



POSTGAME QUOTES

K-State 44, UCF 31 | Sept. 23, 2023

CHRIS KLIEMAN, KANSAS STATE HEAD COACH

Opening statement...

"A difficult loss last week and we talked on Monday in here as a team that we couldn't let Missouri beat us twice. Our kids rose up and our captains, our leaders rose up, and we played an excellent football team. UCF is really talented. They've been 3-0 and played good football. We knew this was going to be the type of game it was. Back and forth with an explosive offense. Two things we had to do, we had to be able to rush the football, we absolutely had to be able to rush the football to try to keep their play count down. And then the second thing we had to do is we had to get some negative plays, some tackles for losses, some things where we could get them off the sticks a little bit. For us to hold those guys to 59 plays in 25 minutes and we have 82 plays in 34 plus minutes, that was the recipe. The easy name is DJ Giddens. We challenged DJ. We said we were gonna give you the football. You needed to step up, you have all the ability in the world. We've got to believe in you and we're gonna keep giving it to you and keep giving it to you. And then we didn't know if Will [Howard] would play and he was not 100%. But in the second half, I told him you have to run the football for us to secure this win. You absolutely have to,' because they were starting to key in on things and they weren't rushing him late. They just started batting balls down. Great job by them. Will had to become a runner and I challenged him a couple of times on the sideline and he responded. We're 1-0 on league play going into an open weekend, we couldn't be more thrilled. We're by no means a finished product. We've got to get a lot better as a football team. We're still growing and learning as a team but excited to come back home in front of a great sellout crowd. Our crowd was phenomenal tonight. They stayed and they were into it. They were a big factor in a number of delays of game they [UCF] had in the fourth quarter."

On DJ Giddens...

"Just how hard he ran and he wasn't coming down with first contact. He [Giddens] made people miss in the open field. He ran through arm tackles. He caught the ball out of the backfield. They [UCF] were doing some things that the running back had to be able to make plays. They did some things outside with our wideouts who are really good. So we had set him up with matchups in the pass game too."

On Will Howard's decision to play...

"He practiced a fair amount last week. I don't know if he progressed as well as we would have hoped from Wednesday to Thursday. We thankfully had a night game. I'm never a fan of night games and luckily we had the night game so we could get another 12 hours of recovery and rehab for the kid. We were going to play him and he wanted to play. I didn't think he could run the ball, watching him warm up. I knew he could throw the heck out of it. And then in the fourth quarter, he had run the ball."

On linebacker play...

"It's a work in progress when you don't have your leader [Daniel Green] out there. A couple of things, Desmond Purnell was a dude today. Desmond Purnell was phenomenal. He [Purnell] got one of our players of the game. He was all over the place. He had the big strip. He's incredibly hard to block, he's getting more and more comfortable. I think he's playing at an all-conference level. Austin Moore is always going to be really good. We got Austin Romaine out there. We did not expect Jake Clifton to play and he probably gave us 25-30 snaps so that was really good. Tobi [Osunsanmi] gave us some snaps late so it stinks to lose your leader [Daniel Green] out there but we had all week to prepare not to have Deuce [Green] out there. So I thought we did a nice job."





WILL HOWARD, SENIOR QUARTERBACK

On the win...

"It's huge. I feel like things didn't always go perfect for us and we face a little bit of adversity. They did some good things on the offensive side of the ball, and I think we played complimentary football when we needed to, and capitalized on some of the things that defense did and vice versa. It was a huge win. Any game in this conference is tough and especially a team like that, that's new to the conference, wanting to come in and make a stamp. That is a tough team and they did some really good things, so that was a big win."

On any doubt he was playing tonight...

"Oh, no, I was playing all week for sure."

On recovery progression throughout the week...

"It was tough. I'm not gonna lie. There was a lot of extra time spent in the training room. I got to give a shout out to those trainers. They did a heck of a job getting me to where I was today. I appreciate them, more than they know. They did a lot of really good things for me, and a lot of it was just pushing it early in the week to see how it felt. I felt comfortable enough to keep pushing it throughout the week and I had good days and bad days, but at the end of the day I felt good enough to go today. I knew we could do enough to get it going, and once the adrenaline got going, man I was fine."

DJ GIDDENS, SOPHOMORE RUNNING BACK

On how his cupcake is tasting after his performance today...

"Nan, the cupcake is tasting good, I can't lie to you. I don't usually eat sweets, but try something new."

On how he would describe his game today in fishing terms...

"In fishing terms, like say going out there and catching a 20 pound catfish, and cool at night and enjoying the weather."

On how he would describe his game today...

"I gotta shout out the O-line for real, and Will [Howard] for trusting me, throwing the ball and the O-line making holes, that's really what it was. Trying to make one or two people miss and that's really what it was."

COOPER BEEBE, SENIOR OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

On how big this win was...

"It was just huge, especially for the o-line. Coach Kleiman and Coach Klein challenged us this week and we stepped up to the plate, you know we could do whatever we wanted on offense. It's just, it's a great feeling. And you know, we needed to get back on track with the line. So it was a great, great win."

On if this is the best they have performed in a while...

"Absolutely, you know, we just had to find our identity again, and I think we did that tonight. So you know, we're looking to continue the success for the next two weeks forward."

On if he got into a rhythm after starting at guard and then moving to tackle...

"Yeah, absolutely. You know, I felt more comfortable. It gets tough when you switch positions all the time, but I could feel like I really can lock in and do what I do best."

BEN SINNOTT, JUNIOR TIGHT END

On how the offense played tonight...

