

Cheez-It Bowl: Oklahoma vs Florida State

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Florida State Seminoles

Coach Mike Norvell

Jordan Travis

Jared Verse

Press Conference

Florida State 35, Oklahoma 32

COACH NORVELL: I mean, just to kick it off, so proud of our team. I mean, all that they have had to work through, all that they have been through, not only throughout the course of this season, but for every young man that has been a part of the journey. The ones that have chosen to come be a part of this family. The ones that have kind of been through it all.

It was really special to be able to finish this year with our tenth win. Even in the way that it had to happen tonight, guys that went down, it was a back-and-forth game. There were some good moments and really tough and challenging situations, but their heart, it is what showed up. They continued to fight, continued to believe. You did everything necessary to be able to finish the game and securing that tenth win.

I told the team in that locker room. This team will not be remembered just because of a number, all right. It is going to be remembered by the way that they played, by the passion, by the character, by just the love that they have for each other. It meant a lot for this team, and it meant a lot for our program.

Just so proud of every young man that's in that locker room. For our staff, the work that they have put in, just in all ways. We have a tremendous administration that there has been a lot of investment in helping us build this program and to getting it back to where ultimately we all know that it needs to be.

Being able to support the players with those resources and their development and just the way that they have worked in all ways. It is just truly special. I think tonight capped it



off and you see the joy, you see the excitement, for what they have done and all the work they have put in. Just proud of our guys.

Q. At the half, what did you tell the team? What was the message? And what did you think about how they came out and approached the second half?

COACH NORVELL: I told them to keep playing, continue to believe. Trust your eyes. Trust what you see. Go out there and execute with fundamentals and trust your training. Just because things don't go the way that you want them to early, doesn't mean that you always have to scrap a plan or you don't always have to make these huge adjustments. You just have to continue to believe in what you are doing.

I thought our players went out there and executed at a very high level. We were able to get critical stops, creating a takeaway when we needed it.

Offensively -- the drive -- I think it was a 15-play drive, 94, 95 yards, that was special. That was a statement drive for how you respond. You have to give credit to OU. They played hard. They brought a lot of different pressures. They were able to attack in a variety of ways. We knew that was an explosive offense especially with their skill positions at wide receiver. The young back, he is good. I know he is good.

Yeah, the quarterback did a great job in what they were doing, but ultimately our guys just continued to fight. When we had to take the field one more time our defense ended it the way it needed to be ended.

Just proud of this team. I want to give a shout out to Ryan as well. Ryan went through some challenges throughout the course of this year. And whether it was confidence, whether it was things that he had to build back, he just continued to work day-in and day-out. To be put on the stage in the moment, need to make a field goal to put us up to go win the game, he answered the call. Very proud of him as well.

Q. This question is for Jared and Jordan. What was

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the conversation in the locker room at halftime to kind of rally the guys together and break things open in the second half?

JORDAN TRAVIS: Honestly, it was no different than usual. We know who we are. We know our identity as a team. We work really hard, and we work hard for situations like that in the off-season. We are made for times like that.

The guys stepped up. Defense came up big. Shout-out to the offensive line, Johnny Wilson, Pokey, the running backs running hard. We couldn't do without all of our guys.

Special teams is big, too. I feel like that gets overlooked, our special teams unit is really special. It was a big-time win for this football team.

JARED VERSE: It was definitely something like that. We were in the locker room, I just came in smiling. I looked at the defense, and they looked at me smiling back. We were like, yeah, it is over with, like we know what we have to do. Offense is going to put points on the board. Special teams is going to handle what they have to handle. Everything is going to be fine and we just have to stop them. I looked at the linebackers, corners, safeties, just smiling. I am like, yeah, it is over with.

Q. I'm not sure how many starters went down with injuries during the game, but it seemed like a lot. And when Jazston went down at the end and the whole team came out to him, what was that moment like?

COACH NORVELL: Jaz is a young man that has been with our team for a year and came in in the summer. But he's a part of our family forever now. When you see -- these guys know. They know the work and they know the investment. It's one thing it to talk about investment when it comes to a football team, and everybody thinks about lifting weights, practice and all the things that go on, on the field.

