

*January 15, 2010*



An interview with:

## **COACH BRIAN KELLY**

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with coach Kelly making an opening comment. Then we'll have questions.

BRIAN KELLY: Welcome, everyone. Thanks for coming out here today on this balmy day at South Bend. I didn't know it was always going to be like this. An advantage for us. Today we're really assembling everybody here as a get to know you, the opportunity for you to meet my staff.

I think we all know this is so important in the success of any business organizations putting together your staff. We are currently also in a very crucial time. That is the recruiting end of things. So the ability to put together a staff during a period which is absolutely crucial to the success of your program as well has been challenging at times.

Certainly we've had to make certain that our recruits understand that we still love them and we still want them here at Notre Dame. But my focus, quite frankly, has been in putting this staff together. If you don't have the right people in place, really it doesn't matter who you recruit. And so it was paramount to the success and the future success of this football program to put together today's staff.

I want to begin by introducing our leadership positions. I'll start with Bob Diaco, our defensive coordinator. Bob was with me at University of Cincinnati. And prior to that, we worked together at Central Michigan. We have a long-standing relationship in this business, and I think we all know how important playing good defense is to winning football games.

Couldn't be more excited, more confident in our ability to play championship defense here at Notre Dame. I think some of the things that stand out with what we did defensively last year, in

particular, we replaced 10 starters on that defense. And we also implemented a new scheme of 3-4 defense.

What did that result in? Well, certainly earlier in the year it allowed us to win key games on the road. 28-20 victory against Fresno State. One of the best rushing teams. We went to Oregon State and played great defense. We were top ten in sacks and tackles for a loss defensively. So it's a disruptive defense, and one, obviously, that we're going to continue to build here at Notre Dame.

From an offensive standpoint, it's a great pleasure to have Charley Molnar. Charley has been with me both at Cincinnati and Central Michigan. Has a great understanding of the offense. Coached our wide receivers. Has been a coordinator at the Division I level. Will now coach our quarterbacks. He's done a great job mentoring quarterbacks in his career and again, to have somebody that is familiar with the offense and has coached with me. You know, I think we all know we're going to play exciting offense. We like to throw the ball but we like to win.

With both coordinators I think what the most important thing here is it's not about statistics. When I put together a staff, I'm most interested in winners. Both these coaches are winners. They've won championships with me. They've both went undefeated this year in the regular season. So the staff that I put together, they're all winners. They've all experienced championships and know what it takes to build championships.

The third leadership position I want to talk about is our strength and conditioning coach, Paul Longo. He again has been with me over the past six years and is absolutely crucial to the development of our student athletes here. I think we all have heard the need for student development and player development. Paul has already hit the ground running. We began our workouts yesterday and we are in the process now of implementing our off-season conditioning

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program, which is absolutely crucial to our success. Though it's not just about offense and defense and special teams, it's about developing your players. And those are three key leadership positions within the program.

Complementing on the offensive side of the ball, it's great to have Mike Denbrock back with me. He's going to be working with the tight ends. He'll have his hand on the running game and passing game. Mike has filled a unique role for me in our time together. He's been an offensive coordinator and a defensive coordinator in my system.

He knows very much what I'm expecting him on a day-to-day basis. Knows Notre Dame, was here with Tyrone Willingham. He also has some very good ties in the West Coast, being at Washington and Stanford. He'll be our West Coast recruiter. He's already done a very good job for us. So it's great to have Mike back with us.

Tony Alford is the lone hold-over from the former Notre Dame staff. I got to know Tony over the years. He's had a relative play for me at Grand Valley, so we're quite comfortable with each other and the knowledge that he brings not only from being here at Notre Dame, but he understands what it takes from my end to recruit. He's a tireless recruiter. Outstanding in the homes.

I've gotten an opportunity to be on the road already with him. He does a terrific job. And we're also going to move him to the wide receiver position, which I think is exciting for me, because he's a great teacher. He's a great motivator. The kids respect him. And now he's going to get the opportunity to expand his knowledge base.

As you know, he's been with the running backs for most of his career. I see him as somebody now that is going to be able to complete the process for us and tutoring our wide receivers.

Tim Hinton joins me from Cincinnati. Tim is a long-time Ohio native. He has got a great deal of experience in all levels. Graduate assistant at Ohio State. Head high school coach. Certainly with me at Cincinnati. And he's just a good old ball coach. He'll build great relationships with his student athletes, with the parents. Very good recruiter, and has a great knowledge of what we want to do within our offensive structure and system.

Ed Warinner is our new addition. Ed comes to us from Kansas. As you know, Ed was involved in a 12-1 season at Kansas as the offensive coordinator. One of the more prolific

offenses in the country in '08. Got a great deal of experience working at Army and Air Force. Obviously has a great understanding of those systems of offense and offensive line play. But also understands the spread.

