

New York Giants Media Conference

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Kevin O'Connell

Press Conference

Minnesota Vikings 16, New York Giants 13

KEVIN O'CONNELL: It was an interesting 24 hours or so for our team, but really proud of the way the guys handled a little bit of the adversity yesterday and then found a way to win a football game.

Played really, really good defense all day long. You know, did enough from a standpoint of third downs and running against a really good -- I mean, that's a pretty darn good front. Just trying to play physical there, fighting through some injuries that I'll get to here in a second.

Thought there were some really good individual performances, but the defense as a whole, that's their game ball right there for what they were able to do. 2 of 10 on third down, 0 of 3 in the red zone for those guys, and then the five sacks and whatever it ended up passing yardage-wise. So really, really impressive performance by them.

Then offensively it was going to kind of be one of those games from a standpoint of cold, windy day. 7 of 12 on third down and then 1 of 1 on fourth down. I like the way we finished running the play to put the game away there at the end.

Byron Murphy with the interception and a couple of tackles. Blake Cashman, it was 16 tackles, all over the field. Him and C.J. Ham with Metellus and Jonathan Greenard going out, players decided that they wanted those guys to be our seventh and eighth captains today, so they had the C on their chest today, which was an awesome, awesome moment.

Will kicking in those conditions, obviously 3 of 3. Then I thought Aaron Jones was an absolute warrior playing through being a little dinged up there, but just continuing to run hard. Then I thought Justin's effort on some of those plays, just give him a chance. Sometimes you just got to give him a chance to have the ball, and even if it's not a concept more than just have some guys spread out trying



to get some blocks and give them a chance to have the football, his greatness was on full display.

Injury-wise, Jordan Mason did have the right ankle very, very early and did not return. Unfortunately, Ryan Kelly was being evaluated for a concussion. Did not return. Then J.J. McCarthy with his right hand did not return. Aaron Jones did get evaluated with that right ankle and was able to fight and get back in the game and help us finish it out there.

Three in a row. Tough point in the season when a lot of guys could have focused their intentions elsewhere. These guys have just continue to do fight and found a way to win three in a row, which I absolutely love what those guys have built in their locker room and the culture in our building to continue to go, and we've got a football game in a short week that we have to get ready for.

Q. Do you have the state of J.J.'s injury?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I do not. He likely -- I have not seen the play, but apparently it happened before his touchdown run. I was actually concerned with the angle that I had when he did run it in. I just wanted to make sure he -- I thought he got hit in the head or neck area going into the end zone, but he was clean there.

Then I asked him if he was all right, and he said he was. Obviously we just scored a touchdown, big moment, but then we went out for the next drive. That's when he seemed to have some discomfort there.

We'll evaluate it and make sure we find out what's going on there.

Q. Did he mention discomfort when he got back to the sideline?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: He did not. When we were in those moments -- and I've done something pretty similar. The quarterbacks hit their hands all the time, whether it's helmets or deflect, other defenders, and things like that. It happened to me in college, and I didn't even know I had a significant injury until the next time I took a snap.



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We ran the ball on first and ten and then just trying to throw a simple receiver screen, very similar to what he had thrown to Justin on some of the third and long conversions. I'm not sure he was able to even grip the ball.

I don't know if he knew or not at that point. I have not had a chance to talk to him. They took him away to evaluate him, but yeah, he was unable to grip the football apparently.

Q. What did you think of his performance up until then?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: You know what, I thought, again, he was in a rhythm of great decision-making early on. Obviously the tip ball interception, it's just a simple quick game out route, makes a great decision there.

Justin is kind of on the underneath route, and they're giving up the out route to Jalen Nailor, and we just got to pitch and catch that one. There was a couple of other ones, but loved the decisive decision to Addison on the play action there at one point. He showed his athleticism on a big, big third down to put the ball in the end zone, which was huge.

I thought J.J. was doing a lot of really good things, and really, really unfortunate he was not able to finish the football game. He was in my opinion stacking, putting together a very nice performance again.

Q. Just a disruption with these injuries. How much is that a setback there when you start to get in the rhythm?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Part of you just wants to make sure you know it's part of this game, and he's a competitor. I think it's something where he's going to go out there and lay it on the line every single week.

Like I said, I don't know at what point the injury actually happened. I don't even know if he does and when I talk to him, we'll try to pinpoint that down.

It is unfortunate just thinking about what these last three weeks and really two and a half weeks or so outside of -- you know, outside of that last play and a half there. I mean, he's looked like he's really found a place of decisiveness, ownership of the offense. I mean, the discussion and the dialogue about things he's seeing.

