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An interview with:

JIMMY CLAUSEN ERIC OLSEN

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with Jimmy Clausen and Eric Olsen.

Q. Jimmy, I'm sure BC is one of your favorite games from last year. Reflect upon that. What do you recall from that game? You were a little banged up going into that game.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I was sick going into that game. But, yeah, it was a bad game on my part. We didn't play as well as we wanted to.

But that's last year, in the past. We're going to watch the tape from last year, see what they like to do against our offense, and just go from there.

Q. Coach Weis was talking about they're a team where you can't force the ball down field.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: Their defense, the way they play, is to try to let everything happen in front of you and just rally to the ball. They're a great, great team of, you know, being real disciplined, knowing where to be at the right time, just rallying to the ball, making tackles.

Q. You've learned to check down. Is that difficult for you, especially when you have a guy like Golden (Tate) that you can get the ball to? Is it difficult to remain patient?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: Not now. Maybe my freshman year and last year it kind of was, just trying to make plays down the field. But to be honest, there's not going to be a play to be made every single time you have the ball in your hands.

I've noticed that. I think I've got a lot better at that this year.

Q. It was obvious that you really wanted to win that game last Saturday. I'm sure a lot of that has to do with guys you're playing against, guys you know. You got angry a couple times when plays didn't come in. How do you straddle that line between being the ultimate competitor and letting your emotions get away from you?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: You know, it is a fine line. That's something I've worked on ever since I came into Notre Dame, something I worked on in high school as well.

When people are watching you every step you take, you got to know when you can do things, when you can't do things. I got a little frustrated. Maybe I shouldn't have done that. That's just the nature of myself and the nature of being competitive in a game like that.

Q. What are some of the issues you have to deal with when coach said you had a couple check with me's and you couldn't get everything implemented into the short amount of time? What are some of the issues you're dealing with when you have to call a timeout in those situations?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: You know, it's exactly that. When we are check with me's, we're going to go on double cadence, try to see what the defense is doing, and based off what they're doing, get into a better play or keep the play on. Some of the times I couldn't go through that procedure, which made me have to call a timeout.

It's frustrating because you're driving the ball down the field. It's third-and-two, you have a double cadence call, now you got to call timeout after driving the ball 60 yards down the field. Just takes you out of your rhythm a little bit.

Q. Is it because you feel like you're

being taken out of the rhythm?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: Yeah. Everybody, not just myself, but we have a rhythm going. I think it was the first drive of the second half. We have a rhythm going. We go double cadence. The clock is running down. I can't do the whole procedure. I got to call timeout. That pretty much stalls the drive.

It's frustrating. But that's just the way the game is.

Q. Eric, in terms of defensive lines, how good was that one that you just went up against?

ERIC OLSEN: I don't think there's a question that they're one of the better units in the nation. I mean, obviously their athleticism, their size and their strength is unmatched at a lot of other places. I mean, to the guys on the offensive line's credit, we played hard. Obviously they're going to make plays. We made some plays ourselves. To the guys' credit, kind of fought to the end. That's something that might not have been the case in years past. I'm proud of the guys for that.

Q. Did you feel in the run game you were winning the line of scrimmage a majority of the time?

ERIC OLSEN: Yeah. I mean, there were certain times where one of the defensive linemen or a linebacker might have gotten through. I think there were definitely times we were pushing them off the ball. On the first drive, we got a first down right off the bat. That's a big difference, a big turnaround from how it was a year ago.

Again, I think it speaks volumes for how far we've come as an offense and an offensive line specifically, how much Coach Verducci has helped us out. We were able to run the ball at certain times in the game. That's something, against that defense, was great for us.

Q. Is there another defensive line you go against that takes wider splits than they do?

ERIC OLSEN: You know, there might be down the road. Coach Carroll, their defensive coaches, they do a tremendous job over there. They're good players.

Q. Is that more difficult to pass block against because they're creating more space

for themselves when they widen their splits like that?

ERIC OLSEN: Yeah. The front of their defense singles up all the offensive linemen, puts us in one-on-one battles across the board. With the athleticism of their guys, the size and speed of those guys, it gives them an advantage in a lot of cases.

Q. What happened on the offsetting penalties? You came from out of bounds and looked like you thought it was going to be called on them.

ERIC OLSEN: Yeah. I mean, just two guys getting after it to the whistle. I thought we were going to get away with one there, but no big deal.

Q. Can you just talk about how important it is to put Saturday behind you and look forward to this weekend.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I think Saturday is behind us. We practiced yesterday, had a good day. After the game on Saturday, everyone was kind of down. But to be honest, when we came in on Monday, no one was really sulking. Everyone was just getting ready to go. Go out for day one of practice to beat BC. That's what this team's focus is on right now, is just beating BC on Saturday.