"I think it just was a thing where we had to kind of build some stuff out, see what kind of defenses they wanted to run against us. So we had to make some adjustments and I think the communication between the coaches and offense was really good."





On how nice it was to be able to run the ball with authority...

"It was awesome, and I mean just getting over that hum and seeing DJ [Giddens] go to work, and seeing our o-line moving dudes off the ball. So it was awesome and I mean I knew all along we could do it, so it was nice to prove it to everyone else."

On trying to get excitement out of DJ...

"It's the hardest thing you can do. He got one of the hammers after and everyone was yelling, 'speech, speech,' but you know, you can't really can't get anything out of him, so it's funny."

AUSTIN ROMAIN, FRESHMAN LINEBACKER

On his emotions getting his first start...

"A little bit nervous, you know, it was crazy having my first start in a power five game. All my teammates had a lot of encouragement for me, so once I went out there and got that first play, it wasn't too bad."

On a clean game from an individual standpoint...

"I feel like we are going to have to go back and look at the film on some of them, but the main thing was playing hard on some of my hits and things like that. Overall, I felt like I did [have a clean game]."

On adjustments made during the night...

"Some calls here and there. I got a lot of help from Austin Moore, he made a lot of the adjustments for me and I echoed a lot. When he was outside the box, I had to make those calls too."

KHALID DUKE, SENIOR DEFENSIVE END

On pressuring UCF quarterback Timmy McClain...

"He was the backup, so we knew he wasn't going to be efficient as a starter. We just stayed in his face and kept the pressure so we could get him flustered."

On building up pressure on Timmy McClain...

"I think by fourth quarter it had mainly passed, a lot more than it was for him to keep his eyes on the field."

On holding UCF to 143 yards rushing...

"We kind of had a hard time drawing stuff like that early. [Joe] Klanderman told us, every time you see them in passing, just try to go inside to shake up a lot of stuff like that."

DESMOND PURNELL, SOPHOMORE LINEBACKER

On playing with emotion this game...

"Tonight was just all around fun for the entire defense. We actually showed what the model was like. I still believe that we still have a lot to improve on, but it's a good start."

On being loose tonight...

"I just trust them. Everybody around me makes sure we all trust each other. So just get out there and make plays."

On the defense stepping up tonight...

"I knew that we all had to amplify our current status in order for us to be where we need to be. Deuce [Daniel Green] will always be there for us that season. We know that from this week we just had to improve a lot, and then I believe that Austin Romaine did a great job stepping up."





GUS MALZAHN, UCF HEAD COACH

Opening Statement...

"First of all, congratulations to Kansas State. We knew they had a really good team, defending champs and all that. Really felt like we were right in the middle of the game until, I guess middle third quarter. There was a sequence I think we had a fourth into thought about going forward. We chose to pin them and then they went 85 and scored a touchdown. And that kind of changed the momentum of the game and, you just look at it. I mean, they rushed for 281 yards and we rushed for 143 and that was probably the biggest thing that stands out to me. They were nine at 15 on third downs, I think they only punted once. Really disappointing the penalties too in that drive, that 85 yard drive we had him we were getting off the field, I guess it was third and six, we had a late hit or something and then we had hands the to the face 30 yards worth of penalties. So, bottom line, is that this shows us where we're at. We've got to play really good. We got to play disciplined. We didn't do the things that it takes to get a quality win against a really good opponent on their home field. We got to go back, we got to clean the things up. I still think we got a really good football team. We just got to do things better, our quarterback this was his first rodeo in this kind of environment. There's a couple things that he liked to have back that I think that he will improve on, but he did make some plays in the passing game. We needed some of the big plays and he made some of those but like I said overall, we just didn't do what it takes to to win against a quality opponent on the road."

On the feeling at halftime...

"We felt pretty good. And then you know, went down. I guess we scored coming out of halftime or whatever to take the lead and so we felt like we had some momentum. But give them credit, they lined up, we had trouble stopping them. In the second half, I think they scored on every one of their possessions, so it was tough, and then we had a three and out, we got down there on the 30 yard line, on first and 10 had a double move, called they bailed out and then we scrambled around and took off, took a sack, and next time we just gotta throw it away."

On frustration on the penalties...

"I mean, that's coaching. That's my responsibility. We had 10 penalties. Obviously, I've got to do a better job and we will, there's quite a few things that we will correct. And we'll start on it when we get back."

JASON JOHNSON, SENIOR LINEBACKER

On what made playing K-State so difficult...

"They just came up with some different moves that we haven't seen them doing so they did a good job."

On how he thinks the team measures up to the rest of the Big XII...

"We good, we just had a lot of self inflicted wounds. So we're going to correct that, we will get better."

On the K-State atmosphere...

"They really do have a home crowd, so you know they can bring it."

LOKAHI PAUOLE, SENIOR OFFENSIVE LINE

On what the message in the locker room after the game was...

"As leaders, we just got in front of the team and we just had to just let people know like, this is the first game of the conference. We just arrived, we just showed up, so there is nothing that's gonna make us flinch. We played hard, played till the end of the game so that's all I can ask for from my teammates."

On losing their first Big 12 game...

"Losing is never good. No matter that this is the first game in the Big 12. Returning champs doesn't matter. Now we know the only thing that can stop us is us. On offense, we did good things and bad things and the same goes for defense. So as a team, we got to tighten some things up and we'll be back at work."





On crowd noise...

"Self inflicted wounds impacted us the most. We just got to tighten up our ends and we will be alright. Great atmosphere, great team. Kansas State played their butts off."



Athletics Communications | West Stadium Center | 1800 College Avenue | Manhattan, KS 66506 | [785] 532-6735

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