



POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE

South Carolina vs. Texas A&M

November 15, 2025

College Station, Texas

QUESTIONS FOR COACH MIKE ELKO

COACH ELKO: Wow. Don't really know where else to start. Credit to our guys. Credit for how they stuck to it. Credit with how they rallied. Credit with how they came together. Thought they did a really, really good job of staying positive and keep fighting to the next play.

And then for them to go out in the second half and do what they did, that's championship-level football, and obviously, the first half, we didn't do anything right. But at the end of the day, we came out and we did what we had to do to win a football game.

So yeah, I don't have much else. Questions?

Q. I'm going to ask the question everybody's going to ask: What did you say at halftime?

COACH ELKO: Honestly, not much. All we talked about was we have an identity of who we are. If we play to our identity, we're a good football team. If we start thinking that's not who we are, if we start thinking we're something else, if we start trying to play a different way, that's not us. That's not who we are.

We're a blue-collar team. We're a physical team We're a team that has to control the line of scrimmage. We're a team that has to play with a lot of energy, and we just weren't doing any of those things in the first half. I think the vibes were good. All things considered, the vibes were good. The kids believed we were going to come out and win that game in the second half. Whether they really did or not, that was the energy in the locker room.

And obviously, we made some plays early in the second half to get the momentum going, to get the crowd going. And from that point, it just kind of spiraled in our favor.

Q. Did you feel like you had to play a near-perfect second half to win the game? Besides the fumble at the 1-yard line, did you feel like you guys did that for the most part?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, we still weren't perfect. There's still a lot of things we could have fixed. For sure, felt like we had to play near perfect. Down four scores at halftime. I think I read somewhere that SEC teams are 0-286 all-time in that predicament. That's 1-286 now, I guess.

But yeah, we didn't have a lot of margin. We were going to have to score. We were going to have to get stops. We were going to have to keep scoring. Again, we were able to do that.

That's it? Thanks, guys. (laughter)



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Q. We all saw what happened offensively. Any thoughts or what you said or what you did, adjustments made defensively, to shut them down in the second half?

COACH ELKO: First of all, I didn't tweet anything. That was important.

Q. I wouldn't expect you to during the football game.?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, me neither. The second thing is, I think we kind of got into some better feel for how they were running things. They did some things a little differently. I thought that was critical and important. I thought that helped.

Q. Coach, any theories or any thoughts on why y'all might have got off to a slow start?

COACH ELKO: I think obviously, we talk about this a lot. If you take your foot off the gas in football, football will humble you quick. Clearly, we weren't in the mental space we needed to be in to start that game. That's on me. I'm the head football coach. We weren't doing the things on either side of the ball that we needed to do. That's on me, I'm the head coach.

Yeah, this game always finds a way to humble you if you don't do it the way it's supposed to be done. And clearly, we didn't do it the way it's supposed to be done to start that game.

Q. You talk about the growth of Marcel Reed, just his development as a leader, as a quarterback. What was the conversation with him at halftime? And what kind of response did you see from him coming out of the locker room?

COACH ELKO: Just telling him to relax. Again, he's the quarterback, so all the positives and negatives always fall on him. Offense is so much about rhythm. If he makes a bad throw, give up a pressure, someone drops a ball, it was just kind of that. That was the rhythm we were in the first half. And it was so choppy.

We were able to get back into halftime, just settle him down. I thought the tempo helped a lot. I think us going tempo to start the second half took some of the thinking out of his brain and just got him loose and free and playing. That certainly helped get him into a better rhythm. I think they didn't handle it particularly well. So we were able to get some more easy-access throws, which was important.

I just think, again, he got rolling and got going.

Q. Coach, what can you say about Izaiah Williams turning his first catch of the season turning into a touchdown right there?



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COACH ELKO: Yeah, it's another story, right? Another story of a kid in this program who works hard every day to get ready when his number is going to be called. And you never know. And all of a sudden, Mario [Reed] is down, and we need some guys to step up, and here comes Izaiah.

He's a talented player. He hasn't been able to get a ton of opportunities this year because there's other talented players in front of him. But to his credit, he just kept working. Talked to him about it in the locker room after the game. Just proud of him for continuing to be ready and be in the position he needed to be in to be successful.

Q. Congratulations. So fourth and 12, third quarter, down 30-3. Talk about that call. It kind of changed the whole trajectory of the game when Marcel [Reed] took off and got that first down.

COACH ELKO: Yeah, obviously, we're playing to win. We're not playing for any other reason. At that point, there was still a chance for us to win, and so we were going to play to win. Punting is not helping us at that point.

We actually tried on the second and third down to get some shorter yards, to get the thing going, and it just didn't work out the way we wanted it to. But we just felt like it was the right thing to do at that point.

