

Notre Dame
Post-Game Quotes
Notre Dame vs. Clemson
Saturday, December 29, 2018
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



**QUESTIONS FOR HEAD COACH BRIAN KELLY, QB IAN BOOK,
CB JULIAN LOVE**

COACH KELLY: Disappointed, obviously. We came here to win a football game, and we did not do the things necessary to beat a very good team.

Congratulations to Clemson. They played well. They were opportunistic. They made the plays necessary to win in a game of this fashion. Opportunistic in that we lost one of our very fine defensive backs in Julian Love to a head injury.

But, again, you can't give up four big plays on defense. We did not do that all year. Uncharacteristic of our defense. And we generated virtually no big plays. We didn't play the kind of offense that would lend itself to scoring enough points to beat a talented Clemson team. So we've got to coach better. We've got to put our kids in a better position to succeed, and we've got to make plays on this stage.

I feel terrible for our seniors. They put us on the brink of a championship. It's now up to everybody else that has eligibility in that locker room to get this football team to a championship. So the challenge is in that locker room now is to dedicate themselves to taking what this senior group has given the group that comes back and running with it and winning a championship.

Q. Julian, could you give us a sense of what the head injury was, when you felt like you could come back in, and just sort of its impact on you?

CB JULIAN LOVE: Yeah, I'm not sure exactly what it was, but I was trying to get going sooner than they allowed me to. I was ready shortly before halftime, then we closed out the half. And I know I was ready to go right after.

COACH KELLY: He didn't pass part of his protocol, which was memory.

Q. Ian, six sacks tonight from Clemson's defense. Really up front they seemed like they were giving you a lot of trouble. Couldn't get through your reads. As far as trying to push the ball downfield, you just didn't have any time to get anything going? What were they doing that was so effective?



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QB IAN BOOK: Clemson, they have got a talented defense. And we just wanted to control what we could control. And I was trying to get through my reads as fast as I could. I'm happy with the way the O-line played today. And I'm just thankful for them this whole entire season and especially the seniors as well.

As Coach [Kelly] said, I feel really bad for them. And it's hard to win a game when you score three points. And as an offense, we've just got to do better. And we've just got to play the way we've played throughout the whole entire year and just control what we could control. And we didn't need any super-human efforts today. We just needed to do what we've been doing all season, and we weren't able to do that.

Q. Ian, the end of the second quarter when you guys had three straight possessions, I think two first downs out of that stretch but then they were scoring on every possession, how key was that part of it that you guys weren't able to keep the ball away from them?

QB IAN BOOK: Yeah, it was huge. And we needed to get first downs. We needed to get points on the board, and we just weren't able to get it done. This whole year I'm really thankful for the way our defense played. And they gave us the ball back so many times this season. And when they do that, we've got to put up points on the board. That's our job as an offense, and we just weren't able to do that tonight.

Q. Julian, how frustrating is it not being able to be out there with your teammates in that second quarter when Clemson starts to get a little momentum there and make some plays like that?

CB JULIAN LOVE: I mean, it hurts. It was hurting me internally because I, obviously, wanted to be out there. I wanted to help our team. And in a sense, I let them down in that regard. So I tried to do what I could in the second half, but it definitely didn't feel good.

Q. What was it about the Clemson receivers specifically that made them such a tough guard -- the height, speed, route running, all of it?

CB JULIAN LOVE: On defense we said all season it's not about who we play, it's about what we do. That's led us to be successful for the whole entire year. And today we got away from that. We got away from what we were doing. We've played big receivers before. We play a variety of different types of receivers. It was just being our best in our scheme. And that's what we failed at tonight. It wasn't necessarily what they were doing. It was lack of attention on our part.



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Q. Ian, just talk about Clemson's defense. Is it something you guys are going to build on for next year when you see a defense like Clemson in next year's schedule?

QB IAN BOOK: Definitely. This loss hurts. And we'll worry about next year in a little bit.

So you see a team like Clemson, you know this is Playoff football, and this is what you're going to get. And we know how we have to play to win in games like this. We'll worry about that when we start working out again and getting back as a team. We've just got to play better. But now we know what it's like, and we know what we have to do to win.

Q. Julian, can you put into words just what this team has meant to you and what this season has been like?

CB JULIAN LOVE: I mean, it's been such a fun ride. We have such great characters in that locker room. And it's led by our seniors. They've done so much for us. Drue [Tranquill] deciding to come back. Everyone just allowing us to have fun, allowing us to work.

Coach [Clark] Lea really taking charge and really directing us on defense. I know Coach [Chip] Long did the same on offense. It's been a dream this year. It's been so fun. And we wish we could keep going and, obviously, end it on a better note. But there's more to come next year.

Q. Just curious, as a player, how deflating is it mentally when review after review doesn't go to your best interest?

QB IAN BOOK: For Julian or myself?

CB JULIAN LOVE: I think that as players you shouldn't leave it to review. That's as simple as it is. We should have made better plays across the board, to not even put ourself in a compromising positions like that and to leave it to review.

Q. Julian, how do you want this team to be remembered?

CB JULIAN LOVE: I mean, not like this, obviously. I think there's more to come next year. And I want this year to be remembered for our seniors. They started this. Two years ago we were in horrible -- we were feeling horrible for a different reason, because we didn't get a shot. And this year, obviously, is different. We got our shot. But we're going to build on it, and you'll see us back here for sure.



