

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

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Arlington, Texas, USA

Shaun Crawford

Notre Dame Fighting Irish



THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with Shaun Crawford.

Q. Wonder if you could talk to us a little bit about the challenge that you see in this Alabama offense, and how it compares to some of the other teams that you've played this season.

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I mean, this team is very talented. On the outside they have great skill position. They have a great running back and a good offensive line. And then a good quarterback who can get their receivers in the skill positions the ball.

It will be a challenge for us to try to contain them and just try to continue to go out there and throw different looks, throw disguises, try to make it difficult for their coaching staff and for Mac Jones as well back there so he can't get a good read on us. And just try to play top down and contain the receivers as much as we can.

A similar team you can compare them to is North Carolina, a team that had a lot of speed and a lot of talent on the outside, a quarterback who can make all the throws, a quarterback who can make all the reads, as well as running backs who can take it the distance, any play.

And so when you're looking at a team like Alabama and I guess the teams that we've played, I think those two are pretty similar as far as the talent that they have on the outside with the quarterback and also the running game that's excellent as well.

Q. What would you say have been maybe the biggest challenges you've had moving to safety and just being at the position week after week? And then the second part of the question is just how have you seen Clarence Lewis come along as a true freshman at the cornerback position?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: For me at the safety position, it's just trying to learn the safety position week in, week out based on the different teams and based on our scheme and our plan, just I guess coming from corner, which is just play man or play zone pretty much, and then going to safety is just kind of seeing the whole field and reading different keys and just making sure I'm communicating to the defense, to the rest of the group in situations like that.

And so it's been a challenge, but it's been a fun challenge. And I think it's helped my game overall to help me improve and then just, I mean, I guess that's just it as far as safety.

But Clarence, he's grown so much in his time here, just his short time here, just being thrown into the fire in our first game against Clemson. I had no idea that our coaching staff had plans for him to play that game. He was thrown out there and ready to go.

It was challenging for me just because I had to step up my communication a bit and make sure he had the calls and make sure he was ready to go. But now he's come along. He's into the playbook. He knows what's going on. And so he's gotten his reps up. And he's very comfortable on the field now.

So it's just great seeing him out there playing at a high level and playing fast and having him outside. I have full trust in him. So his growth has been amazing to see this season.

Q. In dealing with DeVonta Smith, what are the dos and don'ts? What do you have to do to try to contain him? And what do you not dare do in defending him?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I guess try to limit the one-on-one matchups, I guess. He's a great receiver. You can watch on film that Mac Jones and the Alabama offense trusts him to go out there and make a play. So they're going to put the ball up there. And, so, we've got to try to do a great job of holding our shells and trying to disguise things and make it tough for Mac Jones to know that he doesn't have that one-on-one matchup early, or trying to take him away post snap in the way we rotate and things of that nature.

So those are the don'ts. But the dos is just try to be physical. Try to get hands on him. He's an elusive, fast, slippery guy, so that will be tough. I think if we're able to get hands on him, try to slow him down, slow him down before he can get into his route, get into his stride, I think that will help us out tremendously.

Q. I'm not picking on you because you've been around for a while, but because you have as much experience as you do, how have you seen offenses change in college football even since the time that you came in as a freshman?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I guess for an example, I guess Alabama, when I was a freshman, I guess they were more heavy on the run and situations like that. Now I guess they're more of a pass team.

But when I came in, the college teams were still majority pass and RPO game, and that hasn't really changed, so I can't say that's changed much.

Q. What is it about Mac Jones' skill set that allows him to take advantage of all the weapons assembled around him?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: He can make every throw. He's a quarterback you're going to see on the next level. He's very calm and precise in the pocket. And he has trust in his receivers. And so when you have talent on the outside like he does, you can just put the ball in the air and trust the receiver is going to go get it.

So the fact that he has a good arm, he has good precision and things of that nature. He has a good offensive line blocking for him. And also knowing that he has a good remain. So the play-action is always there and it will suck in the defense.

So having that asset on the offense is key for him and also allows the receivers to have a lot of one-on-one matchups and a lot of free areas in the zone coverage.

Q. This is your sixth year here. What does Coach Kelly mean to you, not just as a player but as a person?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I couldn't hear you, I'm sorry.

Q. Your love for the Irish is pretty clear. So it's your sixth year for the Irish now. What does Coach Kelly and this program mean to you, not just as a player but as a person?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: This place is home to me. This is

where I grew up at. This is where I found myself and continue to just find love and passion for the game. And so Coach Kelly has been great to me. He's stuck with me through a lot of the adversity. He's just been like another father figure to me on campus and while I'm at school away from my home in Cleveland.

But, yeah, this place is just home. It was an opportunity for me to find myself, for me to battle through adversity, to really grow into myself. And so I love this team, love this university. And so each and every day I just go out there cherish the moment, cherish the opportunities that this university have provided me.

Q. How would you describe your mindset when it comes to tackling, and how are you going to bring this mindset into the Rose Bowl?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: You say my mindset when it comes to tackling?

Q. Yes.

SHAUN CRAWFORD: Just to get body on them, try not to leave my feet, try not to dive as much, because they are -- or Najee Harris is a bigger back. So just try to get square on him, fit him up and wrap, try to wrap and just bring him to the ground as much as -- or try to bring him to the ground every single time.

But just pursuing to the ball, get a lot of hats to the ball, that's what we're going to do need to do. Try to get to him before his momentum gets going.

And on the outside, we're going to have to -- they're going to catch balls. They're a good receiving corps. When they do catch balls, we got to limit the YAC. And so make sure we get them down as soon as we can.

I think that will be key for us in the secondary, is not so much just getting upset with if they catch a ball, but just making sure they don't take it the distance if they do catch the ball. So just getting them down right after the catch will be huge.

Q. I'm an old guy, so you might have already addressed this. But I was wondering, you've got a seventh year of possibility to come back next year. Have you made a decision whether you're going to come back or not?

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I don't plan on coming back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.