Q. I know as coaches, y'all try to script out and look and put your players in every kind of position possible. Is this something that y'all have done in practice being down and having to kind of pass as much of this to get back in the game?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, a lot less when we work on this situation. We call it six-minute offense. So it's like that thought of being down two scores or three scores with seven, eight minutes to go in the game, where you got to pick your tempo up. You can still run your offense, but you got to be able to pick your tempo up. You've got to be able to go.

There's a conditioning element to it. There's obviously a communication element to it. You don't have the ability to just sit around and take as much time as you want to. So I've never had to do that to start a second half before. But yeah, it is certainly a situation that we spend time on. Again, we just had to start it a lot earlier than I've ever had to before.

Q. When you have a program like that, how much can a quarterback get comfortable when they have gone through something like that before and done it in practice?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, obviously, it helps. The more situational football you play, the better it is. I think probably even more so, the way we went out and got the stop at the end, that's another time that we have gone out with the game on the line on defense and gotten a stop at the end. That situation worked a lot more than the first one.



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But yeah, when you put kids in those situations, you do it so that they're comfortable and they don't panic. So certainly a lot of the things that we were calling maybe weren't part of the base thoughts in our game plan this week, but they are certainly things we have repped a lot, practiced a lot. We practice them every week. So we were able to get in them when we needed them and roll with it.

Q. The final fumble, what was the play call on that? What should have --

COACH ELKO: Yeah, it was a disaster. It's my fault.

Q. Aggies set a record once again today with the most attended game this season. What again is the message to the 12th Man who showed up for y'all today? And most importantly, stayed after halftime to support your team?

COACH ELKO: Thank you for staying with us. Sorry for what the first half looked like. But in a lot of ways, you propelled us to victory in the second. Yeah, there's not a lot of places where that stadium is going to look like it looked when we come back out after halftime.

I noticed it, obviously, in the fourth quarter when the crowd was really going, but then just standing there at the end, just seeing how full the stadium still was, was an impressive showing by the 12th Man once again.

Q. Coach, when you picked up Nate [Boerkircher] in the portal, did you envision he would have this kind of impact for y'all?

COACH ELKO: Yeah. Obviously, when you go get guys, you think that they're good players. We had a lot of belief in who Nate was., Again, it's kind of our process of evaluating tape and watching him play. Yeah, there was some other kids in the portal that, honestly, we felt like he was a much better player than. So we went after him really hard. We thought he was going to be able to give us a little bit of both.

Obviously, he's a more physical kid than he is a wide-open, wide receiver, pass-catching type. But we knew he had really good hands and we knew he could play tight end, run routes and catch the ball. He gives us a lot of value.

Q. Visibly more emotional after this one, especially with Marcel [Reed], watching you celebrate with him. Beyond the numbers, the stats, having him as your quarterback, I mean, 439 yards today, what does that mean to watch him be able to go out there and do what he did?

COACH ELKO: I'm not lost for words very much, but I was lost for words with the team in the locker room after the game. A lot of that emotion was just pride in who they were, how they conducted themselves. Again, there's not a lot of teams that have a culture and a core that will just keep going. Again, like we just, even the 80-yard pass, it just was one after another after another in the first half.



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To not blink and really go into the locker room and still come out in the second half and compete, and then ultimately, to score 28 straight points and win a football game that ends with a 99-yard drive? Like, yeah, there's not a lot of words for that. It's really impressive.

Q. You talk about that second half being championship-level football. What kind of level of football did you see from Cashius Howell, especially there at the end where it seemed like he made the plays when it mattered the most?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, I would be lying if I could tell you who was making the plays at the end. I'm assuming he was in and around the pile. I take your word for it. Some of that was a blur a little bit, just trying to get us into the right call. But he's a talented player.

When they got into a situation where they had to throw the ball a little bit more, we were able to get going a little bit with the pass rush. It was such a run-heavy game plan by them, and we knew it would be. So we weren't really able to do much from a pass rush standpoint early on.

But as the game got open and we got the lead at the end, we were able to kind of turn it lose a little bit, and I think he was able to do the things he's capable of doing.

Q. I know you always tell your team to look ahead and not behind if things didn't go well. But what does it say about [Marcel] Reed that he had a tough first half, and he not only didn't look back, but had one of the most epic performances in the second half ever, to keep your team on track to where you want to be?

COACH ELKO: That's what winners do. That's what winners do, is they control what they're capable of controlling. You have to have confidence in yourself. You have to have put in a lot of work. You have to have confidence in the people around you. I think all of that came out today.

He's a confident kid. Certainly wasn't lost on him that he wasn't playing very well. But we believe in him. The team believes in him. He believes in us. He believes in the team. When all of that stuff is there, the only thing you can do is just make the next throw. That's literally you can do.

So he did it. I think we were able to calm down a little bit. I think one of the things that happened in the first half, for sure, is we just started really pressing. It just was like we were in panic mode trying to do too much, make the play. We got into panic mode. And I do think at least at halftime, it was like, okay, can we just take a breath and start playing football a little bit? So that helped, for sure.

