

University of Notre Dame Football Media Conference

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Coach Brian Kelly

Press Conference



BRIAN KELLY: So who's starting? Did you guys get all that thing taken care of today? We're 12-0, who we're beating, who we're not beating? Lou, got bless Lou. Lou would want to know what the kicking situation is first. He would start with kicker, punters and long snappers. So let's start with a Lou question in memory of our good friend. Let's start with a Lou question.

Q. I'm going to start with Jarrett Patterson question. I know the original intent was to look at him at another position; you moved him back to center. Is that a permanent thing, and what was kind of the thought process in coming to this conclusion?

BRIAN KELLY: It's a permanent thing. He's going to be our starting center.

I think as we looked at a couple things, one, what's in the best interest of Jarrett Patterson first, he's one of the top centers in the country. It's hard for me to take a player and really put him in at a position where it could affect him down the road.

He's done so much for our program. Could we be better served if he played another position? You could make the case. But I think my feeling was we're a good football team with Jarrett Patterson at center, and it helps him in the long run playing that position.

Q. Blake Fisher's rapid development, did that assist you in making this decision?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, certainly the mid-year guys make this decision a lot easier, and so we needed to assess that, so some of my comments were prior to knowing exactly what was going on there, and before we got Cain. So some things happened after the fact.

But yeah, certainly those were factors in this, as well.

Q. Is Correll at good fit at guard? I know he's certainly not as big as last year's left guard.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, no doubt. He brings other intangibles, right? He's smart, he's tough, he's athletic. The physical things that he brings relative to the guard position certainly outweigh the fact that he's not 325 pounds. There's the plus/minus there.

Q. How do you see the rest of the offensive line playing out? Is there competition at some of those positions?

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, there's a lot of competition, and look, I would not -- you know, and Tim mentioned Blake; I would not leave this conversation here and say, oh, Blake Fisher is the starting left tackle. Here's what I can tell you: Jarrett Patterson is the starting center, and Josh Lugg is going to play for us. Those two guys are the veterans on this offensive line that I can commit to right now. Everybody else has got to earn their way.

Those guys have earned their way with me and this football team. The other guys have got some work to do.

Look, Blake hasn't taken a snap for Notre Dame yet. He's got work to do. I think we just -- hold on before we start saying, hey, this is what this is going to look like.

That's our attitude, I guess, is what I'm saying to you guys is that we're going to keep competition at all of those positions with the eye towards Lugg is playing and Patterson is playing, and then we'll figure out the rest.

Q. There's been a lot of speculation about Jordan Botelho and his status with the team.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I saw that, it was kind of a --

Q. Well, what can you tell us about Jordan Botelho's situation with you? Is he in the clear as far as Notre Dame, the NCAA is concerned?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, he's cleared, yeah.

Q. And you expect him to play all the games this year?

BRIAN KELLY: Yes. Yes. Yeah, there was some kind of rumor that he wasn't cleared to play, and that hasn't been the case.



Look, rumors start. Somebody thought something happened that didn't happen. We've had those happen before.

Look, if somebody is off the team, we're going to tell you. We're going to let you know. If somebody is not playing for Notre Dame, we're going to let you know. We're not going to hide that from you.

If there's something with academics, I can't comment on it; know what I mean? But this isn't an academic situation. This isn't a drug testing policy situation. So I don't know where this came from, to be quite frank with you. He's cleared to play and compete. I don't know how else to answer the question.

Q. Can you kind of discuss where the Will linebacker next to Drew White and the corners start camp, how their competition is over the summer?

BRIAN KELLY: Oh, my gosh, where do I start? You've seen all those linebackers. We're so deep at that position. If I've asked Marcus once, I've asked him 10 times, how are we going to get all these guys involved. I should sit next to you guys and we should put Marcus up here, because I ask the same questions. He'll be up here. You guys saw he's going to come out and we've got the coordinators so you guys can ask him a million questions.

But we've got to -- we're deep there, so when you're deep at a position, you're trying to be creative. You're trying to look at situations where can somebody play situational, can somebody be in our three-down package, can we maximize them there.

We're seeing the same things you guys are seeing from that perspective. When you look at the depth chart and you look at how well J.D. Bertrand is progressing and the size and weight that Liufau has put on, and you know the guys that have already been in the program. Yeah, that's an interesting proposition.

