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An interview with:

KYLE McCARTHY SCOTT SMITH

THE MODERATOR: We have Kyle McCarthy and Scott Smith at the front table. We'll start with questions.

Q. Kyle, obviously the defensive line is starting to make some strides after some struggles early on. What have you seen in that group over the last few games?

KYLE McCARTHY: They've really come a long way. There were some young guys at the beginning of the season that we were counting on, they really matured fast. A lot of that goes to Coach Hart. Coach Hart is always after them in practice. You can just tell in practice they're getting better.

Q. Scott, same question for you?

SCOTT SMITH: I think the same thing. A lot of those guys, they knew they had a lot to prove coming into this season. I think that helped them realize how much harder they needed to work, film-wise, on the practice field.

When it comes to the game, making plays, obviously there's a lot of athleticism on the defensive line, especially when you bring guys like Darius (Fleming) and (Steve) Filer, kind of the rush end mode, especially with Kap (Kapron Lewis-Moore) and Ethan (Johnson). There's definitely a lot of guys who have a lot of athleticism and the ability to be disruptive in the backfield.

Q. How much do you think it was a matter of them sort of getting their feet wet, a lot of inexperience up front, them getting settled down?

SCOTT SMITH: I think obviously we were there at one point. When you're first playing more and more, it's a little bit more nerve-wracking. Might take a little bit more time to kind of get your feet wet and understand exactly what's going on in different situations.

But I think those guys have adapted really quickly, especially Kap (Kapron Lewis-Moore), who I think really has come on the last couple weeks. His overall athleticism, his hustle, his hard work, you can really tell that from play to play, he's the same guy, gives that same consistent effort.

Q. Kyle, Ethan Johnson in particular is making a bit of an adjustment, moving inside. What have you noticed from him? Is he still bringing the same energy and production?

KYLE McCARTHY: Definitely, Ethan is the type of guy where we know what we're going to get out of him no matter what. He always shows up for practice and the games. Got an awesome work ethic. Just one of those kids you can always count on.

Q. Kyle, you seem to sometimes get a smile when we talk to you about a freshman quarterback. This week a little bit different type of freshman quarterback, being that he's 25. How unusual is that? How does that change him versus a regular freshman?

KYLE McCARTHY: It's pretty interesting. This isn't your typical freshman quarterback. Obviously he's 25 and he's played some other sports or whatever. So he's obviously more mature than a normal freshman quarterback would be.

We just got to treat him like he's a mature guy and one that's experienced because he can definitely hurt us.

Q. BC has won six games in a row in the series. You're a long-time Notre Dame guy, fan as well. How much do you want to end that

streak?

KYLE McCARTHY: I think ending that streak would mean a whole lot. First and foremost getting our season back on track and what our goals are. You know, that's the most important thing, is just getting the win. Then the added flavor that it's BC adds fuel to the fire. We definitely want to get a win.

Q. Scott, what does this game against BC mean to you?

SCOTT SMITH: Obviously, losing the last six times, we haven't beaten them since we've been here. Two of the best Catholic schools around. Obviously there's a huge rivalry that goes back a long ways.

I think right now the series is all tied up in terms of overall games. Wouldn't mind taking the step to push that series back into our favor.

Q. When you look at their version of the wildcat, obviously very successful, especially last week. Talk about what they were able to do last week.

SCOTT SMITH: I think, like you said, it was very successful last week. Obviously their running game was very successful last week. I think they rushed for almost 300 yards total. Any time a team does that, especially in multiple ways, using the wildcat, more of a traditional style offense, you have to pay attention to guys.

They have a really good offensive line, real good running back, he'll run north and south and he'll hit the hole. I think that's the biggest thing. They do a real good job of taking advantage of the holes that were created by the offensive line, turning that into yards after contact and making guys miss.

Q. Kyle, your thought on what they were able to do running-wise last week?

KYLE McCARTHY: I think one of the biggest reasons they had so much success out of the wildcat, they have two running backs that are pretty awesome athletes. We saw them last year. To have success in the wildcat, a lot of times you have to have two good tailbacks, not just one. I think that's why they have so much success.

Q. Can you talk about what you have to do as captains to make sure everybody moved on from Saturday?

KYLE McCARTHY: I mean, it's been hard on us, too, obviously. But as leaders on the team, no matter how hard our day is, we have a whole lot of football left to be played, six games in our second season, second half of the season. So it's up to the leaders on this team to get the young guys going in practice. Even though it's hard, we need to move on and get our thoughts on BC.

SCOTT SMITH: I think the biggest thing was just getting back to practice yesterday, just getting back to work. That's the biggest thing after a tough loss or a big win, to try to get yourself back to sort of even keel, especially after a real tough loss, just getting back out there, get to work with your teammates, sweating, working hard, getting ready obviously for another good opponent and a big game, not just for us but for the Notre Dame community as a whole.

Q. Brian Smith said they rushed for 140 yards with the wildcat. How much did they run it before last week?

KYLE McCARTHY: They had a good amount of wildcat before last week. I think last week was their most successful game with it so far.

Q. They apparently run two types of wildcats. What kind of problem does that create?

KYLE McCARTHY: You know, a lot of times a team will just have a simple wildcat plan, you know, just try to run it with you, fool you once. Boston College as a whole, not a whole playbook on it, but they have some wrinkles to it. As a defense, we're going to need to line everybody up in the right spot and not be out of position because that's where you're going to get hurt.

Q. Kyle, for you is it just the six-game losing streak that has you fired up or does it go beyond that for you?

KYLE McCARTHY: Actually, Boston College didn't offer me a scholarship out of high school. I guess that adds a little bit of extra fuel to the fire.

