

## Notre Dame Media Day

Thursday, December 27, 2018  
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



### QUESTIONS FOR HEAD COACH BRIAN KELLY

*Q. How big of a win will it be to put 2012 to rest?*

**COACH KELLY:** I put that to rest the next day. That's why we're back here, building our football team, to get an opportunity to compete for a national championship. We put that behind us because you can't move forward unless you are building your football team.

Our goal has been to win a national championship and get back to that. We are back here now. We've got to win a football game. We got a really good opponent in Clemson.

*Q. Would a win validate Notre Dame to be back on the national scene as permanent pow-wow?*

**COACH KELLY:** We are. You wouldn't be here unless we are on the national scene.

*Q. Just like Clemson, you came in with an incumbent starter and you had to make a decision. And when you put Ian into that role, how did you spend time so the team would make his role stand out?*

**COACH KELLY:** I think there are different circumstances when you make changes at the quarterback, and I have made them in my 28 years as head football coach. Sometimes it's more delicate than others. It was not a delicate situation. Our team trusts whoever is the signal caller. I think that was evidenced in the way we played with Brandon [Wimbush] and the way that we played with Ian.

I didn't need to do anything behind the scenes, to answer your question. It had been done by the way they handled themselves and the respect they had built with the team itself.

For any one of you who knows what that is, is that a tire? Of course, one of our sponsors being Goodyear, let me throw that in.

*Q. How do you view this as a measuring stick for your program going against a quality team, an opponent like Clemson?*

**COACH KELLY:** I don't. We had a number of games this year. We understand who we are, and our schedule is a measuring stick. If we wanted to measure who we were, you just start with Michigan at the opener. I think that would probably -- if you asked that question after the Michigan game, I would probably say, We're going to be a pretty good

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team this year.

But when you go through and you win week after week, you're past measuring sticks. You're about consistency and performance. You are about complementing your offense and defense and special teams. We are well past that narrative.

*Q. You said after week one, you could tell this was going to be a pretty good football team. Was there any point in the season where you first felt like, to make it to the College Football Playoff was possible?*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah, I mean, I think you see remnants of it in your off-season. We came off a pretty good year last year. We felt there were some things last year at 10-3 that we had to address. We had a good bowl win over LSU, but there were things we needed to work on. I thought we worked on them in the off-season. We addressed them.

Felt like if things continued to move in the right direction in the off-season and then through the spring and summer, we had to really begin with beating our first game against Michigan. And I think things would fall into place. And then there was no other goal in mind but to be back here and to be part of the Playoff conversation.

*Q. Talk about the confidence that the team has in Justin [Yoon] and you have in him as a kicker that he can hit it from just about anywhere.*

**COACH KELLY:** I think any time you talk about good football teams and consistent football teams, they have to have a kicker that you can rely on in any kind of circumstance. And in particular late in games.

Justin has been a very steady player for us, has not gotten the national attention for some reason. I don't know why. He's our all-time leading scorer in Notre Dame, and I don't think you see his name anywhere. But for us, he has been that consistent player at that position that is required from all good football teams.

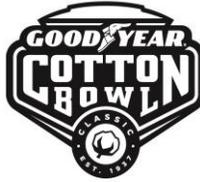
*Q. You talked about the quarterback situation, the way that Brandon [Wimbush] has handled this season. Certainly the other side, Kelly Bryant at Clemson decided to leave after four games to maintain a redshirt year. How did Brandon handle all of this? Have you talked to him about what his future might be with a potential to transfer and stuff like that down the road?*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah, you know, those situations are different, right? Brandon

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had another year available to him; Kelly didn't. I don't know Kelly Bryant other than, you know, he just seems like a good kid. And he had to preserve a year for himself under those circumstances.

So Brandon was still in a competitive situation for us, still had another year of eligibility remaining, knew that he could be called upon. And I don't think there was ever a situation where he thought, when he was no longer the starter, about transferring because he knew how important he was to our football team.

Having said that, now he knows that last year is his last year of competition, we enter a whole new situation relative to, you know, what's his future. He's put his name into the portal for transfer, which I think he should. He should keep all of his options open. He's got his degree from Notre Dame. We've had a number of conversations about what that looks like. No decision has been made whether he is going to come back as a graduate student or a transfer, but he should certainly do what he's doing and keep all of his options open.

His focus is strictly now on these games in front of us, obviously, Saturday. And we are hopeful that that continues. That's his focus right now, but he needs to keep his options open as well.

*Q. When you guys came into the stadium earlier this week, was there kind of a shock-and-awe factor that you needed to get over?*

**COACH KELLY:** I think anybody that comes in here for the first time, you know, the first thing that jumps out at you is the scoreboard. All year, we have stayed away from going to the stadium on the road. I've made it a routine to show a video of that stadium and have made it kind of a light-hearted attempt to show the stadium in a manner that is bigger than maybe it is. When you walk in here, it's not bigger than it is. I mean, it hits you.

However, we've built a routine here now, you know, that we've been here now. This will be our fourth practice. I think our kids feel a lot more comfortable in the environment. We put crowd noise in here yesterday. It was deafening. So I think we've acclimated quite well to it. I think we'll be able to handle the moment as it gets closer to game time.

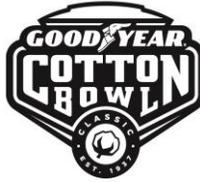
I think there are a couple of adjustments. This board, when you get a punt up into that board, to the side of the board, it changes the optics a little bit. But, other than that, I think the routine that we have built here has helped us quite a bit. If it was our first time walking through the doors, you'd be a little bit distracted.

Tim Collins is audio-visual for Notre Dame, one of the best in the business. That's

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his entire crew right there. He has more student videographers than anybody in the country. So when you talk about those Alabama staffs being large, we have the largest videographer staff in the country. What are we? 72 now, guys? 60. All on scholarship too, yeah funded through Grand Nave.

*Q. Tom Rinaldi talked about how you've changed as a man in the last couple of years. Can you talk to that, about how you changed some things a couple years ago and your perspective and how you deal with the team?*

**COACH KELLY:** I don't know if I changed as a man. You'd have to ask my wife that. That's a little personal.

I think what Tom might be referring to more than anything else is my approach on a day-to-day basis relative to my relationships with the team and how I spent my time. It's been good. It's healthy for me, it's healthy for our football team that I spend more time and delegate more to our assistant coaches. It's certainly something that it's a healthy kind of me relative to how I go to work every single day.

*Q. Has that manifested in any way on how you approach this game and this week? Have you taken time to enjoy the pampering that goes on, the events that are set up for you guys?*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah, I mean, I think, for me, eyes wide open, you don't go into these games and not want to win them, right? So the focus has been on being here to win this football game. But the Cotton Bowl and the way they treat you is so different than any other experience that we certainly have felt it.

But I think, in terms of the day-to-day approach, my focus, I know our staff, they really appreciate how they have been treated. But it's been so much more of a business trip than any other time before.