Q. And we assume three corners with Louis, Bracy and Hart. Is that a safe assumption?

BRIAN KELLY: No, I don't think you can rule out Henderson. He's really emerging. He's long, he's athletic, he's playing with a lot more confidence. I think you've got to add him into the mix there, as well.

You know, somebody has got to play nickel, right, so you guys got to think about three corners. You've got to think about an inside corner and an outside, so you've got to think about three, so for those positions, so you're really talking about the need to be at six, and that's kind of where

Marcus wants the defense to be is that he wants to be able to look at six corners from that perspective.

Q. When we last saw you about two months ago --

BRIAN KELLY: I was a lot thinner?

Q. No, you looked good, your swing looked good. But at that time the numbers, the delta variant and the numbers were down, and now things have exploded. Have you given some thought in the last two months, the last couple of weeks how you're going to stay ahead of this thing? Are you going to adopt some of the things that you did last year? And how did the team come back from the little time off that they had after summer school?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, good question. Look, we're prepared, because we went through it last year, to wear masks, social distance, do all the things, because unfortunately we had to go through that. We've set into motion all of those things if, in fact, we need to get to it.

The good news is we're 95 percent vaccinated with our team. With the new NCAA rules and regulations, we would need -- well, right now we would not have a scenario that with the small number of unvaccinated that we do have through exceptions, if they did get sick, it would not cause a test of our vaccinated, which is the big issue here.

Because of that, we're in a good position to not require our guys to, in workouts, wear masks, or when we are eating. But if things change, then we're prepared certainly to do that.

That's also the case with our staff because we fall into the same category because we're working with the players. We're in a similar position with the vaccination amongst our staff, and as you know, the university has required that, or file for an exemption. But if you do, if you're inside, you must wear a facemask and practice the CDC guidelines.

I think we feel really comfortable where we are. We know that there's the potential that it could go back to that, and I think we've made the appropriate arrangements if, in fact, it does.

Q. Just kind of curious your impressions of day one, how it went, progress that was made.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, you know, it's kind of interesting. I think as coaches we're so excited to get back out there that maybe we needed to do a little bit of a better job today in managing it. I think we pushed our guys pretty hard today. I think I saw that the practice was -- there was a bit of



fatigue at the end of practice, so I think we've got to do a little bit better job as coaches.

And then our players have to adjust, as well, right. It's the first time with helmets and we wear spider pads, but they're pretty good pads, and they hadn't done that all summer. So there's a bit of an adjustment on both sides. We'll be better tomorrow.

But I really liked the way they went about practice. It wasn't about winning the drill per se relative to production, it was much more about how is my technique, did I execute it the right way, and so their mindset was excellent that way. So I leave the practice going, man, they get it, right. We've got enough veterans out here that they understand how to practice and that our player-led practices through the summer were really obviously effective in terms of them understanding.

I think we've got to do a little bit of a better job in putting the practice schedule tomorrow when it's 90 degrees.

Q. At the quarterback position as you're evaluating there, how much stock do you put in what Jack did before he got here versus what you see over the next three weeks?

BRIAN KELLY: Well, a lot. That's why we took him. We didn't take him because he didn't play before. We took him because he had battle-tested experience in the Big Ten in a very good program, and quite frankly one that we respect in Wisconsin and Coach Chryst and what they do. A lot of that had to do with where he came from and him being battle tested.

You know, from our standpoint, he came with a lot of that. He still had to earn it, and he's still earning it, but this won't be a long, drawn-out camp. We'll make a decision after the first scrimmage as to who the starter is.

Q. When will that be?

BRIAN KELLY: The sixth day.

Q. I was going to ask you about the timeline of the quarterbacks. How important is that to make a decision early in camp so everyone knows what the deal is there and just to get things moving for the rest of camp?

BRIAN KELLY: I would normally say that that is really important, but all of these guys, and in particular Drew and Jack, have a lot of respect, and our guys will be ready to go with either one of them in particular.

Tyler is a young kid, and there would be more preparation needed there. And so from that perspective, I don't know that this is one that, hey, the guys are going to be unfamiliar. But we just feel like we've got a pretty good sense of where this is going to go, and we want to make sure that we're going to make the right decision and give everybody the chance over the next week to make their case.

