

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 23, 2019

Brian Kelly

Postgame



Notre Dame - 40, Boston College - 7

BRIAN KELLY: Just so pleased for our seniors. I think that's where we start. This class in particular, maybe didn't start off their career the way they wanted, but, boy, they sure have finished it in an incredible fashion. They still have another game to play, which is a very important game. But to now have 30 regular season wins over the last three years, undefeated at home the last two years, just those are things that have not been done for decades. So pretty special class of players. We talk about failure. Failure is not fatal. And it's the ability to come back from those times, and this group has certainly, has learned that and understands how it's that group that gets back up and goes to work and perseveres and shows grit and they're just great life lessons. And so proud of them, emotional after the game for them and it was a great moment to spend with our seniors in this last home game for them. So again, just so pleased for them. So questions.

Q. How were you able to contain Dillon the entire night. He only rushed for 56 yards.

BRIAN KELLY: We just, again, how we were able to contain the Navy option, how were we able to contain -- it's controlling the line of scrimmage. It's just not one guy. I mean, we have lost two really good players on defense, but other guys have stepped in. Our guys have bought into our scheme, they're very disciplined, they trust each other, they do their job, they're not doing somebody else's job. There's a lot of pieces to this in the sense that you've got freshmen defensive linemen out there, you've got some young players playing. Asmar Bilal was not a starter until this year. Drew White was not a starter until this year. So you've got guys that are accountable, that trust what we're doing, that do their job, and they have done it in a fashion that has allowed us to now in back-to-back weeks shut down the number one ranked rush offense and the number, I think, five ranked rush offense.

Q. And then early in the game it seemed like you guys would have good drives but it would stall out a little bit and you had to settle for a lot of field goals. Was that just what -- and sorry, I can't speak words for some reason right now --

BRIAN KELLY: No, that's fine.

Q. Not executing on offense, or was that Boston College on defense?

BRIAN KELLY: No, you saw us. We dropped one on a crossing route that would have been a touchdown. We had a penalty that put us back. We were a little uneven early on and credit a little bit to Boston College. I thought that their plan was outstanding. They did a lot of really good things that kept us off balance. They ran some two trap, which is a cover 2 and they pressured us so it took away some of our man zone reads. They did some really good things. We had to make some adjustments. But Jon Doerer was outstanding during that period of time when we were a little uneven where he kicked field goals and kept us ahead of would have been momentum swings, if you will. And those were big kicks for us.

Q. A little bit to echo that, as you go into halftime having shuffled down where it mattered most, what was the message? Was it: It's inevitable we're going to get through?

BRIAN KELLY: I told them I was happy with the offense and its ability to take a deep breath after, again, being a bit uneven, and starting to now execute at the level that they're capable of. And that defensively, other than the explosive play, do not give up an explosive play. If they do not have an explosive play, they cannot beat us. They flat out can't beat us. So no explosive plays, continue to trust the guy next to you on defense, because you have to be assignment-correct, just like the option, and let's settle into what we're doing offensively and we're going to be in good shape.

Q. On your offense you did get an explosive play with Braden, the 61 yard rush. He said as soon as he saw where the ball was spotted he knew that would be in the mix. What about having the ball near mid-field line?

BRIAN KELLY: He had no idea. He doesn't know the snap count half the time.

Q. Can we ask him about that? What about having the ball at mid-field --

BRIAN KELLY: Was this his first time with the media? Yeah, so, you got to -- guys, really? You bought all that?

Q. That's why we're asking you.

BRIAN KELLY: Okay. Well let's start again.

Q. Is there anything about having the ball at mid field that makes the jet sweep more effective?

BRIAN KELLY: No.

Q. How much do you emphasize to your team preseason, before the games, the importance of winning at home?

BRIAN KELLY: It's a huge piece. It's part of our summer workouts. We have themed runs, conditioning runs that center around that. We condition in the stadium, which is a protect our house themed run with video. It is a big deal. It's important. And if you look at the schedule you can imagine, most teams play seven games at home. If you can protect your house and do okay on the road, you're in the mix. So it's a huge point of emphasis.