Q. Coach Weis talked yesterday about when it was 34-14, he asked us, What did you think was going to happen in the game? Obviously you got back in the game. Just address the feeling on the sideline that despite everything that's happened in the past in this

series that you felt like you were still in it.

KYLE McCARTHY: I definitely felt like we were still in it. I just knew our defense needed to step up and get a stop. We have all the confidence in the world in our offense, what Jimmy can do. So, you know, we knew as a defense that we just needed to get a stop and give our offense a chance and we'd have a chance in the game.

SCOTT SMITH: I think the feeling on our sideline was that we were going to win the game. I don't think there was one person on the sideline that thought, This game is over, throw in the towel. Everybody was still into the game. Everybody was ready to go. We knew we were going to make a run. We knew we had a chance to win. We kept putting ourself in position to win games.

Just that confidence factor is something that this week is going to really need to carry us forward, just knowing that we have the ability to win every single game that we play.

Hopefully maybe there's some things we can do to not let it come down to those final seconds to decide whether we're going to win or lose.

Q. Kyle, what has Coach Weis' message been to you over the last five weeks and how has his demeanor been throughout this?

KYLE McCARTHY: Obviously last week was a little different than the wins. You know, he appreciates the fight in this team. He knows what kind of character and what kind of guys he has in the locker room. He knows that we're going to go down to the wire, fight down to the wire.

But then again, he also let us know that we need to be playing like we do in the last quarter for all 60 minutes because, you know, we don't need to be in some of the positions that we put ourselves in. Hopefully that shows on Saturday. We're working hard on it and we're going to come out firing.

Q. Kyle, talk about your evaluation where the secondary is right now halfway through the season and areas where you feel like you need to get better moving forward.

KYLE McCARTHY: I think we're underachieving in the secondary. There's a whole lot of improvement we need to be doing and that we're working hard on this week, for the rest of the season.

I'm not the only one that thinks that. I think every defensive back feels that way, that we can improve, and we need to work hard. Like I said before, it's not a scheme thing or anything like that. We need to be responsible for our mistakes and work hard in practice and just try to do not much talking, just show it on Saturday.

Q. What are some of the factors that put a veteran secondary into making a mental mistake or having a blown coverage?

KYLE McCARTHY: I think there's a lot of factors. Obviously, every individual guy has their own issue. You know, might be formation or a guy just not being in tune mentally on that play. Coach Brown always preaches we need to be in tune for every play. Out of however many plays, 75 plays a game, if you're out of tune for one play, you're going to get exposed in the secondary. We always talk about if a D-lineman or a linebacker makes a mistake, we'll clean it up for them. If a defensive back makes a mistake, it's a touchdown. We just need to get better on that and be in tune every single play.

Q. As a captain, how do you keep the confidence of the group up?

KYLE McCARTHY: You know, I don't need to do a whole lot, especially with the defensive backs. You know, the guys in the locker room, we know what kind of ability we have, and I think that's why everyone continues to work hard and try to get better, because we know that we can be a lot better.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your memories from Boston College last year. Seemed like the one game where you were uncharacteristically flat, from an outsider's perspective?

KYLE McCARTHY: You know, I remember the defense, I don't think we played too bad against Boston College last year. I think we only gave up 10 points or something like that. But it was a rough game. I don't know what it was. But, you know, the whole game kind of seemed a little bit down. You know, they had our number. So, you know, we know they're more than capable of beating us.

SCOTT SMITH: At the same time you have to kind of remember what happened last year kind of gives you motivation for this year. We

realize there's a different set of circumstances surrounding this team now than there was last year. There's different leadership. There's different guys, you know, playing a lot and stepping up.

So, you know, whatever happened last year, we can definitely use that as a learning experience about maybe how to approach this game, how to do things during the week to have a different result on Saturday.

But the bottom line goes down to, you know, can we focus this week on the things that we need to focus on, then you also use that as motivation.

Q. Scott, maybe this is what you were just talking about. In the sense of last year, you came off an exciting but heart-breaking loss the week before you went out to BC. Have you talked about putting that game behind?

SCOTT SMITH: Any time you lose a tough game, it's going to take a while to get yourself back to just kind of feeling normal. I know after the game, kind of into Saturday, on Saturday night, Sunday, even Monday, I was still pretty crushed, because I knew that was my last time, that was my last time being in a game like that against USC. At the same time, it's going to be my last time to get a chance to play Boston College. We have a lot of guys on this team who it's going to be their last time.

Whether or not you're a freshman getting ready to play or you're a senior getting ready to play, not trying to say play for the seniors or play for the guys, this is their last chance. We need to play for ourselves, each other, you know, coaches, your fans, students, everyone. So just the fact that we need to get ourselves ready to go, that's the bottom line.

Q. How do you mentally shake off, to realize this is your next best opportunity? A win is a win, but there's some that provide more satisfaction.

SCOTT SMITH: I mean, he guess that's just kind of the nature of the game. You only get so many chances. Like other sports, they get 30, 35 chances a year. We only get 12 and then 13 with the Bowl game. You got to have a short memory and realize that if you don't take advantage of every opportunity, by the end of the year you're going to be looking back and wondering what happened.

We're not a group that's going to put ourselves in that position. We're not going to look back at the end of the season and say what did we do this game, how did we let that game go. We're going to say we did everything possible and worked as hard as possible to make sure that things went our way.

Q. Have any of the coaches tried to educate you or do you even know, the sense of the fact we talk about the wildcat all the time, but how closely it relates to the single wing, something like from your grandparents' days?

KYLE McCARTHY: I don't know anything about my grandparents' days football. That's all I have to say.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone.

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