*Q. Do you know what Brandon Wimbush's plans are beyond this season? Has he told you whether he will be at Notre Dame or not next year?*

**COACH KELLY:** We've had two discussions, preliminary in nature, about his options. No decision has been made. But I think -- I think he's torn right now. I mean, I think he -- he's always been team first and about the moment, and so his focus has been on these games. But he knows there's an immediacy as well. So that's why he's gone through the proper channels to put his name in the portal to make sure that he leaves that door open. But he also knows that he's got enough time to work the back channels and figure out that, if he

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does want to transfer, that he can do that.

But I honestly think he's in a position where he's focused on these games, that he hasn't gone all in on saying "I'm going to X, Y, Z school." So our conversations have been supportive. And I truly would tell you, I'm supportive of whatever his decisions. He's earned the right to transfer and play in his senior year for what he's done for Notre Dame.

He's gotten his degree. He's helped our football team. But if he's decided to stay, he'll be a leader on this football team, most likely a captain. And we'll make sure that he's involved in our offensive structure. So he's got some decisions to make. He knows it's a short timeline. But we've put himself in a position where, if he's got to make a quick decision, he's laid the groundwork for it.

***Q. How much did him having to play against Florida State help him become a better backup for the rest of the season? In other words, you get to the game where, he's a play away. I might be putting words in his mouth that he felt stale, but he felt like that helped him get back into the mode that he was ready to play.***

**COACH KELLY:** I don't think we as coaches kind of evaluate that from a perspective of, well, you hadn't played in a long time and then you got to go in there. But you could see that his preparation was a lot more urgent, if you will, after that game and everything that he did.

And he has been outstanding in terms of the way he's prepared in a sense that you can see things developing much more than they were when he was not playing. And so I think there was definitely a change in the way he saw things in his own preparation, sometimes that we don't see. And he's ready to play. I mean, if he has to go out here and play, he will play at a high level.

***Q. What has it been like watching Ian Book's journey coming from such a small high school and now he's on this giant stage? What has that been like?***

**COACH KELLY:** When we recruited him, you know, it was an interesting recruiting kind of journey in that it was one where he was committed somewhere, and then we got involved. And I didn't know Ian very well. Mike Sanford knew him from recruiting, and then I got in kind of late, got out there to meet him and his family, and really felt like he was a great fit at Notre Dame.

So getting into the process late, getting to know the family, was a different journey for us. We're usually, you know, 12 to 16 months out in the recruiting process where we really get to know them. They're on campus a lot. So this was a little bit different from

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that perspective, but we knew he was a great fit.

He comes to campus and it's really a learning process for him. And he just continues to develop physically. And we see kind of a little bit of a light at the end of the tunnel last spring -- not this coming spring, the spring before -- that this young man has got a chance. And then he's just continued to progress to the point where now he's a starter.

So this is the classic case of under recruitment and somebody that has, you know, blossomed a little bit later than maybe some other high-profile four-, five-star players.

*Q. Do you allow yourself to be a fan at all during this? Do you have a moment or two where you're like, wow, this is what I dreamed of my whole life? You've been through this experience before, but do you get moments or two where you can reflect on where you're at?*

**COACH KELLY:** No. This feels pretty comfortable to me, like I've been here before. Maybe I haven't, but I act like I have. Aren't you supposed to fake it until you make it?

*Q. I think that's the rule.*

**COACH KELLY:** I read that somewhere in a book. Take note of this. If you haven't been there before, fake it till you make it.

*Q. You obviously grew up watching football your whole life. And you've obviously had the experience in 2012 of this. Do you allow yourself to maybe think like, man, where you've been, where you've come to, and where you're going, not to be too clichéd?*

**COACH KELLY:** You've been around me. I don't seem to wax philosophically very much. I'm really proud of our football team. I'm really proud of our staff and what they've put in, the work to get to this point. I think we deserve to be here. I know we deserve to be here, and we expect to be back here again.

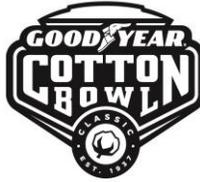
*Q. Not to get too philosophical, but what is the meaning of life?*

**COACH KELLY:** What is the meaning of life? For me, it's just health, happiness, being around people that are positive on a day-to-day basis. I want to be surrounded with people that are passionate and really bring happiness and life to what you're doing every day.

You only get that stuff from Goshen, Indiana, folks.

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*Q. Coach, talk about the difference of the BCS era versus now you're in the College Football Playoff in terms of preparation, if any.*

**COACH KELLY:** Well, you know, I think the preparation for us is that you always have one game in the old BCS; this is two with college football. You're in a playoff bracket structure. It's, you know, the basketball tournament, you're in the final four. So you're thinking about, certainly, this game is the most important, but there's more games to be played.

So it's a little bit of a different feeling, where it's not one and done. You got to win to keep playing, so it has a little bit of a different feel.

*Q. I've asked you this before, but I'm curious, now that you're here, when you played Alabama back in 2012, which feels like a million years ago, it was a great learning experience in terms of, hey, we got to go back to the drawing board. Doesn't mean you're a failure, but you've had great success. But to get to that spot, you had to go through a game like that. Now we fast-forward to now, talk about what you learned from a personal standpoint and also putting together a team.*

**COACH KELLY:** First of all, we needed to have more depth within our program. We were pretty good with our first 44 players. We needed to get down to 85. So we have -- you know, all phases of our football team have been strengthened: offense, defense, special teams. Our front four, linebackers, back end are all really good, offensive line, wide receivers, quarterback.

This is a much more balanced football team. That was a team that we were winning close games. That team could have been 5-7. This team was 12-0, and it deserved to be 12-0. So much more balance and depth within the program.

And, for me, probably just more delegation of responsibility and, for me, spending more time on total preparation of our football team, the mental aspects of going through a schedule like this. So I think, for me, delegation to staff and spending more time on the mental preparation.

*Q. One of the cool things about this game Saturday is the fact that we get old teams. You hear that sometimes in basketball. Now teams like to get old. But you take a look at your roster, Dabo's [Swinney] roster, you got a bunch of dudes that, right now, are seniors, juniors, graduates, in terms of guys who've been there and big games. And you don't see that a whole lot.*

**COACH KELLY:** Again, equating the basketball, our point guards are veterans, right? The guys that are handling the football in this game are going to take care of

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the football. And I think that's a pretty good thing. And that's why I think it's going to be a pretty exciting football game.

*Q. How tough is it knowing that Drue Tranquill will not be on the roster next year?*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah, it will be different, certainly, with his impact, not only as a football player, but in all areas. You know, you could list his impact as being as effective off the field in this 12-0 season as it was on the field as a roving leader.

When I say a roving leader, somebody that is impacting how things go in the training room, how things are going in the meal room, just, on the road, how people are handling, you know, rooming assignments. I mean, just having a 11th coach, if you will.

So he will be irreplaceable as it relates to having a sergeant, if you will, that passes on all those orders and makes sure they get done. As you can tell, I speak from my heart with Drue because he meant so much to our football team this year, but last year as well, and he'll be sorely missed.