So when I was out there looking for offensive line coaches, believe me, there was a long list that had a great interest in coming here to Notre Dame. Ed stood out with his personality, his quality traits, his values, his reputation in the profession, and then the diversity he brings relative to coaching all different systems. So really pleased to have Ed on the staff.

From a defensive standpoint, we talked about the 3-4 defense. And so it's important that in that 3-4 defense that you have somebody up front that has a great knowledge of that. Mike Elston is going to be our defensive line coach. Mike is not here today. His wife just gave birth to a baby. 6 pounds, 14 ounce, I believe. Is that correct? Is it Isabela? Isabela, I think is the name. I could be wrong. You know how those are fluid situations. They change. So don't quote me on that.

Mike is not here today. He too was with me at Central Michigan and Cincinnati. And he will coach our defensive line. Played at Michigan. So he does have one thing going against him. So we've worked on that. We've cleaned that up quite a bit. He's just done a great job for us in developing our players. That's really what this is about. Developing them from their freshman year to senior year. I've seen the development that he's made as a coach as well. He's been on offense and defense. And he also takes care of special teams and does a terrific job. We had -- the last five years had one of the better special team units in the country. So he's got collateral responsibilities that pay big dividends for us as well.

Coaching our defensive backs will be Chuck Martin. Chuck comes to us from Grand Valley State University, where he won a lot more games than I did. He took a program that had won a number of championships, and believe it or not, built on that. And that sometime is a daunting task. Chuck took that on and made it better. So he knows how to get the best out of his players. And the success that he has had at Grand Valley State is unparalleled across the country.

He ranks up there with the Larry Kehres' of Mount Union in terms of sustained success over a long period of time. Now he's going to be able to

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bring that ability to motivate and develop to our defensive backs. And I couldn't be more excited about having Chuck. He grew up as a Notre Dame fan from Chicago. And he's just a great fit for our staff. Chuck was my defensive coordinator at Grand Valley State and helped us win a championship. So it's great to have him back on our staff.

Kerry Cooks joins us from Wisconsin, where he was an extremely successful defensive back coach on Bret Bielema's staff. In a very short period of time took over defense and the defensive backs, in particular, and turned them into a strength in their unit. I think their last bowl game was evident how well they played in the back end of their defense against a very, very skilled football team.

Great deal of experience working with the defensive backs. But he's an outstanding football coach and person, and gives us a great tie into the state of Texas in recruiting a graduate of Nimitz High School. Will do a terrific job in on the recruiting end. But more importantly, building strong relationships with our players.

We brought together a staff from Cincinnati. Lorenzo Guess and Jake Flint, also join us from Cincinnati to be key assistants in the strength and conditioning development with coach Longo. Bill Brechin, Mike Painter, two of our graduate assistants. Bill played for me. Mike has been with me the last five years. To have those two guys, again, the support staff in place is very comforting from my end.

So that is a rundown of the 2010 Notre Dame football staff. I've given you the cliff notes about each one of the coaches. I think the common theme here is they've all been with me at some time or another. I'm very familiar with them. We all speak with one voice. We all share the same values. That is, we know why we're here; to provide a quality environment for our players to gain a degree and win a championship. This is about winning championships, and that's why we're here. And our eyes are wide open to that end of winning championships.

With that I'll open it to any questions you may have.

**Q. You have a history of taking coaches and moving them around to different positions. Your background is on both sides of the ball. The risks of doing something like that are obvious. What do you --**

BRIAN KELLY: What are the risks?

**Q. Well, not having coached that position before. What do you feel the rewards are of taking a coach and putting him in a spot he might not be quite as comfortable with?**

BRIAN KELLY: I think the risks are when you take a coach that's only coached that position. He becomes almost a specialist in one area. I don't want specialists. I want great teachers and great educators that can communicate across the board. So I think first and foremost, what I try to do is put together a staff that have that ability to coach different positions. So I think I start with that. I think it makes it easier for me not to feel like we're entering into a proposition that's risky when I know that they are great teachers, great educators, great communicators.

So I think I put a premium on that first and foremost. And quite frankly I think it goes back to my background where I had two full time assistants in my first job. You better be able to do a couple more things. So I think that's kind of why I work in that fashion.

**Q. Coach, not everybody has their strength and conditioning coach as a position of leadership. They don't value it maybe as much as you do. At what point in your career did that happen and what pushed you in that direction? When did you -- was there a certain moment?**

BRIAN KELLY: I think it's as I was able to expand the resources within my own program.