When its investment in who they are off the field, getting to know a teammate, building a relationship. When you see a guy that goes down, it hurts. I want to try to go out and see every one of them, because this is a game that unfortunately happens.

Jaz played his last game as a Florida State Seminole, but he will forever be a Nole. To see our team embrace him, celebrate after the game with him, he is sitting there on crutches, and celebrating with him. I love the young man and I am grateful that I got an opportunity to coach him. I think you saw the impact that he had on this team just in the way that they embraced a very tough situation.

Q. Jordan, how does it feel to represent Palm Beach County in this Cheez-It Bowl and be MVP?

JORDAN TRAVIS: It is a blessing. Growing up in Palm Beach, it was so awesome. I was blessed. My family took care of me all the time. I didn't have to go through a lot with my brother always looking down on me and protecting me, my family, my parents, my sister. I am so blessed to represent Palm Beach.

We're not done yet. This is just the beginning. We have another chapter. This is the end of the chapter of this year, but we still have a lot, a lot to do. I have a lot of plans for next year and a lot of goals, and I can't wait.

COACH NORVELL: A lot of work.

JORDAN TRAVIS: A lot of work, too, 100 percent.

Q. We've seen the ups and downs with Johnny, but for him to have the game he did when the offense needed him tonight, what can you say about his performance?

COACH NORVELL: It was great. I think you see his growth. I think back to the last regular season game, he had some challenging moments in that game, but even on the last drive, he had a huge third down reception and showed that response. Tonight, to come out and play at such a high level -- it wasn't perfect, but it was -- he made some plays that were spectacular.

One of the third downs, he used every bit of that 6-7 body to go make an incredible catch, and then that long pass there on the final drive, Jordan put it in a remarkable place, hand-fighting down the field and to be able to snag it was special.

He is a special player. You need those players to rise up in those moments, and you see his growth as the seasons progressed, and just excited for what the future holds for him and for this football team.

Q. We've seen this program go from 3 to 35 to now double-digits wins for the first time since 2016. Where would you say the state of the program is in playing for a National Championship?

COACH NORVELL: We're getting better, and our objective is every day we go out on that field or in the classroom or whatever we are doing, and we want improvement.

I will put no limits to what we can accomplish as a team. I was disappointed in some of the setbacks that we faced earlier in the season, but these guys never stopped working and never stopped believing. This is a special



place. This is a remarkable program to be a part of, and it is not just the things of even the history and the past. It is the people.

When you get them around, the past players that have come around you and see their support, you see their excitement, you see their joy, we represent them. That fan base that was out, that was special tonight. We played in a couple different places, going to New Orleans to kick off the season in a classic game, and the Nole family showed up. Tonight in a Bowl game, once again, the Nole family showed up. This is a remarkable program to be a part of.

I get to coach guys like this, and I know that when I watch them work and what they poured into it, they are challenging themselves to be the best they can be.

For where we are going, I can promise you, there are great days ahead in Tallahassee. The future is very bright for this program, but it is because of the people that we have. It is because of that constant push to get better and guys are just willing to fight the fight.

Q. You kind of talked about it. I'm just wondering, do you allow yourself to savor what just happened tonight and what happened throughout this season after the struggles you went through the first two years? But then Jordan mentions there's much more work to be done. How much do you savor this?

COACH NORVELL: Absolutely. Every experience is critical for our journey, the highs, the lows, the good and the bad. I am proud of this team. I am so very proud of them. We get to sit back and see what they have been able to accomplish when people didn't believe that they could, but I knew because I am with them every day. I watch them work. I watch how much they care.

This is a team that they truly are a family, and just like with family, there are days that you squabble together. There are days that -- the accountability part of it. It is hard, and there is a lot of other programs that you can go to that would probably be a lot easier.

But it is what makes moments like this worth savoring, because it is not just about the results of a game. Yes, we could look up at a scoreboard and be really excited, but you know what it took to get there. I have to watch these guys whenever maybe people doubted them or when maybe things weren't going exactly like they had hoped. I know what we had to come through as a program. It was hard.

But we know what is ahead, and it is going to be work. Like Jordan says it, there are no limits to what we can

accomplish because I know how these guys are going to work and I know how we're going to push them to make sure that we get to where ultimately I know where we can go.

