

NFL International Series

Vikings vs Saints

Sunday, 2 October 2022

Minnesota Vikings

Kevin O'Connell

Postgame Press Conference



Minnesota Vikings 28

New Orleans Saints 25

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Obviously a very, very hard-fought win. Really proud of our team for once again really back-to-back weeks showing different types of resiliency to rely on one another.

Special teams was huge for us. Greg made five of five field goals, two punts inside the 20, huge for his first career completion. Just really, really solid performance by our teams again.

We came in with a dialed-in plan. I want to thank everybody associated with our team, all the people I relied on to help me make decisions that were in the best interest of our team, how we prepared to come here, then obviously from the flight, all the way to stepping into our hotel, now stepping out of here. A lot of smart folks that care about our team. Very thankful for those folks.

As well my first experience in a game over here. Cannot say enough about what the environment, atmosphere was like today, in addition to just what three, four days have felt like here for our team, the support, just a genuine real love of American football that I feel.

With that I do want to hit quickly open Lewis Cine. Very tough moment for our team. Obviously a guy that from day one has been a personal favorite of mine, done everything we asked, was continuing to progress in his rookie year, really having a dynamic role for us on teams.

He did have a lower leg fracture. We got him the immediate medical care at a local hospital. Everything I've been told, the care, obviously the local folks here have been phenomenal with Lou.

He will be having surgery to fix that here. We feel very strongly about not only the local doctors, but our medical team that will stay back with Lou and get that fixed up for him. As soon as he's able to make the transition back to the Twin Cities, we'll do that.

Until then, all we care about is wrapping our arms around him, having support stay here with him, then ultimately when it's right for the player, what's most important is everything happens for the betterment of Lou's health.

With that I'll open it up to you guys. Sorry for the long comments.

Q. You say about finding different ways to win, what do you take from winning like that? What can you take as a positive, something to build on?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I think offensively we'll know first and foremost we got to finish some red zone opportunities that we had. I feel like there were some critical moments there where maybe instead of three, we had some opportunities there for seven. If we do that, maybe it doesn't have to be as close in the end.

I give them a ton of credit. That's a good defense. Tough front to run the football against. Then obviously they've got three really good corners, how they were deploying them. Obviously a really good plan to try to take away our run game.

Ultimately we found some plays out there, but just not consistently finishing drives. I have to give Kirk and our offense a ton of credit, back-to-back drives for 10 points to score, obviously getting the field goal.

Learning ops for us. I know it's not always the easiest thing to hear, but we're four games into this thing, tons of opportunities for me to coach better, our guys to be a little bit more consistent. Hopefully when we do that, we'll start seeing a little bit more of pattern of results where we don't feel like we need to come back in the end.

Q. The fake punt, was that a call that you made, that Matt made? Does Ryan Wright have the ability to audible into or out of something like that?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Matt Daniels and I have been talking about that one for a while. I thought it was a critical moment in the game. He suggested it to me. I thought right at that moment it was a great time to give those guys a chance.

I'd seen some similar looks early on in the game where I

evaluated the likelihood of getting look again, especially where we were on the field.

I trust Justin, and Ryan can throw a football now. Now we put that on tape, hopefully we can find other unique ways to challenge defenses in that moment, fourth and shorts. We'll get some more first downs.

I told Jalen Nailor I'm expecting a few more catches in his Vikings' career. He has a way to go before he gets out. A huge play for our team.

Q. (Question regarding the word 'respond'.)

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I think this group is a connected team that loves playing with each other. When they need to, these guys can collectively come together. We rely a lot on our leadership. We rely a lot on guys to make plays in big moments.

There's never any ounce of flinch, even when things don't go well for us, because the expectation is a high standard here. When we're able to make these plays late in games to go execute again, to do whatever we have to do to win the football game, I think it continues to give you confidence moving forward as a team that you can win when maybe you leave some plays out there, when defensively we could be a little bit better.

Ultimately what I'm going to continue to challenge the group is understanding our consistency of being the best possible football team as we progress is going to be key for our season because we can definitely get a lot better.

But I'm so proud of our team, and this moment will help us moving forward.

Q. Wil Lutz hits a 60 yarder, then lines up for a 61 yarder. What goes through your mind?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: As soon as he hit it, I thought it was going in, the second one. I told him after the game, You hit them both as pure as they come.

He's outdoors here. For him to line up two of those in a row, felt like they had a good chance to go through. A couple bounces later, we're able to walk off as the winning team.

You got to give them a ton of credit. That's a tough team, won a lot of football games. I thought Andy battled coming in as the backup quarterback. I told our team last night, This guy is a legit NFL quarterback that's played in Playoff games, had a ton of success. He's going to be aggressive today. We got to be at our best to give ourselves a chance to win the football game.

I got a ton of respect for Andy, Pete, that offensive coaching staff over there.

In general, when it left his foot, I thought it was going in. Then on the first bounce I thought it was probably going in. Then luckily it did not.

Q. How does it affect your game plan when players can kick from 60 yards?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I don't remember this many kickers in the league having that kind of range. I know our guy does. Obviously Wil proved it today, that he can be a real factor in the game from distance.

There's a lot of guys in our league now that can swing it and hit from 60 plus. It definitely is a factor, how you manage those end-of-game situations, how you're going to use your timeouts, use different defensive or offensive calls based upon field position knowing that the 42 or 44 yard line is in field goal range.

We got to be aggressive, maybe try to push them out of that range, which is crazy to say when that kick is happening on their side of the 50.

Q. Adam was saying how much he enjoys coming to London. Do you want to come back personally, spend a little bit more time?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I would absolutely love to. I'm hoping that's in the plans for us moving forward.

Obviously with the week four game, then not having a bye week, we kind of purposely planned this from start to finish. If you tell me it's a couple weeks later in the season, maybe later on in the year, we would like to come, invest our time in the community here. We had a couple events even in the short time we were here with the folks here. Would love to do more of that.

Like I said, the atmosphere was unbelievable today. This stadium, this facility, everything just felt first class. For my first time, a heck of an experience.

Q. What are your thoughts on Justin today? He told me on Friday he was frustrated the last two games, would like to play a main role. It was different today.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I spent a lot of time with J.J. over the last couple weeks, just continuing to tell him how much I appreciate the leadership that he's shown by not allowing that frustration to affect not only his play but our offense.

Obviously how excited he was last week for K.J. and Adam Thielen to make plays late in the game against the Lions to win.

No matter what we had to do today, within reason, within our normal offense, we were going to get him going. We

knew he was going to be matched up against a premier player at his position in Marcus Lattimore. I have a ton of respect for him, how he plays and competes.

But we wanted to give Justin some more one-on-one ops when we saw them. Obviously allowed him to help the other guys as well on some of those early downs.

So proud of Justin. Huge performance. Gave him a game ball today. He earned that game ball today. In my opinion, he earned it in the preparation leading up to this over these last couple weeks.

Q. Change any schemes late?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, I think it was just a matter of consistency for our offense. We were able to kind of stay true to who we are, but at the same time allow Kirk and our passing offense to get aggressive to try to go win it.

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