*Q. His ability to overcome injuries and just adapt so well, we found video from his signing day. And it was you talking about how versatile it is. "we don't know how we'll use him, but we'll find a way." How satisfied are you with how many different ways you've been able to use him?*

**COACH KELLY:** I go back to the recruitment of Drue Tranquill. He was going to go to Purdue because we were so smart that we didn't recruit him. And then I saw him in our one-day camp. And I told our staff, "We're taking Drue Tranquill." Because, when he came to this camp, he had been told no by Notre Dame five times, and he still came to this camp and he was the best player at this camp. And in so many other ways, right? The way he competed, every drill, didn't take any time off.

I didn't know we were going to play him at any position; I just needed him on our football team. So it was evident when I saw him as a senior in high school that he was going to impact our football team in some fashion. And, five years later, or seven years later -- I don't know how long he's been here, it just seems like that -- he's impacted our football team in three different positions now: safety, rover, and at linebacker.

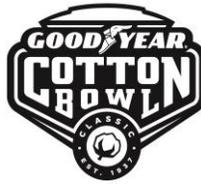
*Q. Has married life treated Drue [Tranquill] well as a football player?*

**COACH KELLY:** I think where he has made great strides is where he was able to take his wife to New York and Atlanta and we were able to fly private back to

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South Bend. And I think he made some real good inroads on his marriage.

Now, that's going to set him up for failure because that's not going to happen very often. But, yeah, the bar is high. So when she has to fly commercial again with him, I think it's going come back down to a pretty long honey-do list.

*Q. Not sure how much of this you can get into, but how much internal debate was there on the staff maybe after the Ball State game in terms of quarterback and then kind of why you pulled the trigger when you did?*

**COACH KELLY:** Chip [Long] and I had conversations about the effectiveness of how we were running the offense. I brought Chip in to move the ball around. And we were having some difficulties moving the ball around. So this was more about giving him the tools necessary to be an effective play-caller.

We had had those conversations. We were trying to fit it and make it work the best we could. It was the realization that I had that we were affecting other parts of the operation that led to a final conversation that we would make a change there. We played 96 snaps on defense. When we have to play that many steps, it started to filter into other parts of the organization. That's when I had to get involved and make the decision.

*Q. How soon in the Wake Forest game did you realize Ian [Book] is the right guy here?*

**COACH KELLY:** I don't know that that really -- obviously, when he hit Alize Mack, we had not gotten the ball to the tight end. I think when he hit Alize Mack two or three times early on some crossing routes, on some high-percentage throws that we had not been effective with, I felt like we were going to be okay there. I don't know that I went into the game with huge doubt. I think I went into the game with more of it'll happen, it's just when is it going to happen?

*Q. How high on the priority list is keeping Ian Book just upright in this game to helping you guys win this one?*

**COACH KELLY:** Oh, no question protection plays a lot in it. The ball is coming out quick, though, folks. I mean, this is not going to be five- and seven-step drop; the ball is coming out. We got to move the launch point a little bit. We're not going to drop back and sit there. So we've got to find some balance. We're not going to bludgeon them off the line of scrimmage, but we've got to keep them off-balance. We've got to be able to do some things that allow us to get the ball out and have some shots down the field.



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So it's comprehensive. You can't just line up and drop back and expect that you're going to have a field day here. But I think we've got enough of a plan here, and we've been through this before, that, you know, move the launch point a little bit, get the ball out quick, some misdirection, and find a way to run the ball enough to build at least a little uncertainty as to whether it's RPO or whether you're running the football.

*Q. Looking back at Jerry Tillery, he's had tremendous ups, has had some downs too. What have you seen from him this year? And do you feel like this is kind of a coming of age for him?*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah, really proud of the way he has been as a teammate. Look, he comes back with a degree. He can be one of two ways. He can be all about himself, or he can be about his professional development and take coaching and develop to the level where he can help himself in the draft and still be part of a group. He did it the right way, and that's hard to do.

I mean -- and that's why I'm really proud of -- Mike Elston has done a great job there of keeping that group together. Jonathan Bonner did the same thing. He came back for a fifth year where he's already had his degree.

There's two guys right there that have a degree from Notre Dame that came back and worked their craft and did it for themselves but also did it for the benefit of the entire group. So really proud of both those guys.

*Q. You got the hospital visit coming up later today. How important is that for the team just to keep things in perspective during a really hectic week?*

**COACH KELLY:** You know, our guys come to Notre Dame because part of their want and desire to come to Notre Dame is that it's about being other-centered. It's about what they can do to help others, and it's important in their spiritual growth. And spiritual growth at Notre Dame doesn't mean that we hold you down and go to Catholic mass. Spiritual growth is the ability to be part of our community service, to give back. And the kids are really looking forward to this hospital visit.

*Q. Obviously, scout team often is the player of the year, and Mick Assaf had a great season.*

**COACH KELLY:** Yes. That's you, isn't it?

*Q. Allegedly.*

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**COACH KELLY:** Yes.

*Q. People have been talking about maybe more touches in this game versus Clemson. What are your thoughts on that?*

**COACH KELLY:** I would say that the only touches you're going to get are on the sideline.

*Q. Not a bad place to get touches.*

**COACH KELLY:** I don't know who's going to touch you on the sideline, but I think in pregame you'll get a couple of touches.

*Q. Brian, you mentioned going through this process. You mentioned the portal with Brandon [Wimbush]. What do you think of the way this transfer process is changing and kind of what do you expect in this off-season where maybe you have kids exploring a transfer but you're not totally sure if that means it's happening or not?*

**COACH KELLY:** I mean, in an ideal world, you'd like to keep it under wraps, right? Because then everybody wouldn't be asking Brandon Wimbush about a transfer 48 hours prior to the game. I'm sure he would prefer that; I certainly would prefer that. But it takes it out of the hands of others who haven't handled it quite well, by blocking transfers and not letting kids investigate those kinds of options, which, in this instance, are certainly his prerogative.

So you'd like a better way to do it; but, for right now, this seems to be the most reasonable way to do it. Maybe if we get a little bit more time, we can think about a better way to do it. But I think this seems to be the best way that we have right now.

*Q. Do you think that because of the way the system is, do you think we'll have more kids exploring transfers this off-season?*

**COACH KELLY:** I don't think the rule really -- I don't know if you're asking that there's a direct correlation to the four-game redshirt to transferring, because they really have nothing to do with each other. I think transferring has always been part of what's happening here.

I mean, you're dealing with quarterbacks that -- you know, in this instance with Brandon [Wimbush], I mean, this makes sense that he should investigate it. He's a very, very good quarterback who should look at all of his options. If you're a freshman, should you do it? You know, I think that's individual to individual. Some would say, hey, you know, be more gritty, hang in there, fight it out. I mean, I think there's a number of ways to

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look at that.