Q. When you were talking about Jared about coming to Florida State and continuing his career, how special of a season has it been for him and to see him covered in glitter? How does it feel? And Jared, how does it feel, the journey you've taken to get to this point?

COACH NORVELL: You want to go first or you want me?

JARED VERSE: I'll go. It meant a lot to finally go out there, end the season the way we wanted it to. At the beginning of the season, we had a couple hard losses where we could have done this or that to be a little bit better.

Just the one thing, I am grateful for Coach Norvell. He has not lied to me once. Like I said, multiple times, he sat down with me and he told me he would give me his best. He has not stopped since then. Like all today, and the first day since I got here, he has given me his best. I have tried my hardest to give him the same in return. This is the best decision I have made in my life.

COACH NORVELL: When you get to coach a young man like this, you don't have to search for his passion. It shows up. I remember in the recruiting process, it was a fast recruiting process, but from the first time that I talked to him on the phone, till the official visit when I was there in person, I just knew that this was the right fit for Florida State, because he wants to be great in everything that he does.

Yes, it is fun watching No. 5 go out there and sack the quarterback. I watch how he competes in the classroom, too. I watch how he competes in the weight room. I watch how he pours in and challenges teammates and pushes guys to be better than what maybe even they think they can be at times.

When he made the decision to come to Florida State, I remember on that phone call, and I am not too proud to say, I was emotional in that moment because, it was real. There was no bullcrap about it. It was about somebody that really went through the process and just said, look, I need to find the best fit where I can grow and grow in every way.

You know, I think you see some of the things he is capable of. I am telling you, he is just scratching the surface for where he can go. This young man has a special future in front of him, because the good Lord blessed him with great ability, but he has an unbelievable mind and unbelievable heart. It is going to be fun to watch him continue to grow to



what I know that potential is.

Q. You obviously had a decision to make if you even wanted to play in this game. How gratifying was it for you to play the way you did and have the sack that sealed it?

JARED VERSE: It was very gratifying. The whole game they did a good job containing me. That right tackle, he was very good. He clamped me up a couple times where I was like, all right. You know me, I love to talk. He was talking to me, I'm like, 'Yeah, okay, I'm going to get you.'

That last play, I remember vividly, he said to me, 'You're not going to do nothin' in the league. You're not going to make it to the league.'

I looked at him, I said, 'Watch this next play,' and we the got sack. I think it was D-Low right there with me. We looked at the clock, 3 seconds left, time running out, I started laughing at him. Quarterback tried to hike the ball, everything, and I am like, It is over. We hear the buzz, and everybody starts to scream.

It was a great feeling.

COACH NORVELL: That is impressive detail (Laughter). I hope you enjoyed that. That was awesome. I did. (Laughter.)

Q. Pokey Wilson is a guy that's been in this program for many, many years, and with all the transfer talent that came in this year, there was obviously some more competition. Can you talk about the development and work ethic of Pokey because he ended up having, I'm pretty sure statistically, his best season here at Florida State.

COACH NORVELL: He is a wonderful player. Somebody that is very versatile in his skill set. He had as made so many big plays for us this year. You trust the process of growth. Competition, you are either going to rise to it or you will let it pass you by.

Pokey, just his work ethic, the amount. He is not the biggest guy in the world, but when you look at how consistent he is of being at practice, of working to get better. He will do. He will give everything that his body has to go out there and compete, and he is a great competitor. I think you saw with a lot of really talented players that have come around him, he still defined his role because of that work ethic.

There are a lot of guys that have been here since the beginning of this staff's arrival, and guys like Pokey, you sit

there, Robert Cooper, that's my heart right there. Just being able to hug him after the game and knowing all that he is done, there are just so many stories like that with players that have come in and guys that we recruited that are very talented. They have continued to push and they have continued to improve, and I am excited about where their future is going to take them.

Q. How nice was it to see Ryan Fitzgerald get out there and get that kick to win the game after everything he's been through season?

COACH NORVELL: Like I mentioned earlier, it was a special moment. You talk about response, you talk about growth, you talk about continuing to try to be the best that you can be. It doesn't mean it is always going to go your way on the journey, but sometimes challenges are necessary.

