

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

Friday, January 1, 2021  
Arlington, Texas, USA

**Shaun Crawford**  
**Kyle Hamilton**  
**Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah**  
**Drew White**  
Notre Dame Fighting Irish

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us. Available to answer your questions tonight will be the following members of the Notre Dame defense. From left to right on our screens, starting with No. 20 Shaun Crawford, No. 14 Kyle Hamilton, No. 6, Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, and No. 40 Drew White.

Shaun, could you just lead us off with an opening statement on how your defensive unit played tonight.

SHAUN CRAWFORD: We went into the game wanting to play physical. We tried to eliminate all of the explosive plays. I think as a unit in the second half -- or as a unit in the first half, we were playing physical. We let a run slip. We let an explosive run slip, but I think overall in the game we held the line of scrimmage. We tackled the running back, forced him to get the ball on the perimeter, throwing the ball.

So in the second half, I think we stepped it up as a group, as a unit, to try to eliminate the run game completely and just try to make them one-dimensional as an offense.

**Q. This question is for all of you. Brian Kelly talked about in his press conference how maybe early in the game, especially in like the first three drives, maybe there was some tentativeness and not really playing aggressively enough coming up to make tackles. Can one of you guys kind of address that? And if you guys kind of saw the same thing and maybe how you settled in as the game went on.**



JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH: I don't really think it was us being shy or any tension of us holding back. I think it just wasn't the execution deal. I don't think we executed well in those first few drives, and we just had to settle down.

Coach Lea always preaches to us to start fast. When you don't do that, you see what happens. So I don't think it was us being timid or shy or anything, but just the deal where we didn't execute to the fullest of our ability.

**Q. I guess kind of looking at the final score the first time in the last two years Alabama has been held to less than 35 points. I guess in some ways there's definitely some things you're happy with your performance, and in a way, you guys may have done some of what you could to help win the game.**

SHAUN CRAWFORD: As a unit, our job is to go out there and limit the offense to zero points if we can. We don't try to take moral victories by holding them to 31 points. If our offense can't get it going, then our job is to go out there and limit them to no points, if we can, limit them to field goals in the red zone.

So, yeah, we stepped it up as a defense in the second half, and we fought to the end as a defense, but this unit, we don't believe in moral victories. So we pride ourselves on trying to shut out teams. So if our offense can't get it going, then 3-0 should be the game-winning score for us.

**Q. For any of the student-athletes, how difficult is it to fall just a tad bit short in this game after a terrific season?**

DREW WHITE: I think the loss is hurtful to all the guys on the team. We battled through a lot of stuff, but a lot of adversity through 2020. In August, going back, we didn't even know if we were going to have a season. So having a successful season, going undefeated in the regular season is special.

I attribute it to the senior class and the fifth years and even the sixth year of creating an identity for the team, creating



a brotherhood that propelled us in the season. So coming up short hurts. We came in looking to go to the National Championship, but looking back at it through 2020, I'm extremely proud of what we accomplished and how this team is heading into 2021.

**Q. I'll do this with Kyle and Drew. Just with, obviously, Clark Lea taking the Vanderbilt job, what would you guys say are the top qualities you would like in a new defensive coordinator? What are kind of the priorities and qualities you would like in a new D.C.?**

DREW WHITE: Well, I know into the hiring process, we got full trust in Coach Kelly to sit down and interview a bunch of candidates, and I'm sure me and Kyle will be in the room for some of those meetings as well. I'm just excited to see who the next D.C. is because he's got a unit here that is super close with each other, that plays for the ball and hunts.

I really think Coach Kelly has done a great job in his hires through my four years here, so I have full trust in him to pick the right candidate.

KYLE HAMILTON: Yeah, kind of going off that, I think we all trust Coach Kelly and his judgment and whatever decision he's going to make, along with the rest of the defensive staff. But I mean, filling Coach Lea's shoes are big shoes to fill. He's going to do great at Vanderbilt. I believe that with my whole heart. He's a great guy, great coach, and I think that Coach Kelly knows that we respond well to that, and I think he'll try to find a guy that's as cerebral, as dedicated, and as focused on making us better football players as well as better men.

**Q. Shaun, this one is for you. I know you already said you don't foresee yourself coming back next year. What things are you most proud of for the season and kind of switching positions and what you'll remember most fondly about your six years at Notre Dame?**

SHAUN CRAWFORD: Just first off, I want to just thank Coach Kelly for continuing to stick with me throughout all the adversity, throughout all the years. He's trusted me with playing different positions and learning new positions. I'm grateful for just being named the captain this year, being a part of this 2020 team.

