

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 5, 2019

Brian Kelly

Postgame



Notre Dame - 52, Bowling Green - 0

BRIAN KELLY: Really pleased with the way our guys prepared this week, and felt really good about coming into the game because of that. There was a purpose to the work this week, extremely purposeful, and they handled themselves like a team that had a vision of what they wanted to accomplish today, and they went out and they did it.

You know, Scot Loeffler will change that football team. They were undermanned today. They battled. They played as hard as they could. But certainly it was a situation where we were certainly a better football team, and they did everything that they could to manage the clock, hold on to the football. But our football team did what they needed to do today, and we got the win, and we're going to enjoy it for 24 hours and then get ready for USC.

With that, we'll open it up to questions.

Q. You told us earlier in the week you were going to challenge your guys to focus on themselves perhaps more than the opponent. How do you feel like they performed on that metric versus just the opponent?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I felt like they did a very good job. Certainly there wasn't perfection out there today but there was a level and a standard of play. Today went the way it should have went, and could have gone better certainly, but given the fact that they played two very good opponents in the previous two weeks and had USC on the horizon, as I said, I thought that they prepared extremely well during the week, and then I thought they went out and were very businesslike in the manner that they played today.

Q. Nine players with receptions today. When your offense is clicking the way it is, is that what you kind of expect where nine guys can have the opportunity to catch a ball in one game?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think there's enough talent there on the offensive side of the ball that if we're required to get those guys touches, they're going to make plays for us. Getting McKinley involved was something that we wanted to get done today. You saw the rotation at the backfield. That was an important piece of what we

wanted to get done today, as well.

That was more of a focus. The rest of it just happened as part of the offense and distribution of the football.

Q. That was your first shutout since 2014. When it kind of gets to the end of the game, is that an emphasis? Do you want to get the shutout, or is it let's just win the game?

BRIAN KELLY: No, I think everybody on the defensive side of the ball was thinking in those terms, what they can do to get a shutout. But you know, sometimes those things are out of your hands when you have some inexperienced players. I'm thinking about when we have the third group in there that we don't have a bad snap and it goes over our heads. But again, I think our defense played well enough to get a shutout. We were superior in terms of players today. We are not going to run around the Gug all weekend about the shutout. We've got it in perspective. We did some good things. There's no doubt. It's hard to get shutouts in college football, but we'll enjoy it for 24, and as I mentioned already, we'll get back to USC.

Q. It seemed like your coaching staff allowed Ian Book to take more shots down the field and obviously he performed very well doing that. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, you know, I think we had some traditional calls down the field. There were some things that I thought he saw the field well today. I think there was probably one that he probably would have liked back, the interference or the lack of an interference call there, that ball should not have been thrown in that situation. But other than that, I thought he did a really nice job of seeing the field, putting the ball in a position where we could make some contested catches. So I liked the things he did today. Who wouldn't? But again, the competition is going to step up. USC will be a bigger challenge. Two weeks later, Michigan will be another big challenge. But good things to work on that we saw today from Ian that we can show him on film that he got a chance to feel today, which is even bigger, and we'll build off of that.

Great question, by the way. Are you a budding sports journalist? You have a bright, bright future with the group that's normally in here (laughter). Just keep going.

Q. More on Ian, when he had the five touchdown passes in the first half and then he had one drive in the second half, you moved the ball down the field running the ball, then it looked like maybe you were trying to get him his sixth touchdown pass, which would have tied the record; was that a thought?

BRIAN KELLY: Sure, yeah. I mean, in terms of thinking about it, we weren't going to throw it unless there were the right opportunities, but you know, they had one series, he knew he had five. I told Chip, you've got one series with him; if it works, fine; if it doesn't, no big deal. Because it's tying the record. As I told him, tying the record is "meh." If you're going to break the record, then maybe we'll do something about it.

So we weren't going out of our way to kind of get a tie here. I think if it would have been to try to break the record, I think we would have probably been a little bit more trying to get him a record.