Q. Is there anything in particular Drew Pyne has to do to win the job?

BRIAN KELLY: I just think he needs to continue to be Drew Pyne and take advantage of the opportunities. He's getting first-team reps, so when he gets his opportunity to continue to take full advantage of them.

Q. Obviously we saw 30 minutes, but any injuries after we departed?

BRIAN KELLY: We had a couple of soft tissue injuries. Nothing that I can really report that are going to be anything outstanding.

From an injury standpoint, we had a little bit of a pec injury in the summer with Isaiah Foskey that was managed today, but he's fine. He was cleared to go. You saw him out there.

We were actually in really good health from that perspective, so yeah, just a couple soft tissue injuries.

Q. What did you like from a leadership perspective over the summer, certainly looking at the guys who are leading the lines, it's like a new generation of guys out there from what you've had the last couple years.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, so we had 14 guys that were in leadership roles, and they were outstanding. We voted for captains. I'll announce captains on Monday, so I'll have that for you guys on Monday once our faculty board clears them. But I would say that it's probably -- I think I can confidently say it's the deepest group of leaders that I've had here. 2019 we had seven captains. This looks like it could be similar from that perspective.

Just really good leaders, well respected, carry the standard of what our program is about, and so the 12 guys you saw up front, add Houston Griffith to that and Jack Coan, and those are the 14 guys that have leadership roles in our program. So the 12 guys up front plus those two, and they've been -- they're well-respected and they're very good leaders.

Q. At the receiver position, I was curious about sort of



the return to full go for Kevin Austin, sort of what you want August to look like for him, and also you were pretty up front in the spring about the Wilkins, Keys, Lenzy, you need something new from them. Do you feel like they had the summer you wanted to give you that?

BRIAN KELLY: Transformational. Transformational, and I underline that word. I know that sounds strong in terms of what I use a word like that, sometimes it's hyperbole, but these kids have changed their body, their commitment level, what we've asked them to do, they've taken it to heart.

Now, they've got to go make plays. I get that. But they understand how important they are to our success, and they look it. Coach Balis was absolutely impressed. Joe Wilkins won the battle for points at the wide receiver/tight end position for the most points, and he was probably in the lower third last summer in terms of points.

Braden Lenzy was in the top 10 percent. That is transformational for those guys.

Kevin Austin has always been a physical presence, so he continued on that realm.

There's great optimism from that perspective.

Answering the question further, we want to be measured with Kevin as we go through, and so we're going to be very careful with him as we get him back to football shape, but there's a lot of optimism right now about where that group is and where they can go.

Q. What are your thoughts on name, image and likeness and how your program has handled it so far?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, you know, I'm excited for our guys. There's a lot of work that we still have to do with just handling each circumstance that comes our way. Look, everybody wishes that there was a clear doctrine on how we handle each and every situation, but I think there's really good communication.

I think the goal here is to collaborate and help our players in educating them the best we can. But there's always going to be those situations where, why are we doing it or why can't we do this, and we're just -- as we told our team, let's work together and figure it out.

We're just trying to be collaborative and communicate the best we can so we can help our players utilize it in the best shape and form.

Look, I think it's a lot similar to maybe -- it was probably six, eight years ago when Twitter really burst on the scene. Some programs said, Hey, shut off your phones, don't use Twitter, and my response was, Let's use this in a positive way. Let's use Twitter in a positive way. And I think this is the same thing with name, image and likeness. Let's look at this as a positive and how we can be helpful and use this in a positive way.

That's our mindset, and that's how we see name, image and likeness.

Q. What are your early impressions of JoJo Johnson since he's stepped on campus?

BRIAN KELLY: He's a typical freshman. He's excited to be here. He's done everything we've asked him to do. But his eyes are in the back of his head right now. I mean, it's fast, there's a lot going on. He's a great kid. We're excited to have him. I mean, he's drinking out of a firehose right now, but that's pretty common.

Those that don't, and there's a couple that we have, and you guys will see them as this thing kind of settles down. They kind of rise to the top, the Mike Mayers. They kind of show themselves. We've got a couple that are not drinking out of a firehose, and they'll show themselves. But he's pretty typical.