Others would say, hey, you know, you should have the right to go wherever you want to go. I mean, there's a ton of ways to look at it. I think each one of them is so individual that -- I don't know that it opens a Pandora's box per se; I think you're going to see quarterbacks, though, that are looking for opportunities to play.

***Q. Two years ago you won four games, and now you guys are here. What do you think the biggest, most important change is you made to where you guys are right now?***

**COACH KELLY:** I think we developed better traits within our program. We lost -- I don't know. Of those eight games, I think, what, seven of those eight games we either held the lead or had the lead in the fourth quarter.

We made personnel decisions within our program that were difficult. We made some changes there, but we developed the traits necessary to be successful. And those traits have carried us to where we are over the last two years and that is we've won 22 out of our last 25 games.

***Q. Do you feel you tweaked anything personally to where you looked in the mirror and said, "Hey, I have to make this change"?***

**COACH KELLY:** Absolutely, it starts with me. It always starts with the leader of the organization. We went 4-8 because of my leadership, so I had to make changes. Nobody's going to follow somebody who thinks they know everything.

I don't know everything. So I had to make some changes, and we made changes as a group. We made changes as individuals. And then we follow the plan and a process that has worked for us, and we have stuck with it and been consistent with it along the way.

***Q. What were some of the changes you made?***

**COACH KELLY:** For me personally? Well, I think, first and foremost, we have been consistent with a message and a theme on a day-to-day basis that has allowed us to build a trust that this is who we are. This is who I am.

I have delegated responsibility to coaches that allows me to spend more time with my players and spend more time on their preparation in all areas, the mental, the physical, technical, tactical, all of those areas. So building those relationships with players has afforded us I think a better opportunity to be successful.

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*Q. Are there any advantages to facing a true freshman quarterback, or is this guy just that poised?*

**COACH KELLY:** I thought he was suspended? That's the other Trevor. Oh, it's Lawrence. Well, that stinks, we have been preparing for the other guy.

I mean, he's poised. He's polished. He's ahead of his years. So what you see is really who he is. He's a guy that is very committed to what he's doing. He doesn't get rattled. He's a really poised quarterback, accurate, athletic, can see the field. He's what you're looking for, and he doesn't play like a freshman.

*Q. How important is just winning the trenches in this game on both sides?*

**COACH KELLY:** They're all part of it. There's no question. I still think in a lot of ways limiting big plays on both sides of the ball, and then you can start to focus on who's going to control the line of scrimmage. If it's big play after big play, it doesn't really matter what happens up front. So limiting the big plays allows us to get back to who can control the line of scrimmage.

*Q. How rare is it for guys like Ian [Book] and Brandon [Wimbush] to be as close as they are when they are competing every day? I mean, you look at quarterbacks all around the country and maybe those guys aren't as close as these guys.*

**COACH KELLY:** Yeah. I think it's rare, in my experience. I think you can be cordial. I think you can be respectful. I think that you can know the boundaries and limits as it relates to keeping the team from picking sides. And I think that that's generally what happens in most instances. In other words, it doesn't go the other way where it becomes toxic. Their relationship is unusual.

And so if it's unusual, it usually means that you have two unique young men that truly transcend normal competitiveness for their position. They're just unique young men in the sense that they really care about each other and they're selfless. So it's rare. I have been doing it a long time; I have not seen it before.



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### QUESTIONS FOR QB IAN BOOK

*Q. What's going through your head right now?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Just getting closer to game time. I'm just excited. And every time we walk in here, we just are that much closer to this great opportunity that we have on the 29th. And we're really just excited and confident for this game.

*Q. What's it like being here and seeing how big it is?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** It was crazy, I remember the first time we all walked in here we took time to look around. And we all know what the stadium is, and a lot of us have kind of grown up wanting to play here. So it's really surreal that we get to play here.

*Q. What do you guys want to show the world on Saturday?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** We want to show them that we deserve the title and show them we're an elite team who belongs in the Playoffs. And we've still got two more games to go to our end goal, but that's just what we want to show people.

*Q. Do you ever think about just how crazy is it how far you've come since January, you, specifically?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Yeah. I step back sometimes and kind of just look back on the past a little bit and see how fast it's gone by and just realize how fortunate I am to be in this spot and kind of just how crazy everything has gone and just, you know, where we are, how close we are to the end goal that we talk about every day.

*Q. No word yet on Dexter Lawrence being able to play on Saturday. But how good is that defense with or without him?*

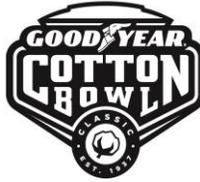
**QB IAN BOOK:** Yeah, really good, with or without him.

They've shown what they can do. We've prepared every day. And they're very talented and just a great opportunity for us to go out there and compete with a good defense like that.

*Q. Are you just super excited for the game? Can you wait any longer? I know it's been a long time for you guys.*

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**QB IAN BOOK:** It's hard to wait. But it's a good time to get some really good preparation in for our team. And we're getting close, and everyone is really antsy to just play.

*Q. Do you give yourself any time to be a fan this week? Take a moment like, wow, we're Notre Dame and I'm playing in a playoff game like this? Something you dreamed of, I'm assuming, for years. Do you allow yourself to take in a moment like that as a fan?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Yeah. Like I was saying earlier, there's been a couple times this year I've taken a step back and realized how far we've come.

Yeah, just, again, really fortunate. And I'm just excited and really happy to be part of this team and ready for the opportunity that we have ahead of us.

*Q. Are you happy you get a couple days to practice in this stadium so that way your first experience isn't looking up and being, like, whoa, like this is a huge stadium. Is it nice having a couple days to get used to that?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Definitely. Being able to practice in here and just take everything in so on game time it's not the first time seeing everything, it will definitely help. And it's just going to help our preparation as a whole.

*Q. Is your neck a little sore at all looking up at that video board for the first time?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** No. But it is crazy, just this whole entire stadium. It's the biggest jumbotron I've ever seen. It will be pretty cool to look up there and watch some guys make some good plays.

*Q. I asked Trevor [Lawrence]. He said he hasn't talked to you. But what are thoughts on you guys kind of being in a similar situation, taking over mid-season and now you're going to face each other on Saturday?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** I think it's really cool just being able to have similar situations. Both of us have the same dream of winning a national championship. I'm happy for him. And he's a good player. And I think we're both probably extremely excited and feel very fortunate to compete.

*Q. When did you find out that you were being started?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Couple days -- probably, like, first week before the Wake Forest game.

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*Q. Were you surprised that the change was made? Because Brandon [Wimbush] started the first three. Were you thinking that you'd be the backup the whole way?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** I prepared every day like I was going to get my opportunity. You know, I wouldn't say "surprised" is the right word. Because I was always ready to go in. I wanted to make the most of my opportunity.

*Q. Had Coach hinted to it at all the first few weeks?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** No. Both of us, Brandon and myself, believe in the coaches. Whatever they do is the right choice. We both have the same goals. We both want to win. So we're ready to react to whatever decisions they made throughout the season.

