



MEMPHIS POSTGAME QUOTES

Temple at Memphis – Oct. 6, 2016 – Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium – Memphis, Tenn.

Memphis Head Coach Mike Norvell

Opening statement:

1-0. That was an unbelievable game. You have to give hats off to Temple. They came in and played extremely tough. Offensively we really had a couple of setbacks and weren't clicking the way that we would have like to get started. I'll tell you, our defense battled. I'm so proud of our football team and the guys in that locker room right now for the work they put in. We talk all the time. It matters how you start. It's all about how you finish. The second half, our guys came out and played at an exceptionally high level. I'm so proud of them. A lot of great individual performances, but collectively as a football team, that's what it's supposed to be like.

Biggest play?

The kick-off return. They (Temple) had just scored and built a bit of momentum. We've been talking since I have been here that we wanted that. That's something that our guys believe in. Coach Lorig has done a tremendous job. He told them at the beginning of the week that this was going to be the one. You talk about how a guy responds. Tony made a mistake earlier and boy did he make up for it in a big way. He busted that thing through; it was just a huge point in the game. I'm really proud of him.

Talk about the defense...

I thought those guys played exceptional. They were put in some really tough situations and they responded. I know down in the red zone and holding Temple to a couple of field goals really allowed for us stay in the game. They guys created a couple of takeaways. You look at a defense that plays 38 minutes in a game and that's difficult. But those guys never gave up and they kept battling. We always talk about focusing on that next play and boy, Chancey Lanier. What an incredible play by just an unbelievable young man. I'm so proud of him.

What was Temple doing to slow you down in the first half?

They're a good defense. They have a good defensive front and they were able to get some penetration. We weren't able to run the ball as much, weren't able to get into a rhythm. In the first half we weren't moving the chains. The series before the half was actually a big play for us because we got a little movement; we were able to extend the drive. We were able to get a little bit of momentum going. I'll tell you, they are a good defense. They have done that and will do that to a lot of different teams. We've got to clean up our mistakes and do a better job of our execution.

You stuck with the run, when did you decide you were going to stick with it?

We knew we had to. Against that team, against a quality pass-rush. That was an important part of this game. We had to run the football against a defense that hasn't given up a lot of rushing yards. Coach Long and I talked all week about being patient and establish the running game. I thought he did a nice job of mixing some things up. Then, Doroland made a big play. Darrell Henderson came back with another one later. Those were just fundamental plays in that game.

Talk about the punter and the big play he made...

Nick Jacobs has done an incredible job and that's the second time that he's had a situation where the potential of an extremely bad play he has gotten control of. You can go through the entire 60 minutes and point out significant plays that attributed to us winning that football game. I talked all week; this was a championship level game. That is a good football team. That quarterback was able to make some plays. He played like a four-year starter. That's the battle of a championship level atmosphere and I am so proud of the guys, the way they finished.

In reference to the earlier mistakes and redemptions by Pollard and Avery...

That was huge. As things were going back and forth, we talked about the field position. We wanted to be able to pin them back and consistently play the next play and hope for some opportunities. Genard missed one early and to be able to respond with his second pick six of the year. I'm very proud of the work of that young man that he is putting in. Those guys battled. You know, we played 88 snaps on defense. That's back-to-back weeks that you put in that many plays and we did it in five days. I guarantee you there are some sore bodies in there against two physical football teams. I was really proud of Tiger nation and everyone in the Liberty Bowl. When we needed you, you allowed. It was just a great atmosphere.

What does this win do to your team?

It shows that we have a good football team. We are not even close to where we need to be. We have to continue to build and continue to get better. Last week we had made a run. We had a momentum swing, but we didn't finish it. When the swing happened, you felt it on the sideline. You felt the energy in the guys. You felt the excitement. That's all we were talking about. Get out there and finish, let's go finish and focus on doing our job and doing the fundamentals. Trust our training and our guys went and got it done (tonight). I have to give credit to Coach Storms and our strength and conditioning staff. Our guys and the training that they've had and what they've done to get to this point is exceptional. Look at our defense and what they were able to do to.

Riley Ferguson

Describe the game tonight. What did you see as an offense?

It was physical, no doubt. As an offense we came out and didn't move the ball like we wanted to. We were just hurting ourselves. We were not executing plays so we just had to come out in the second half and start moving the ball and running the tempo a little bit.

It seemed like a matter of time before you scored... there were big plays made down the stretch from the kick-off return for touchdown to the long touchdown run. What flipped the switch?

You just have to be consistent. Temple's offense started fast and kind of shocked us a little bit. We had some adversity but had to settle down, execute, and play our game.

How do you step up in the face of adversity like you saw tonight, especially in the first half?

You look at the plays and the reasons why weren't moving the ball. It wasn't just turnovers and penalties. We have to get it to where all eleven guys on are the same page. We know the game is a long game so we just had to establish the running game and had to protect a little more setting up the passing game.

Tony Pollard

How big was this win tonight?

Any win is a big win, but this one is special.

You said you weren't concerned when the team got down early. What were you saying on the sidelines?

We weren't concerned. We were all just talking like "move on to the next play".

That touchdown scored on the punt return was the first in 20 years. You know everyone is talking about that...

When we walk into the special team meeting, up on the projector are some plays and right there is November, 1996, so we can't forget.

Jake Elliott

How tough was it having a short week coming off the Ole Miss game?

It's obviously a little bit different. The coaches set up a great schedule for us and put us in very successful situations. The guys got back to work in practice and with the short week it's not quite the same, but practice was great all week.

You set a record for yourself this week with most points scored as a Memphis Tiger...

Yeah, that's a great experience. It's awesome and something I'm going to carry with me once my time here is gone.

Temple Head Coach Matt Rhule

On the roughing the punter call...

Yes. He got close a couple of times. He put the ball on the ground. He got outside the pockets. There is no roughing the kicker when you get outside the pocket. I don't know what the outside issue was. I mean obviously they had a couple of those outside runs. They scored 14 points on defense and special teams. Some of those long runs hurt us in the second half.

The chances late in the game...

We had a lead at halftime. We had the chance to put the team away. Too many penalties. We got the ball down to the three-yard line and moved the ball back and we missed a field goal. If you miss two field goals, and you get a kickoff return for a touchdown, it's hard to win. Our kids always fight hard, they play hard. There are some amazing individual performances. At the end of the day, we weren't able to win the game.

On the deflected passes by Memphis defensive line...

On first and second down, they had their big guys down there. They're not really pass rushers. On third down, they go to their nickel package, all their blitzes and stuff. I think some of those big guys can't really rush so they mirror the quarterback and they knock down 2, maybe 3 of those passes.

Third down struggles...

We came in the game wanting to run PJ more and that was a good concept, we thought. It just didn't work. We had issues in the first half besides all the penalties, stopped drives. We were 1-for-8 on third down. We just couldn't convert on third down.

First half defensive performance...

It's never fun to lose. I hurt for these kids in here. To give them those places down the stretch was disheartening to me. We weren't able to go down there and knock the game out. That's what we've been built to do and we just weren't able to do it.

Memphis defense taking away the run...

They played a bigger defense. They said we're not going to let you run the ball inside and that's why the screens to Jihad were so good. That's why the balls to the outside were okay and they just gave us the passing game and took away the runs.