Q. The end of the first half, when there was the missed field goal, the back-to-back picks, the 80-yard pass you mentioned, what was the feeling on the sideline? Was there anybody that stepped up and maybe rallied the troops in the locker room at laugh time? What do you think the emotions were after that kind of sequence in?



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COACH ELKO: It sounds crazy to say this, but there really wasn't a lot of panic. There were certainly your leaders. You heard Taurean York, you heard Ar'maj Reed-Adams, you heard Marcel Reed, you heard [KC] Concepcion. You heard our leaders talking as we were going up the tunnel, as we were going into the locker room.

I think we made sure that we reset the energy the right way. I thought that was important just to make sure that everybody knew kind of where we needed to be and what space we needed to be in.

Yeah, as bad as everything was going, we don't panic. Like, that that's the one thing we don't do, is we don't panic. Maybe we need to panic a little bit more, I don't know? But it worked for us today.

Q. Any status update on Rueben Owens?

COACH ELKO: I think he came back in at some point. Didn't he? If he didn't, it's not a massive thing.

Q. How do you soak in a game like this right after a game? And have you ever coached or played in a game like this in recent memory that's been this crazy?

COACH ELKO: No. No, that's a first for me in my career. I don't really know what just happened, to be honest with you. A whole lot of heart left on the field. A whole lot of support from a great group of fans.

Q. You touched on it, but just from what you could see in real time, what did you feel like maybe led to the turnovers Marcel [Reed] had in the first half? What did you feel like he did on the field that helped clean up his play?

COACH ELKO: Honestly, the first half, I'm going to come back to that on Monday. That was a little bit of a blur at this point. I couldn't even tell you that I remember them at this point. Certainly, the one was a really bad play call by us. We put him in harm's way with the end charging in his face, the touchdown.

I don't even remember the rest of them. Again, I think the rhythm, the tempo, creating some easy access throws. I think we were able to slow the pass rush down through the tempo. That helped. Obviously, they were really talented up front. They look like a team that was fresh off a bye and fired up to come in here and beat a team that was ranked very high. We didn't match their energy at all in the first half. We did in the second.

Q. Mike, I know you don't like to talk about the past, but given what happened in this game last year, and just the historic win that it ended up becoming, what does that mean for the future of this team to be able to get past that hump and come out on top today?

COACH ELKO: Yeah, I mean, certainly it means, I'm sure, we've accomplished some things today. I think getting to 10 wins is going to set us up to continue playing football and continue chasing the big prizes. I think that they're going to have a confidence and a belief that no matter what the situation in the game is, they're going to have a chance to win.



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Then hopefully they're going to have an understanding of what it takes to get them themselves mentally locked in every week, regardless of what their perception of the game outcome might be. That they better have themselves locked in and ready to play.

Q. Looking ahead, obviously, you got Samford and Texas upcoming, but could you talk about potential College Football Playoff opponents in the state of Texas, for example, Texas Tech?

COACH ELKO: No, I got no interest in talking about potential playoff opponents.

Q. Coach, I was just wondering if anything was said by you or any of the coaches to Ashton Bethel-Roman after he dropped that pass and before he caught the touchdown?

COACH ELKO: Just some encouragement. Let's go, get it together. You're going to be all right. We're going to keep coming to you. Again, that's football a little bit. Some of the worst drops he probably had in his career, and probably one of the best catches he's ever had in his career. Just got to keep playing.

Q. What was your overall assessment from him (Ashton Bethel-Roman), 139 yards?

COACH ELKO: Obviously, critical. The two big plays were huge. I thought KC [Concepcion] had a huge second half. Obviously, Marcel [Reed] had a huge second half. We were really able to get passing game unlocked a little bit.

Awesome. Thank you, guys.



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QUESTIONS FOR TAUREAN YORK, ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN, and MARCEL REED

Q. How would you describe that game and y'all's comeback?

TAUREAN YORK: I mean, it wasn't how we drew it up. Honestly, we didn't want to be down 30-3 at halftime. But ultimately, we found a way to stick together and figure out how to win the game.

Q. What was said before the last drive where you guys had to get that defensive stamina and the ball to take the lead there?

TAUREAN YORK: We wanted it to be on our shoulders. All year long, we talked about finishing the two-minute drill. We had a couple last year that didn't go our way. But we were like, this ain't last year; this is this year's team. We've been training for this since the moment we left from Las Vegas, so let's go make it happen.

Q. What did it take from defensive to go out there and shut down South Carolina in the second half? As good as the offense was, they didn't score and that made it possible for y'all to pull it out.

TAUREAN YORK: At halftime, I told the team we would probably get six possessions and they can't score on any six possessions. Our biggest enemy is probably going to be the clock. These have to be three-and-out drives. They have to be five-plays-or-less drives. And ultimately, we found a way to make it happen. Not every drive was five plays or less, but we found a way to win. And I'm so joyful for that.

