

2011 Champs Sports Bowl Postgame Quotes

Florida State vs. Notre Dame

Dec. 29, 2010

Orlando, Florida

MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Kelly and Manti Te'o.

COACH KELLY: I'm proud of my team. I am proud of we have the motto, "The pride and tradition of Notre Dame football will not be left to the weak, the timid or noncommitted."

Our kids are strong mentally. They love to compete. They're a committed group. I'm disappointed we lost the football game today. Hats off to Florida State. Coach Fisher and his staff, his players. I think it was a hard-fought game. Both teams played great defense today. It's nice to be able to talk about a Notre Dame football Team that plays championship defense because they did that today. Now we've got to get our offense obviously to play that level, as well, and that will be the next step for our football program, is getting our offense to play at the same level that our defense is evolving to.

Today, as you know, the turnovers were, again, the large reason for us not being able to win this football game, and, and it's been the case all year. It started in South Florida, and it continued to show itself throughout the entire year. We know what we need to do. We've already talked about it, and players that are going to be back for the 2012 football season will be committed to getting that end done. I'll open up with the questions.

MODERATOR: Once again, if you find someone with a microphone before you ask your question.

Q Brian, what happened to Michael Floyd? What was his injury, and can you just reflect on the career that he had the part that you coached him?

COACH KELLY: Just an incredible competitor, just, you know, this is my 22nd year and I've had great players, guys that have gone on to great careers in the NFL are doctors and lawyers, and you remember the guys that overcome, the guys that compete in battle, and he did that today. He got hurt on the touch down catch, and just couldn't go. He tried. I mean, he went back in there. You know, I think it was an upper body injury, and they're treating it right now.

Q Manti, can you talk about how this game set a tone for next year's defense and your role in terms of leadership in that defense?

MANTI TE'O: I think defensively we did pretty good. We still allowed the opposing offense to put points on the board, and that's not something that we want to do, but we just have to keep good enough off of this year. It starts with the winter and winter conditioning, and we'll start to get better as a team, not only as a defense because we're going to win or lose as a team. It doesn't matter, and we just have to stay together and just focus on the little things.

Q Brian, could you talk about the emotions in a game like this where you're up, you feel like you're in control, and the momentum just shifts?

COACH KELLY: Well, you know, I don't know your perspective, it's different for me, you know, because I'm so focused on the next play, so I never feel like we've got anything in control, you know, we're always trying to look towards the next play, and that's the way we want our kids to play really. We don't want them to succumb or to be sucked into highs and lows, and I think they've done a very, very good job. That's the way I want my football team to play, and I think they are playing that way. We -- you

saw it. We've turned the ball over. We had missed cues with special teams, we had some penalties that really hurt us. When you play quality opposition and we do that week in and week out, you have to clean up the little things, and that is what I concern myself more with than whether we've got a good lead and we've got our hands around the opponent.

Q Could you just talk about your methodology of the quarterback's position in terms of when you wanted it to go to Hendrix, back to Rees, back to Hendrix and also the last series through the pick, what he was supposed to be looking for there, what the play was?

COACH KELLY: Methodology, we just wanted to get them both in the game. I think that without setting a series here or there, we were just trying to get them in a flow as best we could. It's never easy when you play two quarter backs. I think what we were committed to not doing is putting Andrew in a package. We wanted him to run the offense, so that was the thought process going in with those two quarterback. We were running a dig route and a post over the top, supposed to read the safety. If the safety pushes to the post, we hit the dig, if he jumps the dig we hit the post. The safety obviously double out on the post, so attention to detail, the little things, obviously it hurt us in that situation.

Q Four stacks in the first half, just one after half time, what did they adjust? What did you change, if anything?

COACH KELLY: You know, I thought we brought some pressure with those stacks early on, and you know we were certainly tying down at times, but they made some big plays and we went to some zone coverages and they got the ball out quickly, so I don't know really if there was a big philosophical change on their end. I'll have to watch the film, but when we needed the big sack late, we were able to get it.

Q And just kind of flipping to the other side, you mentioned the offense has to meet that championship level of defense, you talk about the defense needing to be there. First of all, are you little surprised the offense isn't there when you basically came in as an offensive guy?

COACH KELLY: I guess I'm not an offensive guy, so I'm going to have to evaluate everything that I do and how we do it because we have to get our offense better, and when I say better, I'm not talking about the way our guys compete. I'm talking about we turn the ball over, and we cannot win football games at the highest level if we continue to turn the ball over, so the coaches have to get better. The players have to get better, and we have to solve this issue if we're going to be in an elite football team.

Q Same question to the coach, you guys sacked Manuel four times in the first, put a lot of pressure on him. Fourth quarter they pretty much absorbed everything they could on the offensive end, what changed? Was fatigue a factor? How were they able to break free of the defensive strength-hold you had on them most of the game?

MANTI TE'O: Some of the stacks came off three men rushers. I wouldn't say all those stacks came off of pressures. You know, they made their corrections and we just, you know, as a defense, we just needed to get to the quarterback, we knew what E.J. could do back there when he had time. He could scramble and throw the ball, so that is something that we have to look at, you know, when we study film and make sure that, you know, we have a long time to prepare for next year, and when that time comes, that doesn't happen again.

Q Coach Kelly, could you just talk about Manti's play tonight and just the role you see him playing

in forging the defense next season?

COACH KELLY: First and foremost, you know, Manti is a great young man who loves his experience as a college student athlete, particularly at Notre Dame, so we want him to enjoy that too. We don't want to throw nine jobs on his plate. I want him to be a student athlete at the University of Notre Dame and I want him to get his degree. Along the way he's a pretty darn good football player and we're going to continue to develop him in being the best football player he can be, that's one thing that falls on me is develop our players as relates to their skills, but he's also going to be a leader in our program, as well, and he's somebody that we can obviously push out front, but like I said, we're going to assist him in every way possible for him to make sure that he enjoys his time at Notre Dame and pursues his degree and plays the game of football.

Q Jim Morris seemed to be all over the field in different places lining up and in a pretty big game you talked about the way you plan to use him and how he did tonight?

COACH KELLY: As you know, he's playing our drop position or dob position, leadership is playing more, you know, in our cat package, he's playing in the boundary a little bit more, giving us some pass rush. We feel like the skills the teams that spread the team so much now, Jamoris hold up in the running game there. And obviously he's a guy that can cover and blitz off the edge. He's one of the guys that has all those tools, and so we need to get him on the field, and he's been able to impact greatly what we've done defensively.