Q. In the spring you said you thought you had a good team and the question was how to get from good to great. How close do you feel like you are to having a great team now after a summer of work?

BRIAN KELLY: Hmm, no. Look, so the summer is about physical conditioning and then coming together, the relationships of your team. I have a different perspective now on COVID and what it did to teams, like this team during COVID, it could have been hard on them in terms of adversity. It would have been hard. Last year I had veterans, like you could have -- a bomb could have went on in that group; it wouldn't have bothered them, we had so many veterans.

So I can see how teams might have struggled last year in COVID.

This team needed to be together this summer, and they came together. They came together.

Now it's about building this football team from a technical standpoint and from a tactical standpoint and a mental standpoint, so when we get to Florida State and they start doing the chop, we don't run for the exit. So we've got some work to do over the next 24 days.

Q. Following up on the question about the leadership, you said it's the best leadership depth of your time here. What do you attribute that to? I guess how rewarding is that for you to be able to say that? And then my second question would be you talked about timeline for the quarterbacks; what about for the offensive line? Is it a similar timeline to try and get that chemistry, as well, to try and find the best five? What do you look for in that regard?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, so the leadership is just the accumulation of our process and being in the program over a period of time where it's passed down each year now, so we've built our program and our standards, whatever words you want to use, standards, culture. Culture is a way of doing things. Everybody knows the way of doing things, and so it's passed down to that next group that's coming up. So it's been embedded into our program, so it's easy to pass it on to the next.

There's a consistency in the application every single year. It doesn't change. There's not a new way of doing things. So that's how that depth of leadership is built.

In terms of the quarterback position or did you say the offensive line?

Q. The O-line.

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think there's less of a concern in terms of -- we've got two veterans there that will -- that are strong leaders. Lugg and Patterson are really strong leaders. I'm not really that concerned about chemistry with that group as much as getting the right people on the field together as one.

Q. Continuing on the leadership theme, two new guys expected to exert some leadership this year, Jack Coan and Cain Madden. They're new in the program but thrust into that position. What style of leadership do you see coming out of Jack? What kind of style is his leadership style? And Cain Madden, same question.

BRIAN KELLY: So we have a -- Coach Balis gives out an award at the end of the summer. He awards approximately 20 players as Ultimate Warriors. Jack Coan was one of those Ultimate Warriors. It's hard to get that award.

He's seen by his peers as a warrior, somebody that is on time for every workout, is there, is committed. You can count on them. He's a guy that you want -- I apologize for the analogy, but he's a guy you want lined up next to you in the foxhole, right? You can count on that guy.

That doesn't have to be a vocal guy. You can be a leader from that perspective.

Cain rooms with Kurt Hinish. Kurt is a very popular player on our team. So by virtue of that relationship, Cain has been embedded into our football team from that perspective. He's well-liked. His personality fits in very well with the guys.

So I think from that perspective, I don't know that you necessarily have to be standing in front of the group as much as you have to be respected by the group.

Q. One quick follow-up on injuries, Moala and Brendon Clark.

BRIAN KELLY: So Brendon is still limited. He's probably a few weeks away from being able to be cleared at 100 percent, but he's still lagging behind. And not through anything that he hasn't done. He's been crazy in the training room. But he's a few weeks behind.

And Paul is full go. He was active in all of our 11-on-11 and 7-on-7. But Brendon has got some work to do yet. He's still a few weeks back.

Q. What is your outlook on the safety position outside of Kyle Hamilton?

BRIAN KELLY: We have to have more than Kyle Hamilton, okay?

Q. How are those guys progressing? How do you see that working out in terms of guys alongside him and guys behind him, as well?

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I mean, we like the spring that Houston had. We love his leadership. We love what he's been about in terms of his makeup, so we're counting on Houston. DJ, obviously we're counting on him to really play a significant role for us. I think it starts with those two guys.

Those three in particular, and then finding the fourth. There's a number of guys that will compete for that position, but I think you start with the three safeties and let's go find a fourth.

Q. Can Houston and DJ both play that same position?

BRIAN KELLY: Yes, they can. They both can rotate and play both.

All right, hey, this was great. Let's try to do this again in



another year.

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