ERIC OLSEN: Yeah, as bad as we wanted that win - and trust me, we wanted it bad - the thing about college football is you have to show up every week and play another game, you know. You can't afford as a team, as a player, as a coach, to be in the dumps. No matter how bad a loss is or how close it is or could have, should have, would have, any of that kind of stuff, you have to put that stuff behind you, because if you dwell on the negatives, like I said, the could have, should have, would have, you're just going to get beat the next week.

Especially with our schedule, what our goals as a team and as program are, we can't afford to do that. We have to put a loss behind us and get ready for the next week. Boston College, they've gotten the better of us for the last few years as well. They're a tough team. They're a hard-nosed football team. We're going to have to play a great game to beat those guys. That's what we're looking to do now.

Q. Eric, you touched on the fact they've

won six games in a row in the series. How frustrating is that to see?

ERIC OLSEN: For me personally, I don't know how the other guys feel, but when the streaks are for six years or seven years or whatever, it's kind of tough because I haven't been there for all of the games, but I have been for the last two at least. Obviously I want to win those games.

To go into the depth of a streak, it's a little bit difficult. But obviously I want to be part of the team that breaks that streak. So that just means we want it. That's our goal. That's our goal every week. That's our goal for this week.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I think the same thing. It's tough being on the other end of the stick, you know, losing and having a streak like six games losing to BC. They're a rivalry school, just like SC is. We want to come out and play our best game against them on Saturday.

Q. Just your thoughts on Eric and what he's done as a captain this year.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: Eric's done a great job. Coming into the season, obviously we needed a few leaders for the team. Eric stepped up, coming in after the Bowl game in the off-season, just getting all the guys ready to go in the weight room. Everything from on the field to off the field, just being a great leader for the team, especially for the younger guys, helping bring them along and teaching them.

Q. How much has he made you a better player having him as your center this year?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: He's done a great job. Again, you know, helping all the other guys just bring them together. I think the biggest thing for an offensive line is how close you have to be to be a good unit. I think that's one of the things they've done a great job of in the past years, especially this year, is just doing everything together, just being one unit.

Q. Your thoughts of his pep rally routine last week?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: It was great. I was fired up, ready to go play the game. Luckily we kind of played right after that.

But his enthusiasm is great for this team. We feed off of it.

Q. Eric, was that as pumped up as you could possibly get at a pep rally? Have you shown that type of excitement before?

ERIC OLSEN: I get excited sometimes. Sometimes a little bit too much. Some of the guys have seen it in practice. But I tried to save a little bit at the pep rally. Didn't want to go over the top. I did get a little fired up. It's no secret, Notre Dame football, I'm passionate about, I'm passionate about the coaches, everyone onboard. It was a big game, a big moment. I was just excited to have the opportunity to speak in front of all those people.

Q. What has this season been like for your transitions now that you're at the midway point of the year and how it seems like you've been playing center for a while now? Do you have that type of comfort?

ERIC OLSEN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, every once in a while, we'll mess up a snap in practice and I'll try to blame it on Jimmy now that I consider myself a veteran of playing center. It's been a challenge from day one, but it's been something that I've been excited about from the start.

I think that the position, being in the middle, being the one responsible for the calls, the blocking schemes and assignments is something that has fit my personality. I think I'm a vocal guy. I kind of embrace the challenge. Try to have as much fun as I can with it without thinking of the pressures of the snaps.

Q. Can you talk about having a break from school this week, how much that helps.

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I think it helps a lot, you know, just not having to deal with schoolwork, going to class. Coming off a loss like the SC one on Saturday, you really don't want to go to class. This is something that's really good for this team. We can relax, sleep in, get our rest, come in and get some good work in.

ERIC OLSEN: Like Jimmy said, being at the halfway point of the season, middle of the grind of the college football season, bumps and bruises happen, not having to go to class, not have that responsibility, get our rest, is definitely big for our team.

Q. Does that help you a lot with the turf toe issue, get more treatment this week?

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JIMMY CLAUSEN: Yeah, it does. I can come in and get more treatment in the morning. Usually I get two treatments a day. But I'm getting three a day just because I have more time. I think it helps the whole team overall. A lot of guys have bumps and bruises, like Eric said, at the halfway point. A lot of the guys are using this time to get healthy.

Q. I want to ask both of you guys to talk about this. At the beginning of the season, there was a lot of talk about Coach Weis being on the hot seat. How much has that been in your heads, if at all?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: It hasn't been at all.

ERIC OLSEN: It hasn't been in my head really either. I think that obviously we're 4-2. We want to be 6-0 at this point. We could easily have a worse record than we do with some of the close games.

I think it's clear as day for everyone to see we're competitive in every game we're in and we're fighting to the end. I don't think it's a matter of putting Coach Weis on the hot seat, because he's put us in a position we could win every game we've been in this season. Doesn't matter who it's against, even some of the best teams in the country. I think it speaks volumes for how far he's taken us as a team. He can only do so much and the assistant coaches can only do so much in the meeting rooms and on the sidelines. It's up to us on the field.

We've had opportunities to win every game. Obviously we haven't done so. But I think that the team has really shown that we have the fight that we might not have had in years past.