Q. Taurean, did you guys make any adjustments at halftime to try to slow them down? It seemed like night and day from the first half to the second.

TAUREAN YORK: I'll tell you what happened. I walk in the locker room -- well, first of off, me and Dalton [Brooks] were the first people up the ramp. And we talked to everybody walking into the locker room. We were like, this isn't over yet. We got 30 minutes to fight. So me and Dalton did that.

So me and him walk in, Marcel [Reed] had already gathered up the team and he was talking to the team about how he has to play better, how he has to help out the defense a little bit. And I jumped in, we have to help out the offense. We got to get more turnovers. We're losing the turnover battle right now.

We didn't change anything. We just came together as one team like we knew we should have been from the get-go. We were just like, lock in, play one play at a time, and let's go win this football game.



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Q. Kind of early for this question, but when you think back on this game, what do you think is going to be the first memory you think about?

TAUREAN YORK: The first memory I think about this game, about how it took everybody who was at Kyle Field today to win the game and they were cheering for the Aggies. Whether it's the fans, whether it's our program, as far as the equipment managers, operations, recruiting, coaches, football players, scout team, trust me, it took everybody on the sideline to go win that football game today.

Q. How did you take in everything once the game was over?

TAUREAN YORK: Man, it was a special moment for sure because we said they weren't going to score on offense again. The offense said they had our back. KC [Concepcion], Mario [Craver], Marcel [Reed], walking up and saying we got y'all. We're going to put some points on the board. And then at halftime, I'm telling them, look, let's go score some points and get the ball back. Come out at halftime, let's go get some stops and let's get the crowd back involved in the football game.

Q. What was the spirit like in the locker room after making program history with that comeback?

TAUREAN YORK: Let's turn that music up. Let's figure out what we have to do to get better. But ultimately, that locker room is special. There's no panic, there's no fear, there's no quit in that locker room. And that's what I love most about my team.

Q. [Mike] Elko said he doesn't say much at halftime, but from a player's perspective and a leader's perspective, what did he say today and what stood out to you the most?

TAUREAN YORK: Let's go, we got 30 minutes to make it happen, to rewrite history. You don't have many times that you can rewrite history, avenge a loss that we had last year. We knew it was personal coming into the game, but we weren't playing like it was personal in the first half. They were playing like it was personal, even though they went out there and whipped our tail last year.

But we were like, you know what, we got 30 minutes to make it happen. We don't want any blemishes on our record. Let's go find a way to go win this football game.

Q. Taurean, what did you see from Marcel [Reed] in that second half? What was he able to do?

TAUREAN YORK: I saw somebody who stepped up. I saw somebody playing like their life was on the line, which it was. If we go out there and lose that game, regardless of how we played on defense, they were going to blame it all on Marcel. I thought he recognized that and he didn't back down from that challenge.



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Q. Taurean, towards the end of that game, obviously it was important that y'all were able to put it away in the final couple minutes. What were you talking to the guys about in that moment? Or is it just all instinctual?

TAUREAN YORK: Where my closers at? Cashius Howell, Dayon Hayes, let's go win this game. Sacks, kill two-minute drives. They only had one time-out going into that two-minute situation. So let's go do it. They can't get to the 35-yard line because that's the standard field goal range for an SEC kicker.

So all the stuff, we're relaying this information, let's go, let's use all the tips that we learned throughout the week and let's go win this football game.

Q. Was there anything in practice leading up to this game that you felt like you guys weren't maybe locked in or prepared to go from the start?

TAUREAN YORK: No, I wouldn't say that. I just felt like they were out-playing us. They were out-executing us. They were out-efforting us. And that's kind of how South Carolina is against us. If I remember correctly, last year they had a bye week going into this game. This year they had some coaching changes, so they had a couple more weeks to implement some new plays. They came out there with new stuff we weren't expecting.

But ultimately, we weren't playing hard. We weren't playing with effort, and we definitely weren't executing. So at halftime, we said one play at a time. However many plays it takes, let's go figure it out.

Q. You're pretty tight with Marcel [Reed]. What did you tell him during the game and after the game, that conversation?

TAUREAN YORK: It's time to crank it up, man. All eyes are on you, win or lose, so let's give them something positive to talk about. And I'm sure they are right now.

Q. Obviously it's well-documented how well you guys come out in the second half. You've been doing it all season. You talk about the leadership and you talk about the mentality, but how much of the Xs and Os talked about at halftime is credited to the adjustment? Or is it more you guys just stepping up and making plays?

TAUREAN YORK: Yeah, we didn't draw anything on the whiteboard at all. I know other positions probably did, but for us as linebackers, we were like, these guys are playing harder than us, they're executing far better than we are. Let's go make it happen. One play at a time, and that's it.