*Q. Did Coach Kelly tell you that you were going to start?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Yeah. We had a meeting. They told me early in the week just to get ready and be ready and make the most of your opportunity. It's something I've dreamed of, so it's something I'd been preparing for.

*Q. It wasn't a team setting, just you?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** No, just me.

*Q. When you see Trevor [Lawrence] play, what impresses you the most about what he does?*

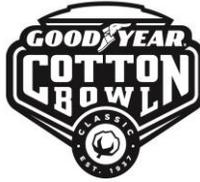
**QB IAN BOOK:** Just the way he throws the football. The first thing I notice is how strong his arm is. And to be a true freshman and go out there and lead the offense, you know, it's hard to find in a true freshman quarterback. So I think he's doing a great job. And I think it's going to be a really good game, and I know he'll do well on offense.

*Q. He's a freshman. You've got another year. What was the biggest thing you learned from the first year to second year you think looking back?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Probably some leadership things. Just getting the guys to rally behind you as the quarterback. You're the leader of the offense. And it's something I really took pride in just wanted to lead these guys and go out there and have fun and lead the whole entire offense to victory on Saturday.

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*Q. Do you think it's difficult for a freshman to come in and be a starter? I mean, not on the field. But it's like you said, the leadership stuff. You've got three- or four-year guys that are now relying on you?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** I think it's hard. I think it's just in some guys. You see that in a true freshman that has success. I think it's difficult to go lead DI college football and be a true freshman and get to the Playoffs. It speaks for itself. So he's obviously doing the right things. Same with the coaches.

*Q. You bided your time at Notre Dame. You started this year. We see more and more, if a guy doesn't play right away, they're looking for the exit. What was it that kind of kept you focused?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Just being confident and knowing I could play. I just wanted to be able to showcase my talents every day and work hard. I knew I was going to get an opportunity sometime. Last thing I wanted to happen is not to be ready for that opportunity. So I prepared for that opportunity and got it. Just wanted to make the most of it.

*Q. Do you see that mentality out there? I know it's not with everybody.*

**QB IAN BOOK:** Sometimes. Sometimes, like you said, you see some guys that start in high school and are the top-rated guys and they don't get what they want when they get here and they might leave or something. It happens. I think it's just the type of people, I guess. Just depends on if you can be patient for a little bit and know your skills and know you'll get your shot eventually.

*Q. How well does the run pass options suit your game?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** It's what I like to do. And Coach [Chip] Long and Coach [Tom] Rees have done a great job of being able to implement that into our offense and getting the ball out quickly and extending plays and just getting the ball to our playmakers as soon as possible and letting them make the plays because that's they do best.

*Q. Was there a particular moment once you became the starter where the game slowed down, the light bulb went off, whatever analogy you want to use?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** I don't know an exact moment. But I remember after the Wake Forest game and as the season went on, the chemistry with everybody just really started to click and started to feel even more confident. Timing is everything for an offense.

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Throughout the year it just kept getting better.

*Q. Coach [Brian] Kelly just said that Clemson is going to be the best defense that you've played all year. How is that going to change your game?*

**QB IAN BOOK:** I don't think we're going to change anything. We know that we're preparing for a really good defense. And we just got to do what we've been doing this whole entire season, preparing the way we have week in and week out. We don't have to have any superhuman efforts or anything, just keep doing what we've been doing and take care of our business and control what we can control.

### QUESTIONS FOR WR MILES BOYKIN

*Q. With all the talk about Clemson's defensive line, their secondary is good, too. What makes their cornerbacks especially tough?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** They're long. Especially one of the things we take advantage of it is shorter outside. They're pretty tall on the outside. They make coverage very well. They play all around great football. That's the reason they're undefeated.

*Q. What have you had to do as a wide receiver to beat that kind of coverage?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** I think we need to be physical, and we just have to win. There's no recipe for success against great teams like Clemson. You just have to win your one-on-one battles.

*Q. I was just curious. I notice you wear the same number as Calvin Johnson. He's someone you looked up to. What was it you looked up to about him that really spoke to you?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** For me just watching him, he was my favorite receiver growing up. How big, how strong, how physical he was with corners. And he still had that speed. And anything that you threw up in his direction he was going to catch. That's who I try to emulate my game after. He's been a huge inspiration to me.

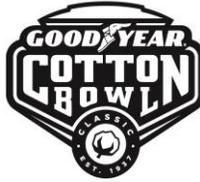
*Q. You used the word recently "traits." This team has different traits. I feel like this is something I've seen them build into your psyche. What are the traits of this football team?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** Attention to detail. Smart, laser focus. Grit is another one of those.

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*Q. Why are those traits important? I know coaches talk about certain things, but how have they actually helped your team?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** It's about a mindset. Playing this game is big mentally. So having that mindset of having those traits instilled in us. And things we've gone through to get those traits is not something you can lose over one play or one quarter of football. So it's something that we build in and know it's about the long run. It's not about one play, two plays. It's about the long run.

*Q. I know a lot of people are talking about Clemson and their explosive offense. How do you describe what your offense is?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** I think we're explosive as well. You've seen us. I don't think we've reached our potential yet. That's what Playoffs are for. So, hopefully, we reach our potential now and if we're hitting on all cylinders, we're going to be a tough offense to stop.

*Q. You had a longer layoff than most teams because of not having a conference championship game. What have you been doing to maintain and have game-like situations?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** We've scrimmaged. We've had full scrimmages that include tackling and all that. It's crazy when you think about doing all that stuff. But it definitely gets us ready. While other teams are playing in the conference championship, we're scrimmaging each other, playing against the best players in the country as well.

*Q. Coach [Kelly] said that one of the reasons he brought in Coach [Chip] Long is spreading the ball around the field. Offensively, how do you feel like you guys have done spreading it around with the way you guys call plays and the way you run the ball?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** I think Coach Long has done a great job this season. Obviously, you see that by the type of people we have on offense. We've got players in every position, and he's gotten the ball to them.

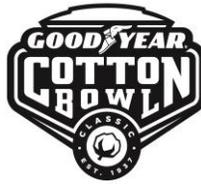
*Q. How does that keep you guys engaged offensively when you know you're going to get your share of it and get a chance to touch the ball?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** You just know that you never know when your opportunity is coming. But you just know it's going to come. It could be on the play that you're the last read, the ball can get there. You never know.

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*Q. How is this team different today than at the start of the season? How have you seen your team mature to this point and be prepared for this moment?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** I think we've played in just about every type of situation you can imagine. We've played being down the whole game. We went into those type environments and won. We've been tested from the standpoint that we played in every situation.

*Q. Do you feel, when you hear people talk about things, this is our moment? To those who don't think we should be here, this is an opportunity to do that?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** That's not our motivation. Because when you play at a place like Notre Dame, we're always motivated. How special the school is, everything it stands for. That's inside of you.

And that's what I play for.

*Q. Do you have any sense for the history of Notre Dame at this bowl game and some of the history?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** Don't we have second most wins, eight or something like that? That's pretty incredible. But other than that, I don't know who they beat here or outcomes of the rest of the games.

