

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

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Brian Kelly

Press Conference



Notre Dame 27, Duke 13

Q. How do you assess Kyren Williams performance today?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: Well, he did something that had not been done here in 25 years. So I mean, from that perspective, you know, receiving yards over 90, rushing yards over 90, pretty good opener for him. There's a lot that he can build off of this, certainly.

I think for an opener that's a really good performance and something to build off of. Certainly there's a number of run-reads and blitz pickups and things of that nature that he's going to get a great, I think, learning curve from. But obviously a really good day.

Q. What did you see from Joe Wilkins in camp that he could produce when asked to?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: He had been limited in camp with a hamstring injury, but we always felt like when Joe got his opportunity, he was talented enough to make some plays and it's just fun to watch him make some plays. I mentioned him in our postgame talk. There's a lot of players that just needed an opportunity. He was stuck behind some really good players.

Ben [Skowronek] has a bit of a hamstring, not severe but enough that he could not play at 100 percent, and so next guy in, and we have a lot confidence in Joe and he made some terrific plays for us. That sideline catch was a really big catch for us.

Q. How important was the use of misdirecting your attention in the offensive game plan?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: It was an important adjustment that we made at halftime. They threw everything at us in the first half, a lot of looks that we certainly didn't expect nor did they show at all last year.

You know, you're going on -- in this kind of camp that we had, you're trying to go on a lot of looks that they had

shown from their past defensive coordinator. One of their looks, their three-down with their stand up was pretty similar look. They had not used it any of the rundowns, so there was some difficulty in terms of identifying and sustaining some of the blocks and their two-points. But we made the adjustments and I thought we did a nice job in the second half.

Q. To what do you attribute the slower start on offense in the first quarter?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: Just the way I answered it, and I don't know if Tyler [James, South Bend Tribune] knows this, but we had not played spring ball or we didn't play in December. If he was expecting that we were going to come out like a shiny new car, he's been reading too much Internet chatter.

Look, it's difficult to duplicate game-like speed when you haven't had that for such a long time. So my expectations is that it was going to be a process that that we just had to be patient, and you saw we were patient and we stuck with what we were doing and we had to make some adjustments at halftime and I thought we looked like the team we should have in the second half after we made some adjustments and settled into some things. I thought we took control of the game in the second half.

Q. How would you evaluate Ian Book's performance today?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: I thought it was up and down. You know, I think Ian [Book] made some really nice plays for us.

What I had said to Ian on the sideline was he has to make some of the easy plays, the lay ups, if you will. He missed a screen and he missed an easy drive route and he did some really good things, too. You have to understand, no spring ball, and let me just go over how many new players that he is blending into this offense: Whether it's Mike Mayer, Tommy Tremble getting a bigger role, Joe Wilkins, Javon McKinley, Lawrence Keys, all the backs, you know, Ian Book has got a whole new offensive group of skill players around him, and he's still working through that process. So it's not in a situation where he knows exactly where they are going to be.

He will. And so I told him, look, don't expect that that happens overnight, but make the easy plays and at times

... when all is said, we're done.®



Ian wants to be great, and he can't be great yet because those guys are young and they need some more time. So just make some of those easy plays and he'll be fine.

Q. The fake punt, what was your thought process and what does it say about the belief in your team that that would be successful?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: My thought process was I hope the heck it works. That was my first thought process. It was there. We saw it on film. We felt like it was there. It was one of those that you needed to call it in a very vulnerable area. In other words, when you're backed up.

So you know, Jay [Bramblett] is a very good athlete and you saw that he had to cut back to make that first down, but felt very confident that he was going to get an opportunity to convert that. And we were kind of -- we needed a little bit of momentum and so I just felt like it was the right time to make the call.

Q. You had a lot of mileage out of your depth on defense. What's your assessment of that group, especially Isaiah Foskey?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: We got a lot of depth and mileage. And then you had a second part of the question?

Q. Isaiah Foskey.

COACH BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, some people would be happy that he would be their featured player and he's a depth player for us. He's an outstanding football player, let's just put it that way and we are just blessed that we have a lot of depth and you saw that starting to kind of show itself.

There were some, you know, I don't know, I mean, there's some plays that we can shore up on the back end, leverage plays that we'll take a look at but we let the ball outside the defense here and there. Things that, you know, I don't know that we're going to lose sleep over, but they have got to be addressed and we have got to clean it up.

But the answer to the question is: What we are blessed with is great depth and you could kind of start to see that show itself in the third and fourth quarter where we started to take the game over.

Q. What were the biggest challenges coaching with masks on? Is it a challenge to signal players?

COACH BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I just think communication at times becomes one where it's a bit muffled in terms of

communicating personnel groupings. It's really clear, obviously, you're listening to play calls and communications, but trying to communicate on the sidelines with a mask on is not the easiest thing to do.

So just making sure there's clear communication on the sideline and that becomes a little more difficult.

Now I will say this: The atmosphere in the stadium was just -- I was blown away. I was expecting it to be like, you know, an inner-squad scrimmage. That was a great environment. Our students created this, for our guys, and they said this to me, they or overjoyed in the sense that it felt like a football game. There were students in the stands and they created an atmosphere that felt like a real football game in there.

So I'm not saying it was a roaring den that we couldn't hear, but they made it loud, too, at times, where it felt like a football game. So really appreciate what our students did in coming out in force and making a great environment.

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