Each year I've been on the team, the teams have been close, but there was never one like this. So I'm going to definitely miss it the most. I was a leader on this team, and just the young guys stepped up when their name was called. So I was just proud to see that. I was grateful to play with some All-Americans throughout my time here and

see some All-Americans, as I was like sidelined.

But it's just been a tremendous ride here, and I'm just so grateful for Coach Kelly and the guys on the team and the rest of the staff members just continuing to believe in me through the hard times and just cheering for me through the good times. So I appreciate all of them, appreciate all the memories, and I'm definitely going to miss this place.

**Q. Sorry for the tough loss down there tonight. What does Alabama, their wide receiver Smith, what does he look like up close and personal? He looks like one of those that's going to be playing Sunday afternoons or any time during the NFL.**

JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH: What does he look like up close?

**Q. Yeah, in person. You see him in person because we've only seen him on video and film and all that stuff. What does he look like up close?**

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I think he's 6'1", 175.

**Q. And he's probably going to be playing on Sundays, right?**

SHAUN CRAWFORD: I think so.

**Q. Jeremiah, I want to ask you about the conflict that Alabama put you in as a defense. Clark Lea talks about making the opponent play left-handed. Is that -- with Devonta Smith and Najee Harris and Metchie, does Alabama sort of let you do that, to take away a strength when they have others?**

JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH: I'm not sure the specifics on what their game plan was. There's a lot of runs to the boundary, a lot of runs to the field as well. There was a lot of throws to the boundary, a lot of throws to the field. I'm not sure on the details of what the game plan was. Regardless of where the ball went, I feel like our guys did the best that they could do.

There's some errors where we needed to execute, but overall, you know what I mean, this is a brotherhood. All of our guys are out there trying to play to the best of their abilities and just making sure we execute, but tonight we came up short.

**Q. Jeremiah, you're set to leave Notre Dame and go to the big leagues. What does this university mean to you?**

JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH: Well, I haven't yet

announced anything, but what this university means to me is just the people who are in this university. I think that's what makes up such a prominent place. I've been here for four years, and I love the brotherhood that came through here, love the coaches that have coached me and just the process in which we've always worked to fulfill not only -- as Kyle said, not only the football player, but also the man himself.

So I'm thankful for the coaches, thankful for my teammates, and also thankful for all my professors and things like that.

**Q. For any of the student-athletes, was the Alabama big play capability more about them making plays or your defense not being able to make plays?**

KYLE HAMILTON: I definitely think it was more about us, just playing within our structure and doing what we were supposed to do. I think every time they got a big play, whether it was missing tackles or not getting off blocks or not being in the right spot at the right time, it's all the stuff that we can control, and our coach has always preached that, that the offenses never really do anything special when they get big plays against us. It's more us just having mental errors. That's something we can improve on as a defense just going forward in the future.

I think big plays have hurt us a lot this year and obviously hurt us tonight. I think that's something to grow on and something to be better at, but I think we'll be there eventually.

**Q. Drew, I wanted to ask you sort of just about a kind of similar question to Jeremiah, the conflict that Alabama puts you in. How difficult is that to read it out? Is it an overly complicated scheme? It doesn't sound like it is. Or does it have to do more with the players they have at their disposal?**

DREW WHITE: Yeah, they're an extremely talented offense. I think the whole country knows that. Our game plan going into it was to make them make the big plays and line it up and snap it as many times as they can. In the first quarter, it was really communications and just not executing the defensive structure well. So that was attributed to those scores.

Then battling back the rest of the game, I thought we did a pretty good job. They have an electric offense. Of course they're going to make big plays. The real emphasis was to down the ball and live another day and make them drive the field.

**Q. This question is addressed to all the**

**student-athletes. Can you talk about the physicality and what's been done over the last couple of years to put you in a position to compete, especially going into the latter stages of the year and the season from a physical standpoint.**

JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH: Yeah, I mean, just starting from when we first got here, when I first got here. Coach Balis has done a tremendously awesome job with understanding how the body works, understanding how to get one stronger, but even above that, you have a mental aspect of it that is really prominent. Guys wanting to be able to be physical. Guys wanting to be able to answer back.

Notre Dame has always been known for its physicality, and we just wanted to get back to that. Coach Balis has done a great job. It's about the brotherhood and how the brotherhood elevated in their mindset. So I think that was a key thing in how physical we've been over the past few years.

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