*Q. You've had a chance to play other places, but what's the week been like for you here? An opportunity to -- I know you've got -- you're focused on the game but the experience is important as well?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** It's been awesome. It's different because it's the College Football Playoffs, so we haven't been going out so much. Just kind of hanging around and relaxing, resting, and watching film, things like that. So they've offered great stuff to us. Obviously, going to the Mavericks game last night. Never been at a basketball game at a bowl game. It's been great.

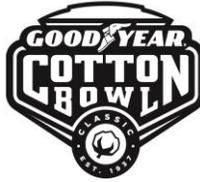
*Q. What was it like the week you saw the other three teams playing championship games. You had a different schedule and had that off week. How did that help you guys to prepare to get back on and be ready to go?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** Helped us get our bodies back, first and foremost. And

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after that we decided to actually -- we had a scrimmage later on that week. So it wasn't like we weren't doing anything. We had a full scrimmage, tackling and all.

*Q. You, obviously, have a physical advantage over their safeties as far as height is concerned. But they feel they match up well with your speed and height, even though they're at a height disadvantage. What kind of vertical leap do you got?*

**WR MILES BOYKIN:** I can jump pretty high. I think the thing about Clemson's secondary that makes- them so good is they're versatile.

That's why it's such a good matchup and such a good battle. Looking forward to this because it's going to be a big stage. So from that standpoint, like I say, I mean, maybe I have a couple inches on them but they are just as lengthy as me. So it's going to be a great game.

### QUESTIONS FOR OL SAM MUSTIPHER

*Q. Your line is going to go up against high-level pro talent Saturday. What have you seen scouting them, and what do you think you can take advantage of against that D-line?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** Not much to take advantage of. They're a big physical front. They like to get after the ball carrier, get after the quarterback. And Coach [Brent] Venables gives them the ability to do so. Looking forward to the challenge.

*Q. Sam, one of the big story lines going in now is what's going on with Dexter Lawrence on the other side of the ball. As you've studied him and his impact on that defense, what do you see?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** He's an incredible football player. He's big. He's athletic. He moves very, very well for his size. He's an impact player on their defense.

*Q. If he's not able to go, what advantage is that for you guys?*

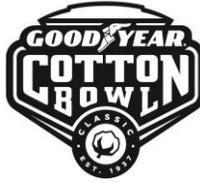
**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I don't really see it as an advantage. I know what their ability to do as a defense is. And those backups are going to come in there. And I don't expect them to miss a beat. they're a talented front. Coach [Brent] Venables does a great job with that defense and giving them the freedom to make plays.

*Q. When I was in South Bend [Indiana] ahead of this game, Drue Tranquill said something to me I found interesting, that being that, while you guys haven't*

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*physically been in the Playoff before, the leadership makes it feel like you have. What's your perspective on that?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I think the leadership is a great aspect of this team. But I think the most important part of this team is the family that we have. It isn't a cliché. It really is a family. We like to do things both on and off the field together as one. Guys are always together. Even at the hotel. Guys four at a time from different position groups are getting together in the restaurants, getting food together. That's the most important thing. When you have the ability for guys to play their role and play their part and help the team be successful, that's important.

*Q. Given your position as center, I imagine you probably know Brandon Wimbush better than anybody on this team or as well. How would you describe how he's handled 2018?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** About as well as anybody could handle it. It's a testament to who he is, who his mother raised him to be, and really, his family. They've done a great job. Because Brandon is well-respected within this locker room and on and off the field. I said it to somebody yesterday. He's the only guy who could come out and say he's transferring and people are like, wow, we love him even more. People are saying he'll run for president and they'll vote for him. That's who he is. That's the type of guy he is and I love him for it. Wimbush 2030.

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I could absolutely see him doing it.

*Q. Losing Alex [Bars] early in the season must have been tough, but how do you see your guys emerge and step up?*

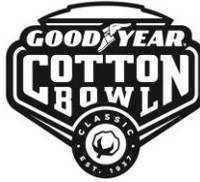
**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** Yeah. Losing Alex was definitely tough not only as a player but as a guy. We've been close. We've grown up together at Notre Dame. So it's definitely personally tough for me. But he's been there every step of the way in order to coach those guys. And whoever came into his role was going to be ready because Alex Bars is going to make sure of that.

*Q. When you look on the other side, Dexter Lawrence or not, how much talent is on the Clemson defensive line and how can you simmer it?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I don't know if you can simmer it. Not too many people have done it this year. But they're talented. With or without him, they're a talented front. They take pride in what they do. And their guys are at the next level, similar to what guys at Notre Dame have done. And so they're very impressive.

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*Q. If you were to score a touchdown, which you probably will Saturday, pretty much guaranteed, how would you celebrate?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** How would I celebrate? I'd celebrate with my guys. You got to go with the offensive line. We'll figure out something on the fly.

*Q. Would you have a dance prepared?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I think the great part about offensive line play is that we're a unit and family, so we're able to adapt and do things. We're pretty smart players.

*Q. How important is it to you guys to feel that what you do in this game can determine the outcome?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** How important do we feel as a group?

*Q. Just protecting [Ian] Book.*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** It's definitely important. Every football I've played in my life comes down to the trenches. Who wins the battle in the trenches. I think it's the most important part of football. You've got to run the ball. You've got to be able to tackle the ball carrier. Whoever wins that battle up front, I think will win the game.

*Q. The Clemson defense is impactful. They gave up 510 passing yards to South Carolina's Jake Bentley. Did you see anything from that game or anything that they exposed?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I wouldn't say that they exposed. There's a reason that it happened one time. But, you know, they did a great job that day. But there was things that the Clemson defense was able to do that was equally impressive. I believe they had the ball inside the 10 three times and didn't allow a score. When you can do things like that, that's something you hang your hat on. You get that far into the end zone, you've got to put it away. The fact they were able to stop them from doing that is huge.

*Q. When you scouted Syracuse earlier in the year, did you guys see anything that they did against Clemson? They kind of gave them the best team they'd faced all year.*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** No. I mean, we had our own games where it was like what are they doing or why did this happen. And every team has a game where they're going to have to fight through some type of adversity. And that's what makes Clemson a

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championship team.

*Q. What do you think of that Clemson defensive line?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** Athletic. They're the best they come, and it's going to be a great challenge for us.

*Q. Did they run many stunts, many tricks?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** Yeah. They have the ability to move, which I think makes them different than most defensive fronts. They're big, and they're able to move and manipulate guys. It's impressive.

*Q. Is it going to make much difference without Dexter Lawrence if he's suspended for the game?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I'll believe it when I see it. I think I said that yesterday. But, I mean, they do a great job. They have a tradition of defensive line play there that's incredible. Their guys move on and make impacts as soon as they get to the NFL. Those guys within the ranks I don't expect to see any drop off in talent or ability.