Trust me, we didn't write anything on the whiteboard. We didn't make any changes. We were running the same calls in the first half that we did in the second half. We just played harder and we executed better.



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Q. At what point in the second half did you see kind of the momentum shift and maybe you saw South Carolina maybe start to wilt and you guys start to kind of have that belief?

TAUREAN YORK: Yeah, I would probably say that fourth-and-one stop by Daymion Sanford played a big role in the momentum swing. If I remember correctly, we didn't score coming out of halftime. So if they went out there and scored again on that drive, they were on the plus side of the field, if they got three points out of that, it's hard to win.

So Daymion went in there and wedged his way between the tackle and the tight end. He made a stop, and I felt like that kind of got the momentum back on our side.

Q. You mentioned you and Dalton [Brooks] at halftime kind of talking to the whole team, what compelled you and also him maybe to do that and step up as that guy?

TAUREAN YORK: I mean, this is something that nobody knows. Last year when they rushed the field on us, me and Dalton were the first people in the locker room shaking everybody's hands, don't worry. We got this. We have no quit in us. Yeah, this is a blemish on our record, but don't trip, we're going to take care of it, and we did it.

But that was just something that felt right last year. So I talked to Dalton about that in the hotel room this morning because he's my hotel roommate. I was like, do you remember that? I remember that, because I remember that. I remember how it felt walking into that locker room and seeing the look on everybody's face.

Today, similar situation, we're down, the team had bad mojo, had bad energy, bad facial expressions, bad body language. You name it, we had it walking into that tunnel. But we're like let's go do it. It feels right, it feels like we're being leaders right now. So let's go boost the mood a little bit.

Q. You touched on how personal this felt after last year, how encouraging is it to get a really tough, gritty win like this at this point in the year?

TAUREAN YORK: It's all about us, honestly. What happened last year with that team, it happened. But it's just more about us and just giving us that reassurance and that confidence, that we can sit together. We can overcome anything. We were down by 27 points to an extremely talented South Carolina team. But it's all about us, how we stick together and ultimately how we execute to go win the football game.

Q. Coach [Mike] Elko mentioned that towards the end of the game, he looked up and saw that the stands were full. Talk about the 12th Man and how cool it was because y'all have seen some stadiums emptied out. You've seen stadiums where they booed their own team. Talk about what it means for the 12th Man in that third and fourth quarter to continue to will you guys to win.



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TAUREAN YORK: Yeah, man, this place is like none other. I'm walking around up and down the sideline, and the fourth quarter hype intro came on, and I just looked Dayon [Hayes] and I looked at Cashius [Howell] and I said, we're not going to let this stadium down. We have too many people here cheering for us.

We're too high in the rankings to have a loss on our record. Let's not disappoint these fans. These fans deserve a season like this, so let's keep it going. Let's not give them something to boo about. Otherwise, let's give them something to cheer about.

Q. How maybe vindicating was it to get the touchdown catch after you dropped that pass earlier on that drive?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I felt good. It felt good knowing that I could shake back, especially so fast, shake back for the team. Because some of the drops, they shouldn't have been drops. It was like mental errors. I feel like we were a little off in the first half, clearly. So there was a lot of mental errors in there. So me being able to shake back, especially so fast, it was more so for my team. I really liked that.

Q. What were you saying to Marcel [Reed] in the first half as things were going bad? What did you see change from him and the rest of the offense during that second half that allowed you guys to have so much success?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: We were saying to him, like, there's nothing to be worried about. I mean, we play football. You going to win some, lose some. You got have a short-term memory. It is what it is. Everyone messed up on the offensive side of the ball, O-line, to receivers, to Marcel himself.

So we got back in halftime and we just had a talk with the offense and we said we were going to get our head back in the game, lock in. And that's all it was.

Q. What was the conversation like in the receiver room with Mario [Craver] not necessarily being 100%?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: Oh, it wasn't nothing. I mean, we would love to have Mario out there. He a dog. We would love to have him out there. But in our receiver room, we have dogs behind dogs. So it's like even though Mario went down, we had Izaiah [Williams] come pick up the slack. And he did a great job doing what he did, so we weren't too pressed about it.

Q. Kind of building off of that, how encouraging was it to see that performance out of Izaiah Williams and just a lot of new faces stepping up?



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ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I almost cried when he scored. I was so happy for him. It's rough when you play football, you're going to practice every single week, but you might not be getting what you think you deserve or whatever the case may be. But for him to be able to swallow that pride, go on the field, and make the most out of his opportunity when his name called, his number called, meant everything to me. I was happy. I almost cried, I ain't going to lie.

Q. Can you describe Marcel [Reed] as a leader? Maybe share a story or a moment of today and how much his leadership helped you guys be able to rally from such a huge deficit?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: Marcel as a leader is like, he leads in a way that he always sees the bright side in everything. Even at halftime, he called the offense up. He established and addressed all the issues that we had. He said that's in the past and we're going to look to the future and we're going to make something out of this. That's all it was really.