Q. Do you talk about the goal of winning every game at home as -- is that one of the goals?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I don't know that we talk about winning as much as the standard that we want to play. On the other side of the T-shirt is the ND standard. And so a standard of play that exists when we are in this stadium. And that standard needs to be one that protects this house.

Q. Myron. Talk about his status.

BRIAN KELLY: I don't believe that there's anything significant there. Soft tissue, but no structural damage. Don't feel like there's anything to be concerned about moving forward.

Q. With the senior class overall, as much as you want to take the program further and sort of like push out, do you feel like this is one of the legacies of this group is like there's a floor, there's a foundation here that 10 wins is, that's just sort of what Notre Dame football is now and Notre Dame has not been viewed in those consistent terms in quite some time.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think three years puts new that position. I think four out of five starts to even bring it clearer into a picture of, you know, four out of five years, that's where you should be. If you did it once and then you don't do it for three or four, then you're hoping and praying that that's where you are. But three in a row, four out of five, that's where you should be with this program.

Q. In terms of just the example you feel like the seniors have set collectively, where do you think that's been the strongest and how do you see guys that you feel like, okay, they're following, like, this is going to be replicable next year?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, the peer accountability piece has been the most important one. Holding their peers to a

level and a standard. If there's trash on the locker room floor, go pick that up. That shouldn't be on there. So not kind of letting things slide, but holding them to a level of accountability. And then the piece that I brought up earlier is that we may slip, but that doesn't mean we can't get back up and get to where we need to be.

Q. Who got the game ball?

BRIAN KELLY: Asmar Bilal.

Q. And second question would be about Jonathan Doerer. There was some concern coming into this season with his length of getting the field goals. He gave you a 47- and 45-yard shot tonight. How does that talk to his maturation over the season?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I wasn't concerned about his length. He has always exhibited leg strength. It was consistency. It was really the mental performance end of things. And I'm so proud of him and his ability to really change his mindset and the way he's gone about it. This is all on Jon Doerer. 100 percent. I think Brian Polian has done a great job with him too. Because he coaches him every day and that relationship has to be really solid, there's got to be trust there. But this is Jon Doerer really getting into a good space of consistency and you saw that today.

Q. Ian was asked after the game if this was his last game at Notre Dame stadium, and he said: We'll see. Do you expect him back next year?

BRIAN KELLY: You know, we haven't sat down and talked about it. I think what he should do is get all the information first, we'll get the NFL evaluation in, get all that. We're still kind of in the, you know, we're in the passing lane right now. We're trying to go through some traffic and so it's really too hard to kind of sit back and make those decisions at this time. There will be a time and place after the game that we play at Stanford to kind of make that decision. But we're, like, so focused on winning another football game and then we'll sit back and make that decision. I'll help him.

Q. Is that the biggest recruitment you have to do for the next couple months?

BRIAN KELLY: You know I'm going to recruit him. I want him back. But that's not my decision. But I'll certainly recruit him.

Q. Are you surprised by it at all or it just makes sense for him to go through the process?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, it makes sense for me and him, and I've asked him to do this is to kind of hold this to the side and please focus on playing the position of quarterback. And he's done a great job of that. So I really don't want to upset that and I've asked him to kind of just put that aside right now and we have got plenty of time to deal with it after the Stanford game.

Q. One more for you on Ian. And his body of work is not complete, whether it's two more games or a whole another season. But at this point where do you think he ranks amongst the quarterbacks that have played for you at this school?

BRIAN KELLY: God, here we go. You guys can't help yourself, can you? I mean, he's really starting to play at a more consistent level and, you know, I really like the things that I'm seeing from him at the quarterback position. He's shown toughness, he's throwing into tight windows, he's making good decisions, he's throwing to hot receivers. So he's playing the game the way it should be played. But to compare him to other quarterbacks, I just, it's just hard for me to do that right now, I'm sorry.