*Q. I've been asking this of your teammates. When, in your mind, did you have that feeling this might be a special season?*

**OL SAM MUSTIPHER:** I think the great part about this team was the ability to take it one week, one day, one practice at a time. I think that's one of our strengths. So there was never a time I was like, oh, this could happen. It was just what can I do to make sure I don't let this football team down. And I think a lot of guys take that mentality. And that helps us be successful.

### QUESTIONS FOR LB DRUE TRANQUILL

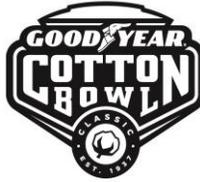
*Q. I know last time Notre Dame was on the stage you weren't here, the 2012 season. Clearly Alabama has beaten a lot of good teams. Alabama has overwhelmed, but it seems like people remember Notre Dame losing to Alabama. Why do you think that's the case?*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** I think a lot of times Notre Dame has a historic tradition of national championships but we haven't won a national championship in 30 years and that's

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something a lot of us take a lot of pride in, bringing a new dawn to Notre Dame football and that tradition.

To see Notre Dame on that stage in '12 and to fall short I think was probably disappointing to a lot of fans, and certainly provided a lot of air for a lot of people who didn't like Notre Dame around the country. We're more focused on this year. We're not trying to be '12. We want to be our own unique team, and we talk about putting our own name on the wall. So we're excited to do that Saturday night against Clemson.

*Q. How important is it for this team, 2018 team, to finish where you are and to finish it out, now that you're here?*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** I mean, first and foremost it's important to us. It's important to us as a team because we've shed so many blood, sweat, and tears since January. Just in our off-season training, throughout the season, all the setbacks we've come through, all the injuries guys have battled through to get back on the field, that all culminates itself Saturday night against Clemson and we've got to bring our best. Certainly the playoffs because you've got a great group of teams with a lot of talent, a lot of experience, and may the best man win.

*Q. It's funny to talk about Notre Dame as the Playoff newcomer because it's such a young system.*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** It's a young system and Alabama and Clemson have very much dominated it in years past and Oklahoma has been a part of it as well. And so yeah, we're the only team that hasn't been in the playoffs yet, but I don't know, I get an air that it feels like we've been here before even though we haven't.

*Q. There's been some talk about Coach [Brian] Kelly's different demeanor and approach to things. Those of us not around the program very much, as a player what has been the most noticeable, whether it's gradual or sudden change?*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** I think first and foremost what I appreciate and admire about Coach Kelly is his ability to have a vision and put pieces in place to achieve that vision. I think you see that in 2016 when we're coming off a turbulent time and his ability to rally the troops in a time of heartache and of trial. It was very admirable. I've always been very appreciative to Coach Kelly because he believed in me when not many coaches did and gave me an offer to play football at Notre Dame. And so he's a very generous man, and I'm very thankful for that.

*Q. If there was one thing maybe you could put your finger on, is it a different guy*

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*or a different approach or --*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** I mean, I think like many coaches he has times where he's going to get on you and then times where he's going to be more relaxed and get to know you more as a person. I think he's very balanced in that regard. I think a lot of people just see the screaming Coach [Brian] Kelly on the sidelines in games. That's not who he is as a person, as a coach. Certainly when he's inspiring and engaging our team, he'll get excited and get riled up, but he's a great football coach. He's been in the business a long time doing it and he's had great success.

*Q. Not trying to compare the '12 and '18, but in '12 some things happened, some breaks fell the right way for Notre Dame to be in that situation. Now it seems the foundation is firmer and more sustained. Do you get that sense, that the foundation at Notre Dame has reset kind of?*

**LB DRUE TRANQUILL:** I mean, I wasn't even a Notre Dame fan in 2012 so I have no idea what was going on. I do know that, you know, we started kind of this rebuilding process last year. Guys like Mike McGlinchey, Quenton Nelson, those guys did a tremendous job of starting groundwork and laying a foundation. We're in a position now we're 12-0 and have a chance to compete for a national championship, and certainly departing leaders like myself hope that this legacy continues. If you achieve something one year but don't leave a lasting legacy, it's almost a little bittersweet in a sense. So I certainly believe we have the guys in the locker room and the coaches in place to continue that tradition. That's something only time can tell.

### QUESTIONS FOR DT JERRY TILLERY

*Q. What was it about this season where it really seemed to come together?*

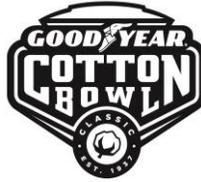
**DT JERRY TILLERY:** Yeah, I think it was our defensive line coach, Coach [Mike] Elston. He was able to put us all in positions to win. And for us to be able to like be in positions to win and, you know, exploit what we do well, I think. And that's really worked out well for us and our team.

*Q. I was curious, I read a couple of interesting articles this week that talked about and actually Drue [Tranquill] was quoted a couple of things, talked about one of the changes he saw in you over the last year or so, a couple of years, just your approach to the game, your approach to your preparation, those kind of things. What changed or what kind of kicked in for you that made you take it a little differently than you had in the past?*

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**DT JERRY TILLERY:** I think it started in the off-season, with the renewed commitment that we made in the off-season to working harder and playing together. And I think that has really shown up this season. And someone asked earlier about what was the difference between the '16 team that won four games and this one that was undefeated. I think it was the work in the off-season that we put in. I think we've all worked so hard together, we've all done so much and we lean on that when we're in tough situations. And I think that's what's helped us.

*Q. For you personally and your preparation in terms of studying film or watching opponents and offensive linemen, you know, how have you grown and improved in that respect in terms of your studying of the game?*

**DT JERRY TILLERY:** Oh, I've learned a lot really. I think like kind of the maturation process of a player is just first, you're just in the system, right? You just do what it says to do on the line, on the page, without really understanding the bigger picture, right? How it all fits out. How you fit the run play, how you rush the passer and your rush lanes. So I think I've grown to understand, you know, the whole defense like all of the intent we're trying to get accomplished. And I think that that's allowed me to better execute what is there but also with the understanding of what we're trying to do, you know, broadly, more broadly on the defensive end.

*Q. You guys -- a lot of teams do this, but you guys probably as much as anybody rotate so many guys in your defensive run, a lot of depth. How important has that been in terms of keeping guys healthy and then keeping guys fresh late in games when you need to really try to create some pressure?*

**DT JERRY TILLERY:** I think even more than that it's just keeping guys engaged mentally because if you're week after week not playing at all, then that weighs on your buy-in, that weighs on your work ethic, how hard you work. And I think that especially for the young guys that this happens to and they're able to better invest time and work and practice in the film room to stay engaged. And they know they're -- everyone can play. We rotate a lot of guys, got a lot of people stay fresh. It's helped us win a lot of games. And so I think that that's really been the key to our success.