You have to know what you can go through to be able to prove what you can get through, and Ryan has done that. That was a big moment for him. That is one that it was the difference in the game. Just proud of him, proud of this team, and grateful for the opportunity that I have to be able to work side-by-side with him each day.

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based on what you guys were able to do this year?

TRESHAUN WARD: Use this year as an example, with where we started from January from last year, it all built up to what we had this year. It's only going to get better from this point on. And we're just going to work even harder so we can get to that National Championship.

JOHNNY WILSON: We just getting started. That's it.

Q. We've talked about this a little this year, for the last point to come from Ryan Fitzgerald, how satisfying was that to see someone who has been through a lot this year and to come through and get the win, how big was that?

TRESHAUN WARD: It was very exciting for him to get that. With this first part of the season, how it was going, he got a lot of -- (indiscernible) what he was doing and all that. I came to him the first time he made the first field goal and I told him we going to get it back. When the game come to the end and whatnot, it came to him and he made it and we came out victorious. We couldn't have done it without him.

Q. Jammie, can you talk about your performance tonight, a couple tackles, sacks. Seems like you were determined to make a statement tonight. Do you feel like you did that?

JAMMIE ROBINSON: I always felt like Coach put me in the best position and I just trust in him. I just be committed to whatever they tell me to do, you know what I'm saying. I'm a team player and I just try to be here for my teammates and try to give it my all and give 110 percent every time I step on the field.

That's how I feel about my performance. I just do whatever Coach call. I run a play -- whatever play Coach calls, I'm running it, you feel me. That's how I am. I'm a team guy honestly.

Q. What did a game like that mean and a season like this as a whole mean, where you are now, as compared to a year ago?

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Q. Treshaun, after the year you've gone through and everything this program has been through, how sweet is this for you personally?

TRESHAUN WARD: You know, when Norvell first got here, we been through the tough time. Seeing this team being happy for the first time, getting like our ten wins and stuff like that, it's amazing. It just brings us together and the confidence we got now, it's just -- it's great to see that we're being successful right now.

Q. Johnny, on that last pass that you caught, can you walk us through it? Did you know the ball was probably coming to you, the throw that Jordan made, and Norvell called it hand fighting, like it was a physical catch that you made. Walk us through the play.

JOHNNY WILSON: We ran the play earlier in the game and it was open and he asked me, "Is it open?"

"Yes, it's open."

We ran it again, and it wasn't as open as it was last time, but he threw anyways. I expect him to throw it to me every time, you have to, everyone does. The ball is in the air, and I just had to make the play. I knew the situation. And yeah, I tried to stiff arm him and I tried to score; I caught it. That's all that mattered.

Q. Jordan talked about the next chapter next year, kind of coming back, working hard or trying to continue the progress that you guys have made, how do you see this program evolving in the next year

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JOHNNY WILSON: Honestly, I feel like it was about time, like all the work was going to pay off at some point, all these guys, we all work so hard. We know what we put into this, and it's like you expect it. It's almost like you expect it to happen. You know, you work so hard, you do it so much. You don't expect nothing but the best of yourself. And that's just what we try to do every day is just be the best version of ourselves.

Just doing what I did tonight, it was just all for the team. I just knew I had to make the play when it came to me, and yeah, that was that.

Q. Jammie, obviously to make the decision to come and play -- play in this Bowl game, and the performance you had tonight, does it justify your decision and what does it mean to you?

JAMMIE ROBINSON: I'm just trying to take a couple days off. See my New Year's; I'm going to have a New Year's present for everybody.

You know, I appreciate Florida State for everything, even if I leave or if I don't leave; I don't know yet, you feel me. I just take a couple days off. Clear my mind, you know what I'm saying, and talk with my brothers and talk with my parents and my family, you know what I'm saying, and just see what's best, what's the best decision for me.

Q. Coach Venables said that they made a couple mistakes in coverage and a safety on you on a big play, and gave you a lot of man coverage. When teams do that to you, do you feel like challenged a little bit, and did you feel that tonight?

JOHNNY WILSON: I don't know, it's like if you put your corners in man against me, I just feel like your coach doesn't really respect you, that's all, so yeah.

