

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 11, 2021

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Coach Brian Kelly

Press Conference



Notre Dame 32, Toledo 29

BRIAN KELLY: All right, happy that we won the football game. Great to be back in a stadium at Notre Dame Stadium with fans. I thought the fans were great today. Like I said, just a long time since we've had an environment like that.

And Toledo played great. Hats off to Toledo. Jason and his staff did a terrific job. They were well-prepared, well-coached, their players played really well. They're going to have a fine season.

From our perspective, right, happy about the win, but there is just -- I can't even begin with the work that we have to do. Obviously it starts with just the basic premise of football. Three turnovers, one of them was a touchdown. You don't usually survive those games and win when you do that, that's No. 1.

And No. 2, we gave up big plays on defense. We let them out of -- we got them backed up on a couple occasions and we just -- I know we haven't turned the corner from that perspective.

So, again, I think the biggest thing on me is we lacked intensity coming out. This game requires a team to play with minimumly for the price of admission, you have to play this game with some intensity. I did not like the way we came out. I thought we lacked intensity, and that's on me and my preparation in terms of how I prepare the football team.

I obviously didn't do a very good job preparing them. I thought they played with more intensity in the second half, but sometimes you don't want the circumstances to have to dictate that they have to play with more intensity.

So that is kind of an overview. I'm sure that that will give you enough to begin questions.

Q. With Tyler's first appearance, was that planned? Were what you guys hoping he could give you there,

and overall what did you see from him that seemingly gave him some more chances?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, as you know from watching the game, we were trying to find ourselves offensively in the run game. We're transitioning as we speak. We lost another offensive linemen in Carmody, so we're trying to find a run game.

We're backed up there. I felt like going to Tyler there, he would give us the versatility in the run game that we needed at that time.

Turned out it worked out pretty good. He gave us the shot in the arm that we needed.

Q. With Jack obviously he responded really well at the end.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah.

Q. How did he handle that? I imagine that was part of knowing how he would react, part of the decision to involve Tyler.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, Jack is a just a great character kid. He just wants to win. He stayed ready, you know, and knew that. We told him, This is something that we're going to do to help the football team win today.

He was, again, prepared and ready to get back in there and help us in that last drive. He was outstanding.

Q. And then Michael Carmody, like you mentioned...

BRIAN KELLY: Ankle sprain.

Q. And then Cam Hart, noticed he wasn't out there on the last drive. Was that injury related absence or just wanting to shake it up?

BRIAN KELLY: No, I think we went with TaRiq on that series.

Q. Specifically in that final drive, what did Coan show you?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, just he -- couple things. One,

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patience in the pocket. We were able to protect him. That wasn't the case most of the day. We had some issues in protection for various reasons. Not offensive line per se as much as we had some coverage sacks. We didn't pick up a corner blitz one time.

We were trying to chip with the back and they were second wave blitzing the back once we did that, so there was a variety of different things. I thought he was poised in the pocket and decisive with his throws in that last drive, and that's the mark of a veteran quarterback.

Q. I know you would prefer not to be in games that are decided in the final minute, but in terms of having a game like this with the fans back for the first time in two years, can you put in perspective the atmosphere?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, it was great atmosphere. Again, I thought that -- you know, they helped us a lot, the home crowd, especially when you need that jolt, which we did.

You know, it helps to have that home crowd, and certainly, as you know, they had a number of false start penalties that affected their management. They had to burn a timeout or had a 10-second run off.

So home crowd, you know, definitely helps in those kinds of situations.

Q. The defensive performance, some big plays couple weeks in a row. Do you have sort of a this is why this is happening, or is this something that needs a little bit more of a deeper dive?

BRIAN KELLY: No, we know why it's happening. You know, we are transitioning defenses. Again, I will tell you that we have new players on the field, younger players, inexperienced players that are going through some growing pains.

We still got to get the ball on the ground. We have a chance to do things and we're making them worse by not doing some of the fundamental things in terms of turning plays that are 10, 12, 15 yards, you might have those occasionally. We're leading them turn into 60, 70 yard runs.

So, you know, it's counterplay; didn't long arm it, didn't fit to the right way. Ran the play all week. So we just got to be fundamentally better and we have got to keep repping it and commit to it.

Q. Did Jack Coan dislocate a finger?

BRIAN KELLY: He did.

Q. Can you just walk through that play.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, so he dislocated his finger. There was a break in the action and one of our trainers, Mike Bean went out there and performed some kind of, I don't know, pull the finger thing. (Laughter.)

I don't know -- what's the medical -- is that the medical term? He pulled the finger, got it back in place, and the next play we were throwing the verticals. We went four vertical, brought the tight end to the backside hash, and Jack steps up. We're going to have Bean work on his hand more often.