*Q. Is there any sense -- and I know you guys are above petty little things -- but any sense that there's so much talk and emphasis on Clemson's defensive line that you guys get a little bit of chip saying hey, we've got a pretty good group ourselves?*

**DT JERRY TILLERY:** I think we're pretty good, too. I think they have a talented defensive line but so do we. They have a lot of playmakers up there, but we've

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made a lot of plays, too. But that's always the story when Notre Dame's playing. When we played Michigan, that's what they were saying. Oh, Michigan's defensive line, they're so great. When we played Syracuse, they've got a lot of good players on their D-line. It was all about them. We've played a lot of defensive lines and it's always them. But people aren't really talking about us until after the game.

*Q. That's probably better, right?*

**DT JERRY TILLERY:** Exactly. So that's what we'll be waiting for.

### QUESTIONS FOR CB JULIAN LOVE

*Q. I know you guys are tired of talking about it. You're going to be asked about it all day. Double digits underdogs. Does Notre Dame belong here? Behind the scenes is that just noise or is that motivating for this team?*

**CB JULIAN LOVE:** I think what's special about us is that for some guys it is motivational. But then for some guys, it's just noise. I know no one's kind of like putting out to each other, the coach putting it out to motivate us. Everybody takes that their own way, and I think that's what motivates us. A lot of people are motivated. I'm one of those people who doesn't really listen to that. And so, I mean, people are going to talk. They have all year. And we're going to do our job all year and we'll do our job.

*Q. What do you make of the receivers and how do you break them down?*

**CB JULIAN LOVE:** I think they all have their own talent sets, similar to our team. I think you have big strong receivers. Like what is it, [Tee] Higgins and [Justyn] Ross, I think. They're strong, powerful receivers, and you obviously have the experience of Hunter Renfrow, and rightfully so. You have the quick guys, ten (Derion Kendrick) and three (Amari Rodgers) who are speed or horizontal type guys. So I think they're very well rounded in that regard.

They have good players in those positions to make plays. And so I think it's very similar to our team which I think is an advantage for us because we've been practicing it all year and this is one team we feel is very similar to our receivers.

*Q. So I remember talking to Clark [Lea]. We did your Wake Forest game and Northwestern game. I remember talking to Coach Lea, and he talked about one of the changes from last year to this year that you guys really wanted to work on was reducing or cutting*

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*down free access kind of throws and really putting more pressure on taking the slants away, those kind of things. Talk about just some of the technique things you worked on to become better at that?*

**CB JULIAN LOVE:** I think probably that game plan last year was that whole bend on break, make them earn it mentality which is a little similar this year, and last year we kind of played a lot of off coverage and repeated those short routes. And last year a lot of times it didn't kill us at all and we maintained that. And this year we're mixing it up much more because Coach Lea was big on not impeding those throws at all. Really changing that whole mindset. That's why you see a lot of press now, you see a mixture of off and press. And I think that's as much he didn't want anything easy for other teams. And it changed from week to week but especially Wake Forest and Northwestern. We really want to kind of apply that pressure and really make them earn even those little throws. That's what those teams kind of lived off of.

*Q. You mentioned the advantage you have going against your receivers that you have, going into a game like this with Clemson's wide receivers. When you're dealing with bigger physical guys, what's the key in terms of defending those kind of receivers?*

**CB JULIAN LOVE:** I mean, it's tough. I'm going to be honest. I'm not the biggest guy, by any means, but I think it's just really going toe to toe and really kind of applying your will to it. And so from Miles [Boykin] and me it's kind of knowing the different releases, getting into the body -- some guys don't mind being pressed, some guys really can't be pressed so it's knowing your opponent. And then kind of taking them off their launching mark. Because if they get comfortable in their jump, they can catch a ball in a big catch radius. Just being kind of -- you try to get to the body before they jump, kind of a mind game. It's like boxing out. They can't jump if you're into them. That's my mindset for sure. And putting your hands on and being physical. Everybody likes that aggressive physical play.

*Q. You've got a couple of guys on your coaching staff that you work with that have been former players, great players. What kind of advantage has that been in terms of learning and teaching for you?*

**CB JULIAN LOVE:** I think my whole career the biggest role model and main guideline for improving my game is Todd Lyght. He's my backs coach. He's the guy who offered me -- I was his first commitment when he got to Notre Dame, and we have a good relationship. His mindset in terms of winning at the highest level is always from that, and he brings it to the table every single day. And it's been great. I know how he ticks and he knows how I tick, and I think that's a special thing for sure. He's helped me so much.

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And you have Autry Denson who is a little different. He's a little more composed and well-rounded person in general. And those guys really -- it's always good to pick their brain and see what they're about. And they are about a lot of stuff.

### QUESTIONS FOR K JUSTIN YOON

*Q. Just talk about this facility. You're playing here all week. It's a little unique.*

**K JUSTIN YOON:** Definitely phenomenal place. I'm probably never going to forget this place. It's a different dome atmosphere. I'm totally in love with this turf, especially. I just love how flat it is, and it's perfect for kickers. You can't get a more beautiful field. Maybe ND, but that's about it. It's just phenomenal, and I really appreciate being here. Fortunate enough to be here.

*Q. Have you gotten used to people introducing you as all-time leading scorer?*

**K JUSTIN YOON:** Not yet. I don't think so. I'm speechless at this point. Like I said, all I've been doing every day is making sure I do what I need to do for this team. It's all about making sure we win. Before I knew it, it happened. So I think it's a lot of fan support I get that helps me get through every game. So I'm really truly grateful for everything that's happened to me.

*Q. As a placekicker people know you kick field goals and your job is to make them go through the uprights and make points. Another job is kickoffs and that's a lot more complicated than people think. What do you need to do to limit returns?*

**K JUSTIN YOON:** I think the way Coach [Brian] Kelly always talks about if you can get it as deep as you can, then you will help our team, so I think that's the most important thing. If I can get it within like five yards deep to ten yards deep, that's the most important thing. I don't know what their schemes are. We're going to play our schemes.

*Q. Every now and then the kicker gets to be the last man on the field.*

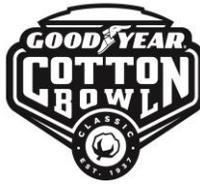
**K JUSTIN YOON:** I focus in on what I do. I don't think about what other people do. What I don't need to think about is this is the last kick, oh, my God. That's going to freak me out. There's obviously going to be some nerves, I'll be aware of that, but if I can calm myself at that moment and produce what I have been capable of doing in time, I think that will help me get through what I need to do.

*Q. I've heard you talked about in the NFL draft circles. What are your thoughts after you graduate, NFL maybe? They're saying draft or free agency. You've got*

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*Notre Dame leading all-time scorer. Thoughts on the NFL or what are you going to do after?  
What are you majoring in right now?*

**K JUSTIN YOON:** I'm a finance major. You go to university for a reason. You go to get an education, a degree. So I'm fortunate enough to be able to graduate soon and, in fact, this December or January I'll be graduating. And so I'll have that behind me and to face whatever challenges I have trying to get a job. So that's always good, a plus. But like I said, if I'm trying to go further and go to the NFL, it's not just given to you. It's something that you work for, especially a kicker. So hopefully I'll be one of the fortunate ones to get there. If not, like I say, I have something to go back upon.

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