

# University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 10, 2020

South Bend, Indiana, USA

## Brian Kelly

### Press Conference



Notre Dame 42, Florida State 26

BRIAN KELLY: I think first and foremost, winning is hard. Just to be here talking about a victory is really satisfying given the fact that just about 10 days ago we had 36 guys that were unavailable to us.

In short order to prepare our team and have our guys be selfless and take care of themselves and put themselves in a position to win a football game today, I couldn't be more proud of our group, our coaches, our support staff.

We gave the game ball out to Rob Hunt and Dr. Matt Leiszler. We couldn't be here today without their extraordinary efforts to get our football team safe and healthy.

Just overwhelmed with a sense of I think pride that we have such a great support group that was able to get this group together.

With that I'll open it up to questions.

#### **Q. What was the thought behind moving Shaun Crawford to cornerback? How would you evaluate how he handled the move?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, the thought was that Cam got out of quarantine yesterday, Cam Hart. Let's see. [Nick] McCloud was unavailable until Thursday of this week. Clarence Lewis was unavailable till Thursday of this week. So we were down three of the corners that played quite a bit. So it was TaRiq [Bracy] and a bunch of freshmen that really weren't particularly ready.

Shaun had played the position, so he was again, as I mentioned to you earlier, selfless in the sense that he moved over to the cornerback position and bailed us out in a very, very difficult time playing a position that he hadn't been repping at all because he had played all those safety reps.

#### **Q. Were you comfortable with Liam Eichenberg going**

#### **back in with his eye looking the way it was?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I don't make those decisions. I defer to our medical professionals. They felt like once they put an eye shield on, they got the swelling down, he had full vision.

They're always going to err on the safety end of things. They're never going to put a kid back in unless they feel like they can protect themselves and that they can be effective.

Then I asked Liam, I said, Liam, how do you feel about playing?

He said, I feel great. I want to go back in there.

So there wasn't any hesitation at all.

#### **Q. Another injury question. In addition to an update on Liam, what about an update on Paul Moala?**

BRIAN KELLY: I don't have one for you. It looked to be an ankle, then I got updated that it was more severe than that. I don't have specific information about the severity of it. We'll get an MRI and then we'll have further information for you when we talk on Monday.

#### **Q. You expressed concern over the tackling after missing three weeks. How much of that was Jordan Travis' creation?**

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, he's a good player, there's no doubt. But that was not our A game. Good teams win when they have their B or C game. Our defense did not have their A game today.

A lot of it has to do with a combination of really good players. And Travis, I thought he played extremely well. They had a good scheme for him that made it difficult for us in terms of making some adjustments.

But again, we gave them 10 points. We keep them to 16, that's not playing at our best. We can play much better. Some of that is attributed to obviously the layoff that we had.

Look, I'm not up here making excuses for our guys. But



the quarterback's good. There was a layoff there. We still with not playing our very best came out with a pretty good victory.

**Q. Kyren Williams had a strong response after the fumble. Did you or the staff leave him alone after the play or was something said to him?**

BRIAN KELLY: No, he's a competitor. We just reminded him about ball security. Again, he wasn't hit a lot. We only had one opportunity in these last three weeks to go live with our guys.

Again, I'm not up here to make excuses for guys. But he's a great competitor. He bounced back. Look, great competitors put that play behind them and they move on. That's the kind of competitor he is. He moved on from a mistake he made, showed the kind of athlete that he is.

**Q. Kyren Williams and Chris Tyree both hit over 100 yards tonight. Why do you think these young backs are seeing the field so well?**

BRIAN KELLY: Because they have really good guys blocking for them. There's five guys up front. There's receivers blocking for them. There's tight ends that are blocking for them. We got a lot of guys that are doing a lot of pretty good work for the backs.

Then they're making good, decisive cuts, seeing things very well. It's a combination of all those things. Good backs that are making really patient cuts, letting the offensive line do their work.

**Q. Where do you think the layoff impacted the team the most and why did the run game seem almost immune to any kind of rust tonight?**

BRIAN KELLY: It's hard to duplicate the speed of the game. I thought our conditioning element was not where it needs to be. We were playing a tempo team. The legs get a little bit tired. We had a long week of practice.

Look, we had to push them hard this week. It wasn't ideal in terms of optimal game readiness, if you will. We were a little tired, if you will. But we had to do it to get them game ready. You could see there was a little bit of fatigue defensively. We were falling off some tackles.

But from an offensive line standpoint, they excel under those circumstances. The work for them I think was positive in that sense. Again, that group is a unique group. There's not a group that I've coached that those five guys work so well together.

**Q. A few questions about the offensive line. What made you go with Dillan Gibbons over Josh Lugg? How would you evaluate both Dillan and Aaron Banks this evening?**

BRIAN KELLY: Gibbons is a left guard. We lost the left tackle. We normally bump Banks out to the left tackle position as the first man in.

Lugg had just stayed on the right side because we were moving him in and out because we were giving Tommy Kraemer a blow. Tommy banged up his shoulder cuff during the week, so we were moving Lugg in. Lugg got most of his reps this week at the right guard position. He really wasn't prepared to go in on the left side.

When we had to make the choice, it just was the wiser decision to put in 'Gibby' because he had gotten all those reps at the left guard position.

**Q. Why was Javon McKinley able to have some success in the passing game tonight?**

BRIAN KELLY: He's coming on. I mean, it's just one of those things where sometimes it just takes longer. He's a beast. He just needs to think that way more often. I think he's starting to think that way.

I mean, I think he is, isn't he? Aren't you? He's starting to think that way (smiling).

He can't be defended. I mean, there's nobody I don't think in college football that can defend that kid. I mean, [Asante] Samuel is one of the best corners in the country. He didn't have much of a chance defending him.

If he just continues to work the way he's been working, he's been one of our better practice players, he is a great leader with those wide receivers. I've been telling him he's got a chance to do some special things.

**Q. Ian Book showed a willingness to let it go and challenge with the deep ball this evening. He played aggressively. Was that a point of emphasis in the first two games?**

BRIAN KELLY: No, I think your observations are right on. It was a conversation that he kind of had with us this week. He said he felt really good, as good as he's felt in quite some time.

I don't know, maybe a perspective that he had gained. He was very calm in the pocket. I thought he saw the field well. He was aggressive in pushing the ball down the field.

It was nice to see. If we continue to see that from Ian Book, he's going to be very difficult to defend.

**Q. Even if the defense didn't have its A game this evening, do you think the physicality of that group ultimately wore down Florida State and can that be part of the identity of this team?**

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, yeah, there's in doubt. Travis, he's a really good player. I mean, he did some really nice things. But he was getting hit very hard. In that last couple drives, he got up slow. He's a tough competitor. But it was starting to take a toll on him physically.

Our group was just starting to come together. Kyle had a big hit late in the fourth quarter, too. I think the physicality was coming together. We were getting our legs back. But having some time off, it just takes some time.

It's a physical defense. Like I said, it wasn't their A game, but they will play at a much higher level and it will be fun to watch.

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