

Notre Dame Coaching Staff Press Conference

January 15, 2010



Bob Diaco, Defensive Coordinator/Inside Linebackers

On what assistant coach Kerry Cooks brings to the Irish staff...

"Kerry's a hard worker. He was a hard working, grinding guy as a player. I fancied myself the same way. He wasn't begging out of things and late and lacking any effort and passion, so those people tend to gravitate towards each other. Kerry was that same way. He continued along the same network that I did. As you look at that group that played or coached for Coach Hayden Fry, there are so many guys in coaching and teaching and athletics, football in particular, that it's just a massive amount of people that share the same philosophy and have installed that same paradigm for development. So there is a shared vision there, a shared vision with not only the tangible and intangible traits for creating good teams, but also just exactly how young men should be treated. We've always maintained strong contact. We hired him at Central Michigan and then he got a great secondary job at Minnesota for Coach Mason before he hooked on at Wisconsin with Bret (Bielema). Coach (Kelly) had the opportunity to bring him back and get him back in the fold. He's looking forward to that opportunity. A large part too for him, which is exciting, is his scope is going to be broadened now to where he'll have a detailed knowledge of how the front works."

On if there is pressure on him to improve the Irish defense greatly...

"I don't think so, for me. Everybody is different and I hope this doesn't come across as coach speak because you get that so much, but really, genuinely there are some core principles to playing great defense; effort and hustle, tackling and then maintaining the top of the defense, so that won't change. The bulk of the work and preparation is built in that. Then there is that next level of being assignment correct and in our fits as it relates to the run and the pass, and how we're all tied together. When you put this package together, as it relates to creating and bringing along and developing a defender and then bringing along a unit to play great defense there is not much time for all of the other 'neat stories' out there. It's really for public consumption. In our room we spend 100% of the time on those things I mentioned. There's not a lot of time for that and it really doesn't drive me. On a personal motivation it has no effect at all. I love, love, love and always have loved teaching young men and helping them become productive men through football and that's really it for me."

Chuck Martin, Defensive Backs Coach

On what makes Coach Kelly successful...

"You don't have the success that he's had by at some point in your career deciding that you have all of the answers and have it all figured out. He has continued to improve and get better at each stop of his career and obviously the results speak for themselves."

On his time at Grand Valley State and how tough it was to leave...

"Everybody asks about the decision to leave and I always say the decision to come to Notre Dame was not a very difficult decision. People who know me know how family oriented I am and the decision was as much about me talking to my wife and make sure that she was as excited as I was, which I knew she was already because she is a big-time Notre Dame fan too. We always said that if I leave the job I have up the road it was going to be for something pretty special and I think this certainly fits the shell. Leaving Grand Rapids and Grand Valley State, which I worked at for ten years and those relationships, that is really difficult. The nice thing is that it's an hour and half up the road and we're trying to convince all of the people that are going to miss us and we're going to miss that 'hey we're only an hour and a half away.' Location is nice and we feel that we can still see a lot of people that have helped us a lot of different ways up the road."

On dreaming of being at Notre Dame with his brother as children...

"I've been biased for a long time. I thought this was the greatest place on the planet since I don't even know what age, but since the first time I figured out that Notre Dame existed. Me and my brother grew up where every single day we'd watch a little bit and then about ten minutes into whatever sporting event, whether it was football or basketball season, we'd be out in the backyard trying to emulate our favorite plays or favorite players. When they broke out the green jerseys against USC, we were out in the backyard pretending we had green jerseys putting it on USC. It's pretty neat for me as a person and for my family with all of the love and respect we have for this university and what it's all about."

Mike Denbrock, Tight Ends

On how his previous time at Notre Dame could benefit Kelly...

"Well I don't think he needs any help from me. I think a lot about what a unique place this is and how much passion is involved in the program. How much people care and how much it matters that

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things are done the right way. I don't know yet what advice I can offer from a situational standpoint."