At Grand Valley State I understood the absolute necessity to be involved as the head coach with strength training and conditioning. So I did it. It was part of my hat that I wore. So I think I had that with me my entire career. But as the resources grew and I was able to expand, I was going to turn that over because I knew how crucial it was as I took that role early on in my career as a head coach.

**Q. Recruiting coordinator, what's the process of that? The second part is when the staff hasn't necessarily taken on the national recruiting scope, what are the nuts and bolts of getting that started?**

BRIAN KELLY: Dave Peloquin is really by de facto our recruiting coordinator. I know his title points in a different direction. He has acted as our

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recruiting coordinator. We will continue in that vein through this recruiting season. Really he's acting as that. When you are assembling a staff when it talks about national recruiting, you're just expanding your boundaries. What I mean by that is that obviously at Notre Dame you're recruiting on the East Coast and West Coast. What we've tried to do is assemble a staff that has relationships, pre-existing relationships in those geographical boundaries that I had not recruited in before. For example, Mike Denbrock at Washington and Stanford recruited West Coast.

He already has pre-existing relationships. It was a natural fit for him to be our West Coast recruiter. I think it's easy to look at Kerry Cooks and his success at Texas. On the Wisconsin roster there's a number of players from the state of Texas. Kerry Cooks will recruit Texas for us. So I think it was just about placing those coaches that had pre-existing relationships in those geographical regions and then doing what you do; and that is build a relationship with a kid, know the decision-makers that are involved in the process, make certain that you're persistent and in your pursuit of a quality student athlete.

**Q. When you bring your offense to a new system, what are the main fundamentals, principles that you try to stress to get it started before you work out the finer points?**

BRIAN KELLY: The mind-set from an offensive standpoint is that we want to be aggressive. I think we all -- you know, I think in terms of a defense being aggressive, you have to have that mind-set that from an offensive standpoint right away before we even talk about the first X or O or the first play call, about having an aggressive mentality. And it's not about anything else but scoring points. This past year at the University of Cincinnati we were last in the country, dead last in time of possession. But we were one of the most prolific scoring teams in the country. So it's about aggressive mentality and about scoring points.

**Q. Will you be pretty much handling the offensive role throughout the spring and on game days? The coach that will be coaching the special teams, the coach of the defensive line. It's a big responsibility.**

BRIAN KELLY: Absolutely. I will be involved. Charley Molnar will coordinate. He'll have the day-to-day responsibilities of the

organization of our offense. The implementation. I will be involved in the offense. I will walk around. But most of my attention is paid to the offense, and in particular the quarterbacks. Because when you are play-calling, you have to have certainly a relationship with the quarterbacks as well. So Charley will take a great deal of the day-to-day operations and coordination. And I'll be involved in pointing him in the right direction. And saying we should be looking in this direction this week.

And then he'll go implement the system that's in place that we've worked under and go from there. From a special teams standpoint, I agree. Mike Elston has the best knowledge base of our special teams. We do want to assist him this year. And we're going to do that more than I have in the past, because it is a big load in terms of defensive line and special teams. But before we transition out and if we transition out those special teams, it won't be for another year. So he's going to get some assistance. And we will be in a process of transitioning that to somebody else on the staff. But right now, he will carry the leadership of special teams coach.

**Q. Can you tell us about the process of interviewing all the coaches and how you came to weigh familiarity over some other factors?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, the process for me is really -- first of all, the leadership positions. It starts with your coordinators and your head and strength conditioning coach. Those were known early on in the process. Obviously all three of them were with me at Cincinnati when I left to take the job at Notre Dame. Clearly we had some indications as to who was interested. So that was the first end of the process. I think what changed it a little bit in midstream was Jeff Quinn getting the job at Buffalo. Then we had to make some changes as to who we were going to hire an offensive line coach. Because Mike Denbrock could usually do that as well. He's an outstanding offensive line coach.

So it was finding what was going to be the best fit for our staff. And so that process changed a little bit as we moved forward. And then bringing in coaches that complemented my personality and what I'm about in terms of player development. So some of it started with the Cincinnati staff. And then we were able to build off of that. Once I knew the leadership positions were in place.

**Q. I know it's early, but do you have any feedback yet from any coaches or players on the off-season conditioning?**

BRIAN KELLY: We're in our first day. Today will be our second day. You know, I think you judge it down the road. But I can tell you this: Our players are committed, they're excited, and they want to win. Having said that, I think we had seven guys who threw up before we got through stretching. So we know that these young men want to win. And they're committed and they're going to do what we ask them to do. But we have got a ways to go. And I think this will continue to play out over the next few weeks, as we get a chance -- I'll be quite honest with you. We had our first meeting, I told our guys, "listen, we don't have time to ask you to buy in." We don't have time. First of all, we didn't have the same opportunity that the other teams in the country had in terms of bowl practices. So we're behind right there.