Q. What do you think about the halftime and the conversations that were had, thinking back on it, what are some words or one moment you're going to remember about that time?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I don't think I can remember like a word, but one thing that I will remember for the rest of my time playing football and the rest of my life, is we were down 30-3, and there was no heads down. There was no feeling bad or feeling sorry for ourselves. It was the whole offense together, a lot of togetherness, and just having each other's back.

Even all the bad plays we had, always having each other's back, that family, that brotherhood that we have. That's how I'll remember it personally.

Q. Several people during the first half had trouble with some drops. Can that be contagious? And what do you feel like y'all did to rectify that in the second half?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: It might have been contagious. It might have been. Because it was Terry [Bussey] and it was me and then it was KC [Concepcion] and it was Mario [Craver]. But in the second half, we went to the second half, we went into halftime, and we kind of just sat there at first. We pressed it, we were mad that we dropped the ball.

We get into halftime, it's like we making fun of the fact that we dropped the ball and it's time for us to lock in now. It's time to start playing a game and let's lock in.

Q. Obviously, your halftime adjustments have been great, well-documented at this point. But with a comeback like this, what does it say about your and your guys' resiliency?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: It shows the brotherhood we have. The togetherness we have. Coach [Mike] Elko talks about it all the time, the togetherness that we have matches no other team. So that's what that resembles for me.



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Q. Ashton, your last four games, I believe, where you really started to come on. What's enabled you, maybe after first five games being a little quiet, to really come on these last four games?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I would say just me being out of my own head. I feel like that played a big part in the games earlier in the season, me being out of my own head. Someone that really helped me was Coach [Holmon] Wiggins. He's been in my corner. Telling me to keep a level head, your time is coming. Then when my time did come, I had to make the most out of it. It was that, Coach Wiggins.

Q. Taurean [York] mentioned that he and Dalton [Brooks] were the first two guys that welcomed y'all in the locker room at the end of the South Carolina game last year. And they did the same thing at halftime this year. I don't know if you were part of that mix, if you talked with them at halftime, but what does that say and what's their message to you guys?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I mean, that's just [Taurean] York. That's York at his finest. He's going to be a leader. That's one thing I respect about him, no matter how bad things, he's going to be their leader and we're going to be able to count on him when needed. I seen him running around the locker room telling everybody, "we good, keep our heads up."

And Dalton, he might not have the C on his chest, but he's a captain, too.

Q. Ashton, can you walk us through the long catch and run? And what happened to you at the end that had you have to sit out for a little bit?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: I'll walk you through it play by play. I wasn't supposed to run that route. But it didn't matter, because we got the job done. I caught the ball, and I was running, and I would call myself a pretty fast guy. Honestly, I'm the fastest in the receiver room. They would say it, too.

But after today, I don't think so. It wasn't looking too good. I don't know, I just got -- maybe I was a little tired? But the last guy dove for me, he missed, but the way I stumbled after that messed my ankle up a little bit. But I'll be fine.

Q. A lot of the receivers weren't in Columbia last year when you guys had that loss. What did this game this year mean and the win and the way you guys won, what did that mean to you personally after what happened last year?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: It means a lot. Even last year, I wasn't playing the most last year. We got ranked 10th in the country, and we were on an all-time high. I believe we had just beat LSU. For that, for conversations for us to talk about us being in the SEC championship and all of that, and we go to Columbia and we get dog walked by South Carolina, they stormed the field.

Yeah, it meant a lot. Coming back next year, and especially coming back from that deficit. I mean, we shouldn't have had to. We should have just came out fine in the first half. But coming back from that deficit, it meant a lot to us.



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Q. So how did y'all as a team this week address all the outside noise? So much spotlight has been put on the Aggies, and how did y'all support each other as teammates and maintain that focus coming into today's game?

ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN: Coach Elko really managed that. He don't let us get on social media. It's out there. Everybody got Instagram, everybody got Twitter or X. But we're just in one ear and out the other. We just don't pay too much attention to it.

Q. Could you tell us about the scramble on fourth down? It feels like from an outsider, it feels like it ignited something or kept the second half kind of off to a start. When you made that happen, sort of what did that feel like for you? And did that symbolize anything for you?

MARCEL REED: If I'm being honest, I didn't know where I was on the field. I just knew I had to get somewhere. And I was honestly surprised we went for it on fourth and 12. I guess we needed to do in that situation early in the second half.

But just glad I got the first down and we could continue the drive. We started to go tempo a little bit and it kind of warmed down.

Q. Your coaches and your teammates have talked about how you were able to stay positive and you don't dwell on bad things that happen in the game. How are you able to do that in a game like this where y'all were down so big at halftime, and not only come back, but come back in such an epic way?