On why Notre Dame fans should be excited he has returned...

"I think I bring a lot to the table. I think there are a lot of positive things that we left here (during his previous stint from 2002-04), even though we obviously didn't win enough games to remain here. I think from a recruiting standpoint, I was able to recruit many quality kids here, many of whom ended up being captains at one time or another, even after we were gone."

On some of the players he helped bring to Notre Dame that went on to have success...

"Brady Quinn was a gentleman that I recruited, David Bruton, Travis Thomas ended up being a team captain, a special teams guy, David Grimes was a young man that I recruited and did a great job in the program here. I think, more than anything, I have a quality of understanding about the type of student-athlete that we're trying to attract here, what it takes to be successful here and I think I do a really good job of bringing that information to the athletes we're recruiting and help them to understand what Notre Dame's about and what that can do for them."

On his first impressions of Brian Kelly when they first worked together as graduate assistants at Grand Valley State...

"Brian has always been a tremendous leader of men. People are drawn to him in a way that not everybody has. He has a way of communicating his message to the people, not only to the student athletes, but to everyone in the program. I didn't have any doubts about the type of success he was going to have. It's hard to think back to 1987, when we first met each other, that we would someday be together here, but I knew good things were going to happen for him."

On Kelly's expectations...

"I think that the expectations that Brian has of the staff and of the players is the expectation that he carries for himself. I've never had any problem with that, whatsoever, because it's been an expectation that I've had of myself and of the position groups that he's made me responsible for over the years. I think it's nothing but a positive thing."

On the tight ends he will work with at Notre Dame, including Kyle Rudolph...

"I've had an opportunity to talk with the young men in-person and on the phone several times. We're beginning the feeling-out process of getting to know each other. There's certainly a lot of talent (already here) at that position that I think we can really utilize in this offense. I think it's really exciting for Kyle, in particular, to line-up in the scheme that we're going to run and the match-up nightmares that he creates for defenses are something that we're really going to be able to take advantage of."

Paul Longo, Strength & Conditioning Coach

On how a strength & conditioning coach helps develops a team atmosphere...

"Much like the Marines, the first couple weeks of winter is always getting those daily work habits, in terms of being on time, your dress, knowing what you're supposed to look like, right down to what you're locker is supposed to look like and those things, for us, are important. They're important for a reason and it's the first thing that we start getting them in and it goes down to attention to detail. If that's crawling, then we start to walk. It goes to level of effort and not only concerned about what you're doing in conditioning and training aspects of it, but what your buddy is doing, what the guy who's going to be playing next to you is going to be doing. We really try to put them in positions where they will have the opportunity. You have to continue to give them opportunities so they can become better leaders."

On the players' expectations from him...

"They'll always know what I want. There will be no gray area there."

On the development of a training table at Notre Dame...

"The nutritional aspect of training an athlete is paramount. There is no question about that. The trick is to, within the parameters we have within college football, is to do it better than the next guy. For the guys to have access to some of the food choices that would help them with their recovery and help them with their goals, in terms of their body composition, which right now is #1. That's the first step, body composition, which helps with our high-tempo offense, that is the first step."

On the first day of off-season conditioning with the team...

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"Our stretch is probably not what you would think as a stretch. My warm-up takes 20 minutes. We start fast and finish strong. We started fast yesterday and they got an idea of what starting fast means in my vocabulary. A couple guys had to, you know, clear their stomach a little bit, but they were right back in there and I was impressed that everybody finished. I told them, 'I'm not real concerned about where you are right now, because there's nothing I can do about it. I'm concerned with where we're going to be tomorrow, the next day and the next day.' That's where we're at now. We're going to go as fast as we can, forward, but it's going to take some time."

Ed Warinner, Offensive Line Coach

On his coming to Notre Dame ...