JAMMIE ROBINSON: It don't add up. It don't add up.

Q. I have a question for each of you. Treshaun, Coach was asked about how do you keep six scholarship running backs happy; and he's like, man, we're on fries. All we care about is what we do, focus on your job. How hard was it to focus on your job maybe when you weren't getting the ball as much as you wanted, and how fulfilling is to perform on a stage like this to help your team out for a huge win?

TRESHAUN WARD: I feel like especially with my injury, being out there and seeing all the boys going crazy when they was out there and having an opportunity, I was playing through them.

So I always stress that there is no selfishness in our room, and we want to go to the next room. All each other want to get to the next level. So there's no reason for you to be selfish.

Coach Norvell, he has a lot of guys that he was at Memphis with that he had some guys that stacked the room and they made it to the League. Just got to trust the process and just be there for each other.

Q. What did it feel like to see a guy like Duke who has had an up and down season deliver maybe the biggest play of the game to turn the ball over?

JAMMIE ROBINSON: Honestly, I feel like Duke, like you said, he faced a whole lot of adversity. And I feel like our whole room kind of be facing a whole lot of adversity, you know what I'm saying. Like a lot of injuries be happening.

But guys always step up, and I feel like we got a great group, you know what I'm saying. Like last year, everybody was on us about the DBs being, like, iffy or whatever you call it.

But this year, we all -- we put the critics, you know what I'm saying, if their place, you know what I'm saying. Like I love Duke like he my real brother, you feel me. He can call me and I can call on him about anything, and he definitely stood up and he delivered, you know what I'm saying.

Because earlier, it's so crazy because we was on the sideline, we was under coverage and he probably might have made a mistake or whatever, you know what I'm saying. He was down about it but everybody turned around, "Bro keep your head up, keep your head up." You seen it later in the game, he made a play. And then you know how it be, everybody around him, celebrating with him.

We already knew what type of guy he was. Even last year when he was a freshman, he came in and played against Miami, probably had one of the best games against Miami. Caught an interception, you feel me. You know, I knew about my boys, you feel me. I love them boys, you know what I'm saying. I appreciate what he did tonight for sure.

Q. Johnny, you did a real good job tuning out the noise and focusing on this game. Did you envision a night of this stature?

JOHNNY WILSON: Every game, I just want to do my job. It's never like I'm fishing for stats. I wanted to win. That was it. I just wanted to get that tenth win with these boys. I'm just so happy that we finally accomplished that. It was a long, tough season. A lot of hard work we put into this



season, and just to get that tenth win, that was it.

I was not trying to do anything past what I'm supposed to do. I just had to do my job tonight when the opportunity came. That's that.

Q. That moment with Jaz at the end of the game when he got hurt, the way the team responded, the culture of this program, what's it like to see that? Treshaun, you've been here for most of the transformation, and Jammie, you've seen it. What was that moment like in encapsulating what that team is as a brotherhood?

JAMMIE ROBINSON: You just said it, brotherhood. That's all it is, you know what I'm saying. For me, I could say this is my best college year. Even though we won ten games, that's the main reason but I feel like we brothers and all.

Like Coach said earlier, like, it ain't how it used to be. Like prior, you'll see guys in the locker room and hallway where y'all walking by each other, you probably not even going to say what's up to them, you feel me; it used to be like that.

But now, everybody is speaking to everybody, you know what I'm saying. And it shows, like, the whole sideline got up on the field, you feel me, when he got carted up. It just shows that we got a brotherhood. Definitely I'm going to remember this season for the rest of my life, for sure.

Q. Treshaun, the offense has had so much success this season, but you only had like 11 points at halftime. What did you guys talk about at halftime, and what do you think was the difference in the second half?

TRESHAUN WARD: We knew that we came out a little bit flat the first half and when we got to the second half, we made a few adjustments and whatnot to what they were doing. They gave us multiple looks that we didn't see. We adjusted to it and we trusted each other and we just kept climbing. We had every confidence with each other and we was speaking to each other and came out there and got the win.

With Jaz, I felt like the game was already won once everybody started to rally up and that showed true brotherhood. We had to do it for him and all the boys that was hurting tonight.

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