But he did, he dislocated the finger and got it back in and felt like he could keep going.

Q. I think you knew this team was going to have to figure some things out in-season. Do you just have more things to figure out than maybe you thought you would?

BRIAN KELLY: Yes and no. Yes in the sense that I think from a defense standpoint there is a little bit more to it than maybe I thought in terms of figuring some things out.

And then offensively I thought we would get to a run game that we felt comfortable with sooner.

But on the other hand, I think the personnel is driving a lot of this in terms of making it difficult to settle on something, because we have some guys that really can make some plays, and we are a little hesitant at times to say, All right, this is who we're going to be.

I think we got to stop tinkering and say, All right, this is it; let's go. We're in a transition, and as I told the guys had the locker room, starting Monday we have to make it simpler for everybody.

Q. Congratulations on win 25 in a row at home.

BRIAN KELLY: Thank you.

Q. Talk about the two-point conversion play. How many times had you been able to rep that in practice, and was it a little broken or...

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, it was broken.

Q. So didn't go just as you diagramed.

BRIAN KELLY: Well they brought pressure off the front side edge and they played man, so it was going to be a

pass back to the quarterback from Avery Davis. They picked him up, did a great job, so Avery stopped, and we have the tight end on the backside that the back end, tight end leaked out the backside. He made a great play, stopped, redirected, and we have never seen that in the play.

We've always either -- he's kept it and run out the front, because you cover the quarterback, or he has thrown it to the quarterback. So just a great play by Avery.

Q. How often had that play been repped in practice?

BRIAN KELLY: Quite a bit. Quite a bit. It's one our standard plays that we've run for a couple years. We just haven't used it.

Q. Now everybody knows it.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, it's out. We got another one. We'll come up with another one.

Q. How much does Tyler Buchner expand what you could do offensively, and does what he did today make you consider trying to put some of those packages in on a regular basis?

BRIAN KELLY: You know, packages, packages, packages. We thought we had this package and then we started just calling the plays that were installed for everybody.

So, you know, it's kind of what I talked about with our staff, is that the offense has to be certainly some run game for Tyler, but he's got to be able to go in there, and if he's in there on that last drive, we've got to be able to throw the football down the field and do those things.

So this is kind of to Pete's question. We got to kind of figure out where we want to go here. We've got some really good players, but this week will be, All right, here is who we are and let's get to work.

Q. Does that include shuffling on the offensive line if Carmody is out? Can you move Jarrett Patterson to tackle in-season?

BRIAN KELLY: We don't need Jarrett Patterson at tackle. He's really not set to be a tackle. What we need is to keep working with those guys and get them better. Maybe we got to move the pocket a little bit, maybe we got to do some things to help them a little bit, but it's going to be Carmody, Baker, Alt, going to be Lugg, those are our guys, and maybe we got to get a tight end in there.

We've got options to figure this thing out. It's not rocket science. Those kids are good, young players, but they're young. We can win with those guys. We just got to figure it out. We'll get it figured out.

Q. Are I think there was a pretty big stretch in the middle of the game where Michael Mayer went catchless. Was Toledo making an effort to...

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, we tried to throw the pivot into him and he was double covered. He got picked six. So, yeah, there was inside/outside bracket coverage on him, and I would too. We have to be able see that and work through our progressions.

Q. On the topic of not tinkering and figuring out what you want to do, how quickly do you think that can come about? How close do you think you are to figuring out what you're going to be on the offensive side of the ball?

BRIAN KELLY: I mean, Toledo is a pretty good defense. You know, I know they're not Power 5, but that defense is middle of the pack in the ACC. So consecutive weeks we put over 30 points on the board. We got work to do on offense. You can't turn the ball over. Let's start there.

If we don't turn the football over today we're going to put points on the board. So if against Purdue we play clean offense, don't turn it over, and really settle on how we want to run the football, that would be a good step forward.

Q. You say opened up the playbook for Buchner. Given how the day had gone going into the final drive, was there any consideration of him instead of Coan just given the previous quarter or two?

BRIAN KELLY: No. I think having them both keeps the defense off of what you're trying to do. I think we can blend both of them into what we're doing.

But, you know, each week is a different week. We're trying to find a way to win the game today.

Q. Not asking about a controversy, but that last drive in particular.

BRIAN KELLY: Could he have gone in for that last drive?

Q. Did you consider that?

BRIAN KELLY: No, we just liked Jack's experience. He's been there before. Not that Tyler couldn't have done it, but if you're looking four in the moment trying to win the game, it just made more sense to go with a guy that's been

experienced.

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