And clearly, we needed to hit the ground running. So we've asked our guys to buy in unconditionally. And if we can get that, we've got a chance to move our team closer to where it needs to be going into the Spring ball.

**Q. With so much attention obviously on first getting the staff together and now recruiting, what's kind of been your relationship with the upperclassmen coming back?**

BRIAN KELLY: Not much. Expectations have been set. They've walked into our locker room, and in our locker room we have already made known what our expectations for our team relative to our Irish commandments, our Irish creed, our Irish covenant. All those things kind of shape what we want from not only our seniors, but from our freshmen. As I said in responding to the last question, we had to go. We didn't have time to have a big group hug. It was time to go to work. And so we had to do some things and have our kids locked into that immediately and see what we're about. But have some faith and go to work. And so we haven't had that one-on-one conversation yet.

**Q. Are you willing to share with us what those commandments -- covenants and creed are?**

BRIAN KELLY: Not right now, because I think our players need to kind of get a sense and feel. And they'll be able to share it with you. I

would rather have them share it with you at a later date. Because they're going to hear about it every day. They're going to see it every day in their locker room. It's about that one message. It's about that consistent message on a day-to-day basis. So hopefully when we get the next chance to come together, probably sometime around Spring ball, they'll be able to tell you about those things.

**Q. Talk about your philosophy, as you're looking for these various coaches, are you thinking about how they will work together as coaches in terms of the continuity you need in meeting rooms and the continuity you need in practices, the assistants working with one another?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, I think what I look for is a shared philosophy. Not just hey, I'm the wide receiver coach and I only care about how many catches we get and how many yards we get and yards after catch. I want our coaches to have a shared vision of success across the board. This isn't about hanging pelts on your wall, or you won't be on this staff. This is about "we" collectively. Now, each coach has their own responsibilities. Just like you do on a day-to-day basis. But in putting together what I look for in terms of a staff, I stay away from dysfunction. And those are guys that are not bought into a shared philosophy, number one; number two, think they know it all.

I told you, there are coaches in here that can be head coaches, they can be coordinators, they can coach other positions. They put that aside to be here at the University of Notre Dame. So I was looking more for, is there a dysfunction within that wouldn't allow this person to be a part of the staff.

**Q. You kind of have a tendency in your staff to bring guys along with you. Guys that you have a familiarity with. What has been the advantage of that when it comes to getting down to work?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, I think when you have that track record and that history together, it's the -- we talked about it as unconscious confidence. You don't have to talk about it. You know what's expected. And that's what we want from our football team. That level of unconscious confidence. Habit-forming. So when you're with coaches for a number of years, they already know

what you're going to say. They can finish the sentence. And that to me, if this is the team, and they're getting the same message from every single coach, you know what? It starts to resonate. That's the advantage of that.

**Q. Can you tell us generally how you've been received on the road? And can you address the Michael Floyd situation at all?**

BRIAN KELLY: How I've been received on the road has been one of I think a lot of people know who I am, our success over the past few years. We've been on TV a lot. I think most of the kids we've been in their homes know about my background. A great thing called Google. People tend to use that now. And they know a lot about you. So I think more than anything else, in terms of how I'm received, Notre Dame carries the day on that. I'm representing the University of Notre Dame. So it's been very, very positive.

The Michael Floyd situation, I've got a chance to sit down with Michael. We have reinforced to him about in our program here at the University of Notre Dame that making good choices is going to be paramount to his success in this football program. So we've had that, as you know, there's some things pending that I can't get into because of the levels. As you know today, relative to discipline, it starts with the university level, then it works into the athletic department, and then it goes down to the football program. So I'll be quite honest with you, over the past five or six years, that has in a large degree rendered the football coach really out of the process when it comes to discipline. Because they are going to get nicked on one or two before they even get to you.

But it doesn't mean that Michael is absolved from anything. It means that those processes are going to take their course first before it gets to me. But that doesn't mean I'm not going to sit down with Michael like I did and talk about accountability, responsibility and making good choices.

**Q. Can you talk about the five kids that just enrolled and what they are going to have over the recruits that are going to show up in June?**

BRIAN KELLY: As you know, we do not have a fifth-year class. So clearly what this does is it puts them in a position that we can develop them prior to their first enrollment, and prior to their first enrollment in the fall relative to playing.

They're absolutely crucial. I'm very thankful that Dan Saracino felt these students were quality students that could get in. And we hope to continue that process if we have success with these young men right now.

Thank you. We'll turn it over to Brian and have you at all the coaches. Thank you very much.

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