Q. Jimmy, it's good to see Robby Parris upright and walking around. You've called on him, gone to him in some clutch situations. What has he done to earn your trust?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: He's just a great receiver to have in the arsenal because in crucial situations he's going to come up with the catch and make the big play. He might not be the fastest guy, the biggest guy on the field, but he's a great possession receiver. I really have faith in him that if I throw the ball to him, he's going to either go get it or the defender is not going to get it. I think that's why he's done a great job.

Another thing about Robby is the way he runs routes, he runs them so precise, at the depth

that they're supposed to be done. He's real accountable.

Q. I would assume a lot of the precision in the routes comes with his experience. What does that mean to the team, him having been there and done all that before?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: He has been there and done that. He played as a true freshman when Brady was here. He's been around for a while and knows what to do in different situations. Like I said, he's always accountable. He's always at the right spot at the right time.

Q. Eric, obviously you've played with Sam Young now for quite a few years. How has he changed during his career or developed?

ERIC OLSEN: You know, he was kind of thrown into the fire as a freshman with a real veteran group, veteran quarterback, veteran offense really. I think he kind of ran with that opportunity, which, to his credit, is a great thing. He really took hold of that opportunity. I think he's done a tremendous job of, you know, kind of staying grounded.

I guess being a freshman, starting from day one, can kind of give you a little sense of who you are. But Sam is not that guy at all. He's a great friend. He's a great leader on the team. He's a great line mate. He's kind of grown into a mature guy. He's had all the scars from the years past, had the success from freshman year, been through all the troubles in the years after that. This year he's really showing, kind of like Robby Parris, he's been there, done that, taken the full opportunity of being a four-year starter and being a leader on this team to help the guys around him and help himself.

Q. Have you been in that vehicle of his?

ERIC OLSEN: The Lincoln? The boat? Yeah, I've been in it (laughter).

Q. You talked about kind of processing the USC loss, getting it out of the way. Last year you had the loss to Pitt. Losing to Syracuse, hard to get back for USC. When you look at this team, why do you think you are able to process a loss and kind of forget about it maybe better than last year? How does that

show itself in practice and meetings and the film room?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I think we're better handling that situation because we've been there before. We went through the Pitt thing that we did last year going into BC, then Syracuse going into SC, like you said. Just going through that, experiencing that, is going to help us that much more. Because all the guys that were there last year are here pretty much now. We've been there, done that.

Yesterday's practice was really up-tempo. Everyone was having fun. In years past, after a loss, everyone's down until probably Wednesday, Thursday of the next week. You know, I didn't see that at all yesterday.

Q. Eric, is that where you see the biggest difference, is this practice, or does it show itself other places as well?

ERIC OLSEN: I think it's two things. I think it's the maturity of this team. Last year we went into overtime and ended up losing to Pitt. This year we went into overtime and were able to win the game. I think the experiences we've had, the maturity of this team growing up a little over the last few years, I think that kind of helps us get over a loss, especially a heart-breaker like this one.

Like I said before, I don't think we really have a choice but to get over it, you know. I mean, Boston College is another rival, just like USC. They're a hard-nosed team. They're going to play to come out and punch us in the mouth the first snap. We can't have a hangover from this loss at all. I think to steal something from Coach Weis here, the best way for a player or a coach to get, you know, over a loss and to get rid of that feeling is to get back on the practice field. You get focused on next week's opponent, get right back to work.

I think the guys on the team, led by the captains and the leadership, did a great job yesterday of not having that hangover from Saturday, for lack of a better term, hangover. I don't want this to be like some bad thing. But I think the guys really came out and got to work. It wasn't just, you know, trying to survive practice and get through practice either, get the work done. It was guys having fun. You could hear the same guys that are always running their mouth at practice, chirping, chirping. It was good to hear guys getting back into the swing of things.

The season is not over. We obviously want to be undefeated. But our goals are still attainable. We have six games left plus a Bowl game in everything works out. We have a lot of room to improve. We're just trying to have fun with it.

Q. How important is it for you to come out emphatically the first half this week?

JIMMY CLAUSEN: I think it was big for us to come out on that first drive, going down and scoring, not putting three points on the board, we have to put seven points on the board. To be honest, that's what this offense's goal is every single time we touch the ball, we want to score. The only people that have stopped us so far this year is pretty much ourselves, whether it was mental errors or penalties, missed assignments, bad throw, dropped ball, whatever it was. It's pretty much ourselves stopping ourselves. That's our goal, is to score every single time we get the ball.

Q. How important is it to come out in the first half and be more dominant against an opponent?

ERIC OLSEN: It's really important for us. Like Jimmy said, we want to score every time we have the ball. At the same time we want to put ourselves in a position that we don't have to be worrying about a last-minute drive or scoring in the last second, the last play of the game. I think as an offense, we're capable of getting ourselves out of that situation earlier in the game and it's something that we've definitely talked about, it's something that's definitely on our minds. It's something that we're definitely working on in practice and working on every week.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone.

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