Q. On a day where you averaged nearly 10 yards per play and you get the shutout and you say there were things that you could have done better, it sounds like there were maybe one or two things in your mind in that respect.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. I mean, there's some things that we have to tighten up in coverage. Obviously we're going to play elite receivers next week. We can't do some of the things we did today. Our guys know that. We're going to have to tighten some things up. I wasn't particularly pleased with some of the things that happened today and some particular instances on 3rd down, so we'll clean those things up.

But you know, we still bring a lot of pressure. We're still going to pressure the quarterback. That made up for it. But those things got to clean up a little bit. I'd say it probably focuses a little bit on that.

Q. You've kind of walked right into what I wanted to ask second. Maybe they were just personnel moves, but Houston Griffith looked to make a switch, and Cam Hart flipped over to cornerback. Were those depth concerns, or something you see in those guys individually?

BRIAN KELLY: You know, we want to play Houston, we want to get him some playing time, and we think cross training him at the safety position is going to afford him the opportunity to get some safety work, maybe some opportunities there in our nickel and dime package. You know, moving him there gets him on the field a little bit quicker.

And Cam has been moved over to defense. We want to look at him -- we like his length at corner. He was a guy

that played quite a bit of defense when we recruited him. We're looking for some size at that position, and he certainly brings that. We evaluated him the last couple of weeks at the position during one-on-ones and some individual periods, and we really liked what we saw there, and right now we're going to work him at the cornerback position.

Q. Late there in the fourth quarter you got Assaf the ball and he was pretty much stopped and he had a pile of guys trailing behind him, and he was carrying for some pretty good yards. What can you say about his desire when he gets a chance to play?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, Mick is such a hard-working guy, loves Notre Dame, loves his role. You know, I don't know that there's a guy on our team that wouldn't tell you that -- from one of our walk-ons that he is not only a spark plug but a great leader. He's physically strong. If you ask Coach Balis, he'll tell you he's as strong as any of the backs that we have. You know, that was a great way to finish out the game. So just a tough, hard-nosed kid that we really appreciate and our players really appreciate.

Q. Javon McKinley had a big game today, had a big game against New Mexico, as well. What does he need to do to have some of those bigger moments against tougher competition?

BRIAN KELLY: Wow, that's a tough question. Well, I think he needs probably opportunity. I think that -- I think in the Virginia game, he got a couple of catches certainly. You know, Ian Book really trusts him. They kind of grew up together on the scout team and have a great relationship. I think there's a lot of trust there, and I would not be surprised to see him continue to grow into the offense.

We started the game I think against Virginia with him on the field, so Tyler, I think more than anything else, this is just -- you're seeing a guy really who this is his first year of playing. I know he's been in the program a long time, but it's been one of those slow starts for a guy, and I really think that he is going to continue to ascend in the program.

Q. What's Lawrence Keys' status going forward for you?

BRIAN KELLY: We wanted to rest him. I think we could have played him, plantar fasciitis. I can't articulate that word quite the way I should. But he was sore, and we wanted to cut back on his reps during the week, and we just felt like let's get this kid healthy, and this was the right week to do that.

Q. And then Jurkovec getting a chance to do some things, what happened there at the goal line when

he had to burn a time-out, and is he tempting you with that running ability to maybe have a Jurkovec package for running?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, let's start a quarterback competition. We haven't done that -- this is my first year that I haven't had it, so I don't know what to do.

Actually we had a mistake on a signaling issue. We had a signaling issue, and then he's supposed to look at the board, and we were dummy signaling, and he didn't look at the board, he looked at the dummy signaling, so you can see how this can really get away from you quickly when the backup quarterback comes in. So we had to take a time-out there.

Do we see a package for him? Not really. I don't like to get into those kinds of packages unless they are really such a competitive advantage, and Phil is a really good player in those kinds of situations. I just haven't found it to be a competitive advantage at this time.