Yeah, it's a bummer just because I'm having a blast coaching him and seeing the growth of a young player getting the opportunity to actually go out there and grow and develop. I've been so proud of the way he's come

really these last few weeks come back and just really shown some growth.

You would love to have him. Love to have him for two straight home games to finish, and we'll see where his hand is at and if he has the ability to play for us again. I sure hope so.

Q. It wasn't him turning down that screen or not throwing it? He just couldn't grip the ball?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: From the sounds of it, I think Carter might have been on the edge, but that's a perimeter receiver screen that you get that thing started. I think they were in man coverage, and you have a chance to get two blocks and possibly give Justin another chance to activate underneath and pick up some of those big guys coming out there.

The ball needs to be thrown right away, and he knows that. He had done it already in the game. If you do hold it on a receiver perimeter screen, the back side defensive end is coming. He knows that. I haven't seen it yet, but my guess is he could not grip the football.

Q. With some of the drops, how do you parse through those, whether it's him throwing the ball hard and receivers needing to adjust or just receivers needing to make catches there?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, and it's kind of -- look, I thought it was impressive some of the throws he made. I mean, the wind was significant at times when it was gusting, a cold day, and he's out there pushing the ball.

Yes, it's unfortunate. Simple kind of day one kind of quick game kind of ball-out kind of plays. Very similar to the one Justin had in into the boundary. That one got on Justin in a hurry, and it's just those are the things that when you fully catch your stride as a group, those are all pitching and catching. We're either first and ten or second and short, whatever it is.

That's been a big part of how we've operated here for a long time is the pitching and catching has been a big part of what we do. I thought over these last two, three weeks it's really shown up.

I even liked the early decision J.J. had against man coverage to Addison on the first drive of the game giving him an opportunity to make that ball. Our guys will make those plays. We got some of the best in the league at the receiver position. You know, clearly with Justin and Jordan and Speedy have all had really, really bright moments this year.

It's just some of those glue plays in between that we got it continue to work to make those throws and catches at the level those guys are capable of. Not only the quarterback, but the receivers as well.

Q. The ball that Max threw kind of down the stretch, can you just walk us through that play?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, so you're kind of knowing that the defense is playing pretty spectacular. You also know you're going to need to potentially try to find a way to at least give Will a swing at it, so we get ourselves into a third down and long, very long, situation.

It's basically a play where we were going to try to do some work to help on the edges and had C.J. in there, and Justin can run the out route from that point. He can run the in route. He can go vertical. He basically has all angles of the cut by what we put on tape. In that circumstance he's running an out cut off of simulating kind of maybe running an in cut to try to see if we can run the leverage.

I told Max if he felt like there was grass out there, I want you to lay it out there and let him go get it. I thought it was a phenomenal throw to get him up and over the flat defender. It was kind of a unique inverted two-deep coverage. Corner has the half, and we could dial all the way in on that if we had a white board, but what it was is Max making a big-time throw and giving Justin Jefferson a chance after the year and the leadership he's shown.

That play will probably not be remembered with some of the five sacks or some of the plays that were made, J.J.'s scramble for a touchdown, but I thought that was as game win because of -- from a player today, and it was Justin Jefferson in a huge moment to make the play.

And Max stepping in, how about that? Stepping in and functioning at a high level, throwing some completions here and there, running the show, made some great decisions with our can system in the run game.

It was a total team effort. Not a very pretty performance, but on a day like this, it really can be with some of the elements.

Q. Ryan Kelly, a little concern, and I know how much he means to you.

KEVIN O'CONNELL: Yeah, concerned just because of obviously his journey and just how well he's been playing and the time that we all took and he took, most importantly, to get back out there. Then he's absolutely one of our best players over these last few weeks since his return.

I got to see the play, because I don't know where the contact could have come from in the normal rhythm of a play like that that could cause that. There was some concerns from some of the folks out there about the play on our side, and I'm going to need to take a look at it to kind of figure out what happened there.

But most importantly, I am absolute -- the concern for Ryan, we're all hoping and really just thinking about him. Don't have an official kind of diagnosis or anything, but any time anything like that happens, you have concerns as a head coach.

Q. Do you have concerns about the play?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: There was just some -- I don't want to get too much into it. I think we all need to probably take a look at it and kind of figure it out from there.

Q. With J.J., do you have concern that this could be something that could end your season?

KEVIN O'CONNELL: I don't have the answer to that right now. I just know they told me he could not return. I know at this point the only information I have is that X-rays were negative, but obviously the hand, there's a lot going on there.

I don't want to speculate one way or the other and just crossing our fingers that we'll have him back out there.

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