It was an interesting process, because obviously, the one thing that had to happen was that someone like Jeff Quinn left the Cincinnati staff and became the head coach at Buffalo. The day that I saw that on TV was the day that I said, 'There's going to be a job open at Notre Dame with Coach Kelly, and I'm interested.' I was very interested. I've always been interested in Notre Dame. I've coached at places that are special like this. When you coach at West Point, it's a special place. The characteristics of West Point and the Air Force Academy are inherent here, the type of people, and being that I'm from the Midwest and my wife and I have raised our family Catholic and so forth, this place has a lot of very, very high interest. I immediately aggressively pursued trying to make contact with Coach Kelly, although we had no prior relationship, but through various ways, he was able to learn some things about me, read through my resume, and I think the things I brought to the table interested him, and we talked and developed a relationship by phone and then in person here on campus. I think he felt that I was a good fit for his coaching staff and his philosophy and beliefs, and I think there is a lot of common ground. It was really exciting to have that process work out, and that I didn't have to have a prior relationship with Coach Kelly in terms of working with him. It just worked out.

On the similarities between Kelly's offense and Warinner's offense at Kansas ...

The offense I ran at Kansas as the offensive coordinator has a lot of similarities (to Kelly's). I think that was intriguing to him (Coach Kelly) too, that we had a lot of success there just like they did at Cincinnati. They're not identical; you may do a lot of things visually on the outside, but they may be set up internally and how you do them are different. I think I'll be able to learn some things, but make strong contributions as well. But I think in terms of running our offenses, there was some common ground.

Kerry Cooks, Outside Linebackers Coach

On learning to coach outside linebackers ...

I think as a coach, when you move to a new position, you look at resources. Right here I have our defensive coordinator who I played for at Iowa, Bob Diaco, so he's been around the position and it's his system so he knows exactly what he wants. I will go out and tap into some of the best coaches in the country in college and throughout the NFL and watch tape. It's not that you don't know a position, having been the secondary coach linebackers are critical to tie into run stopping and pass coverage so it's a matter of getting the fundamentals down - the stance, the footwork, the eyes. I think if you are a good coach you go out and research all that stuff.

On recruiting Texas and the challenges it brings...

I think it helps that I grew up there from the standpoint that I have a lot of relationships built in through high school coaches that know me as a player and as a coach from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Western Illinois. Some of the challenges are the distance and down there, the weather. Those are things you battle, plus down there with Texas and Oklahoma you have a pocket of great schools, but there are guys who are a great fit for the University of Notre Dame. There will be hurdles but nothing I have not faced before. The good thing about Texas is that there is a large group of great athletes; some will be the right fit for this program.

On Coach Kelly's coaching philosophy ...

I think coach Kelly's philosophy of having everyone send out the same message as one voice, and letting that trickle down through the program means that everyone is hearing the same things, everyone is believing the same thing and everyone is moving in one direction ... that only leaves to success.

Tim Hinton, Running Backs Coach

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On where the current crop of running backs stand...

I told them all I am giving them a clean slate, so I am not really listening to everything people want to tell me about each kid as much, and I am not going to watch a lot of tape on them because that kid, whoever it may be, deserves a clean slate when we start our winter workouts with position coaches in February.

Are there different responsibility for running backs in a spread offense?

Absolutely. You have to be proficient in three phases of the game. One, God gave you and it come pretty natural- running the ball; every running back wants that phase. Our job is to find the best ones in America that do that part well. Two, in our offense they [the running backs] will literally line up at every position on the football field: as a number one receiver a number two receiver, a number three receiver, a number four receiver, a number four-by-one receiver, one and two on the backside, six different positions in the backfield - seven counting behind the center - so they will have to line up a lot of different places. Their ability to run as a wide receiver and catch the ball from a wide receiver position is important. And the area nobody likes to talk about is you better be a great pass protector. If you cant protect the quarterback, then you have no chance of throwing the ball vertically down the field. Also, to be a great runner, you need great ball security and you have to hold onto the football. Last year we were number one in America in lack of fumbles and that is one of the reasons we were 12-0.