MARCEL REED: Yeah, our biggest competition all year has been ourselves. And we killed ourselves in the first half, whether it was dropped passes, we couldn't run the ball, or I was turning the ball over. It was all us. It had nothing to do with them at all.

And when we get in that situation, all we need to do is just take a deep breath. And we came at halftime, we talked, and we took a deep breath. And we told each other that we didn't need to worry about the score. All we needed to beat was the clock. We had to go put points up. The defense had to go make stops. And that's what we did at the end of the day.

Q. Yeah, Taurean [York] said he told the defense they basically have to be perfect, not allow any points in the second half. Was a similar conversation had on offense? How did y'all feel about the situation heading back out there?

MARCEL REED: Like I just said, I told the offense, we got to become more physical. They're beating us at the line of scrimmage right now, and that the now brand of football. We have to be physical in all phases of it, offense and defense.



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Honestly, I came in at halftime, and we brought in the offense together, but the entire team ended up getting in a circle. So gave a little bit of a speech. Just saying that we have to be physical here. We have to hit them in the mouth and can't let them push us back. Defense, keep doing what you're doing. Offense, we got to score the ball. We got to put points on the board. And defense held them, and we put points on the board.

We ended up getting the win by one point. Thank God we got that stop at the end of game.

Q. When you think back on that halftime moment, is there one set of words or one moment that's going to resonate with you when you think back on it moving forward?

MARCEL REED: Honestly, I don't even remember everything that was said. The message was got across to everybody. We knew that we were still in this game in our eyes. It didn't matter what anybody else thought. Maybe we were the worst team in the country after this game or -- we knew what we were capable of. We knew what we had to do, and we ended up doing it.

Q. You talk about the message at halftime. When you got together with Coach [Collin] Klein, how much was the conversation about Xs and Os and changing things up? Or how much was just going out and execute?

MARCEL REED: Wasn't too many changes. It was really go out there and execute. And once again, it was just the message of being physical. We had to hold up at the line of scrimmage. We had to be able to run the ball. We did go a little bit more tempo, just kind of keep them off guard and not let them bring plugs and stuff like that to blow up the line of scrimmage. There wasn't too many changes this the scheme, just us going out and executing.

Q. I know you guys don't like to talk about the past or last year, but just getting this win and the way you guys got the win, what does it mean to you personally as the leader of this team after the heartbreak of last year?

MARCEL REED: It means a lot. Obviously, we wanted revenge on this team. They were the team that put us out of the question last year. And honestly, they probably could have put us in a bad position this year, depending on the score and the team it was. Just having that one loss on our record, there's no telling what it could have done. The Committee could have done something a lot crazier than we would have expected.

But we got this win. And I think it was really important for us just because this team battled in the second half. And it shows what we have in that locker room, what a lot of people don't have, and what college football nowadays is just -- there's not much culture and brotherhood.

And I think us going in and making those adjustments as a team and not with coaches in there says a lot about what we have here at Texas A&M.



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Q. Izaiah Williams, great game today. What have you seen with him working with him in practice? And what led to him playing the role that he did today?

MARCEL REED: Zah has always been a great player. We have a lot of talent in the room. We have a lot of depth, whether it's running back room, receivers, whether it's O-line, anybody goes down, there's somebody else to step up.

So really proud of him. He made plays, and he made some really big plays that a lot of people, probably fans probably wouldn't expect. But we always knew it inside the room. So really proud of him, yeah.

Q. How hard is it from a psyche, mental standpoint for a guy that has the focus on him as the quarterback to overcome the tough first half that you did to then respond in the second?

MARCEL REED: I mean, I'd say it's probably one of the more challenging things, but I feel like I'm built for it. And I've been in situations like this before, whether it's in college or high school or playing another sport. So just staying calm and like I said, going one play at a time and trying to beat the clock.

We weren't really worried about the score. We just tried to worry about executing and doing everything to the best of our ability, just kind of making plays, getting the ball down the field. Whether it's a big play or small play, we just have to execute.

Q. Can you think back to a time, maybe high school or college, where you had a turn-around or a comeback like this where you ended up on top in a win?

MARCEL REED: I'll say this, the Oklahoma State game, that bowl game freshman year, we didn't win, but we were kind of behind, and we had to bounce back a little bit from turnovers and a lot of other things. And I think that's kind of where it all started a little bit.

Q. When you saw your defense get that final stop and you knew y'all were going to win the game, what was the feeling? What was the emotion? Can you take me through how you were feeling?

MARCEL REED: Relief. Relief, that's what it was. I came on the field, and we took that knee. And I just looked up, my arms up like this to God. Kind of just a thank you to him. I feel like the story was kind of already written. Didn't matter how it was, how it went, but it was already written for us to win this game. We ended up winning. It's amazing.

Q. Do you think being able to win in such a gritty way will help you guys as y'all go forward trying to reach bigger goals this season?