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Q. The yardage and the points similar to the Alabama game six years ago. Do you feel closer to that level of competition, despite the numbers?

COACH KELLY: I want to be clear I understand the question. Do I feel like it's different than that game? Oh, I do. Absolutely. I left that game feeling like there was so much work to be done from the inside out, so much development, so much recruiting. This felt so much different, like we gave up four big plays that we characteristically don't give up. And very capable of moving the football and doing the things necessary to beat this football team.

They were the better team today. There's no doubt about it.

But with now giving them the opportunity to see how they need to play in this atmosphere, not flawless but with excellence, we can come back here and win. So it's a real different feeling for me.

I almost have to go like -- I mean, they should play the (Chicago) Bears after playing that game against Alabama. This is a totally different feeling. I feel like this football team is on the brink. Where, when I left that game, it was, "Boy, do we have a lot of work to do."

Q. Brian, just wondering if you were surprised at all about how well their young guys performed on this biggest stage, freshman quarterback, freshman receiver, sophomores. They had a lot of young guys making plays.

COACH KELLY: No, I thought that we evaluated them accordingly, that they were going to be really good players and that they -- I will say this: I don't think that -- we need to coach better. I thought that there were some things that we needed to do better as coaches in this game in our plan. And we're going to learn as coaches in this game as well.

We've got a great staff. It's a young staff. And I think we learned a lot from this game. But I have a great deal of respect for their young players. But I think we had a really good handle on knowing that they could be explosive as well.

Q. With [Brandon] Wimbush, was he getting ready to go in, or what was wrong with Wimbush today?

COACH KELLY: There was nothing wrong with him. We were going to let him go in at the end of the game, but they picked up that first down and that was it. But, no, there was nothing wrong with him.

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Q. What is it going to take for you guys and this program to go from not just making it to this level but then winning a game at this level and being able to get another national championship at Notre Dame?

COACH KELLY: Well, we gave up four big plays. I think Clemson was extremely smart and opportunistic in taking advantage of some things schematically today. They did a great job of pushing the ball vertically in some opportunistic situations.

And offensively we struggled moving the football today. So those were technical and tactical. I did not feel like there was an overwhelming difference in terms of talent. They have extremely talented players.

But, if we were better tactically and technically today, if we coached better and we made plays today that we have been making all year, we would have had a pretty darned good football game going in the fourth quarter. It didn't happen that way. So we're on the brink. We're close. We're going to work our tails off to get back here.

Q. Brian, so you mentioned multiple times, like the second quarter, a bunch of plays, big plays after big plays. It's a tactical situation. So on your end, what needs to happen from a coaching standpoint to make sure that you guys are better prepared for those types of situations?

COACH KELLY: It's really too much to get into right now. And it's a very good question, and I respect the question. But I think you know that we lost a very good corner. And to get any further into it would be really trying to talk about players and their performance. As coaches we should have done a better job in putting together a plan during that time. Clemson was outstanding in taking advantage of some things, and we needed to do a better job in that situation.

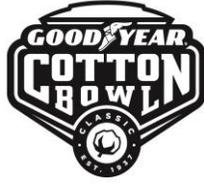
Q. Coach, what did this senior class mean to the Notre Dame football program?

COACH KELLY: Well, they allowed us to really set such a strong culture and foundation for where we want to be every year, and that's in the playoffs, playing for a national championship. So our guys will now go into every year knowing that this is the destination.

Q. How do you want this group to be remembered?

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COACH KELLY: That they put us on the brink and that the next group now knows that journey and that path and how to get there. It's their job now to see us there and through it and to get us to a national championship.

Q. Coach, when Julian [Love] went out of the game, can you describe what the feeling was a bit on the sideline? Because it seemed like the play immediately, obviously, suffered a bit.

COACH KELLY: Again, we have to be good enough that we can overcome the loss of one player. Clemson was able to overcome the loss of a great defensive lineman. We have to be able to overcome the loss of a really good player, and that's the bottom line. And, when you're in this game, you've got to be able to overcome the loss of key players. And that means from a coaching standpoint and a playing standpoint.

The players have got to make plays, and coaches have to put players in a position to make plays. And that's just being real. So this is about coaching and players. In these games, when you lose key players, coaches have got to step up and players have got to step up.

Q. Obviously, not the result you wanted. But what are some of the positives you can kind of take away and use in recruiting and everything in looking ahead to next year and building blocks from this?

COACH KELLY: More than anything else, if you look at the last two years, this is a team that's won 22 out of 25 games. It's a really good, strong, solid football program that needs to continue to work towards a championship. We don't play for a conference championship. So it's the ultimate goal.

We're in here licking our wounds after being one of the four teams. That's a good place to kind of take restock and get stronger from it. We'll get better because of this. Losing gives you a perspective. It's not great. No one ever likes to go through losing to gain perspective. Our guys saw that they could win a game like this, and we'll go to work on that.

Q. Can you just clarify on the Julian Love situation? Was it precautionary initially and then he was cleared?

COACH KELLY: Yeah. It should always come from me, because the young man doesn't know the protocol. But he went through the stages of our protocol. Each step. And he was cleared by our medical personnel. And that's why sometimes, when you get into these formats and you ask questions to players, I can't jump in like his lawyer.

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But he went through our medical protocol, cleared all those stages. And then our doctors came to me at halftime and said he had cleared all of our protocols. And he was cleared to go back in the game.

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