How does being a high school head coach and now coaching in college help you develop talent?

You have to have the ability to not look at what he is today, but to look at what he is going to be tomorrow and have a clear understanding and path how to get there.

On what it means to be at Notre Dame...

It's a dream come true ... I have 27 years coaching in the state of Ohio, and was an old farm boy who never wants to leave. But, some good friends of mine have coached here ... and when I have come up to visit them I enjoyed it. I worked summer camp here as a high school football coach and I took a job on campus, and when you are by the lake in the summer and you stop at the grotto, if you're not moved as a person you're not breathing. And, if you get an opportunity to coach at an establishment like Notre Dame, it's a phenomenal opportunity. My family and I will be honored and privileged every day we get to do what we are doing.

On the message that Coach Kelly sends out...

He [coach Kelly] never fails to talk about winning championships. He never puts a timeline on it because it will come, but everything we talk about comes down to winning championships. So that's the bottom line, we want our kids to know that everything you do from what you eat to how you prepare in the weight room to how you study is about winning a championship here.

Charley Molnar, Offensive Coordinator

On his view on the run game...

We understand the value of a strong run game, and I would be disappointed if we went through the season without a 1,000-yard rusher at the running back position.

On his offensive style...

We believe in aggressiveness and having an aggressive mentality that you don't just sit on the ball. We're looking to score points. Even at the end of the half when the other teams are taking a knee you may see us taking a pass or a run but we're trying to score. We'll try to get another score in before the half. In the type of kids that play for us and the kids we recruit we look for those with an aggressive mentality that are temperament and aggressive in their style of play.

On his outlook on recruiting...

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There's no question and really the Cincinnati thing has been valuable for us because we were on TV at times where kids got to see us play games. Many more kids than we expect know about our offensive, and if we could do those things at Cincinnati imagine what you can do here at Notre Dame.

On his offensive philosophy...

"It comes down to that we have a great system and the kids are well schooled in that system. Our philosophy has been next man in. As coaches we don't blink an eye, if a guy goes down we don't stop the game or change what we do offensively. We just keep doing what we do and expect the next man to go in and keep it going. Success is necessary to get kids to buy into it. Coach Kelly is a guy that kids put on their chips on the table for. Once the kids buy in and have success they work to keep the system going."

On his view of the current running backs...

"To be honest, we have spent so much time grinding through high school kids; I wouldn't be able to do a fair analysis of the kids that are in the program. I want to see it with my own eyes. I don't care to see what they've done in the past. I want to see what they can do once they start winter workouts and spring ball."

Tony Alford, Wide Receiver Coach

On being named wide receiver coach...

"It's a matter of going in, working hard, and paying attention to detail. I have a lot of things to learn, but it's just like the running backs position where we're trying to enhance what we do every year. I am going to try to enhance my knowledge of the whole position. This game isn't that complicated. It is what it is. It's as hard as you make it to be. You come out to learn, play, and study the things you need to study to be a great football team."

On his transition to a new coaching position...

"I'm comfortable in this position. I have great resources in Brian Kelly. I've been doing this thing a long time. There are a lot of guys I know who could help me. I like to think I have access to things I need to have access to."

On being asked to remain on the staff...

"He called me when I was out visiting my father in Colorado, and I didn't know what to say at first. I was flattered. He said you don't have to answer me now. You have time to think it over. I thought about it and counseled with some close to me. It was a big decision to make, but I think it's in my best interest professionally. It is going to help me expand my knowledge base and resume for the future and things I want to do and accomplish in the future."

On the recruiting assignments...

"As far as I know we'll sit down as a staff and go over the whole things and the notes about who's going to what area of the country. I currently have Florida as my base as well as Colorado and Arkansas. At this late junction of recruiting though, you're tied into certain guys and not areas. You just have to go from there until we can sit down as a staff and see where we need to put guys in order to establish bases."