NICK MCCLLOUD: Just playing the game, it's just a blessing in itself, you know what I'm saying? Growing up, this is the game everybody wants to play in. Everybody watches the Rose Bowl growing up. Just blessed to be here.

But as far as the challenges that the offense presents, they have a lot of weapons from top to bottom -- great physical offensive line, great quarterback, veterans up and down the roster. So I think just that in itself is -- everything that they present is a challenge.

Q. What are a couple things maybe you've learned from being coached by Clark Lea this year that maybe you weren't accustomed to or just some newer things that you learned? And then how has that helped you when you have a couple weeks to prepare for a game



like this?

NICK MCCLLOUD: Just the scheme in itself, it was, like, we did a lot of similar stuff my first couple of years at NC State. But just the scheming stuff, how we (indiscernible) on third down, how we prepared in walk-throughs, everything.

It's just always -- it helps us throughout the week just because we see a lot of plays through walk-through, through film, everything. I just think just the expression of his defense on third down is just how much we see the plays throughout the week definitely helps.

Q. I want to ask you about the impact that Matt Balis and his staff has had on you as a football player in your time at Notre Dame?

NICK MCCLLOUD: I definitely appreciate Coach Balis and his staff for everything they've done. Coming off that knee injury, it was a little tough, just trying to get acclimated back to where I wanted to be in the weight room as far as my lower body stuff.

So definitely appreciate them for all they've done, getting me back to where I know I could have been when I got hurt. Get me back even better. So definitely appreciate those guys.

Q. You mentioned a few times about your relationship with Stephon Gilmore. Have you picked his brain about tips about what you'll face this week?

NICK MCCLLOUD: I haven't hit him up yet, but I'll definitely hit him up probably later today or later on in the week, just to see, like, how he plays guys similar to DeVonta Smith and similar to guys Alabama has. So definitely we'll be giving him a call later throughout the week.

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