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MARCEL REED: It will definitely help us clean things up. I don't think it will help us any other way. Because this game is now behind us. We have another opponent to focus on. It will change our mindsets, for sure, because we have Samford and then we have a big one against Texas at Texas, so yeah.

Q. Pretty emotional moment between you and [Mike] Elko after your post-game interview. We don't see him being super emotional all the time, but what does this one mean to get, not just for each other, but for him?

MARCEL REED: Means a lot. Coach Elko, he's done something that I don't think a lot of coaches have done at certain schools. He's came in and he's changed this program. He's changed the culture of this team. The people in here, they're so much love in this locker room that we have and there's so much brotherhood. I don't think I've ever been a part of something like this.

But it's just amazing that we're playing for each other, but we're also playing for him and trying to get this win. He always makes jokes about his life being in the hands of 18- and 22-year-olds. Then he says, 27-year-olds like Ar'maj [Reed-Adams] and [Jacob] Zeno. He makes those jokes too.

We understand that he has a family and this is his job, and we're kind of doing this all for him, but we're doing it for ourselves, too.

Q. In that first half, why do you feel like the connection almost seemed off between you and your receivers? It seemed very uncharacteristic for a lot of the drops. Why are you guys able to have the confidence to keep at it and completely flip things around?

MARCEL REED: Yeah, when you drop the ball, you know it's not anybody else's fault but yours. When you make a bad throw, it's not everybody's fault but yours. We knew we had to clean those things up. We know what we're capable of. We have arguably the best receivers in the country. Best O-line in the country. Best running backs in the country.

We can compete against anybody. It's just up to us. Like I said earlier, we're our biggest competition. We just had to come up there, it's a focus thing. If you lose focus for a little bit, it can all go downhill. So we had to flip that switch in the second half.

Q. Talking about your receivers, what can you say about Ashton [Bethel-Roman and Izaiah [Williams] stepping up in Mario's [Carver] absence?

MARCEL REED: Ashton has always been a big guy for us. He's probably one of the fastest people in that room, and he can get behind defenders at any moment. He did a really good job of just making plays, run after the catch. And then Izaiah as well. You know, Izaiah kind of stepped in for Mario to play that F position. Sometimes he played the Z. We had KC [Concepcion] at the F. He did his assignment, and he made some big plays for us this game.



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Q. Earlier in the season, you gave a message to the 12th Man and you said if you're with us, then you're with us, and if you're not, then you're not. And in the third and fourth quarter, almost every student in the stands stayed and cheered you on until you came out with that win today. How does that make you feel that they are pushing through for the Aggies and your team? And how did that help you win today?

MARCEL REED: Yeah, I really love the 12th Man. We appreciate them a lot, appreciate them for staying. I hope they don't leave, no matter what the score is. You should cheer your team on all the way through. But yeah, they bring a lot of juice. And you see the defense starting to get a lot of stops and they start to turn up the crowd a little bit and get loud and kind of mess them up. And we get on the field and score touchdowns, it gets electric when we're in the end zone and we're having a party and the entire crowd is up and jumping. So it's an amazing feeling. And we really appreciate the 12th Man.

Q. So there are moments in Aggie sports history that you can just say a couple words and people know what it is for. For Acie Law, it was "The Shot." If you say seven overtimes, everyone knows it's the win over LSU. How would you label this big win that the Aggies are going to be talking about for years?

MARCEL REED: I don't even know. Just be corny and say chills.

Q. Ashton [Bethel-Roman] said he wasn't supposed to run that route on that play.

MARCEL REED: Oh, the one where he got hurt?

Q. Yeah. How did it end up going to him and what was supposed to happen there?

MARCEL REED: Honestly, he just got jammed at the line and ended up in the position that KC [Concepcion] was running into it. I guess it ended up being good because his defender kind of ran into KC as KC's defender was going that way too. So we caught the ball and ran it up the field.

I wish he stayed up and got in the end zone on that one. I mean, shoot, when things go wrong for you in the first half, something has to go right for you in the second. So that was one of the plays that went right for us.

Q. Marcel, I know there's still more to play, but what do you think this game did for your Heisman case?

MARCEL REED: I don't even know. Could have went up, could have went down. I threw two picks in the first half. I threw for 300-yards maybe in the second. I don't know what it would do, but it doesn't matter to me. Wherever I end up, I end up, but we're just focused on winning games right now.



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QUESTIONS FOR COACH SHANE BEAMER

Opening statement...

COACH BEAMER: First of all, the credit to A&M. They did what championship teams do. I said, coming into this game that there was nobody in the country playing better in all three phases than those guys and they showed that to respond in the second half like they did. Having said that, to say that I'm hurt for our guys is an understatement. I know the rest of the country was surprised with what was going on in the first half, we weren't. And when you're dominating, you don't look at the scoreboard, you just keep going and that's what we talked about. In the second half, I'm just feeling disappointed with the way that we performed. I know our guys will respond and we'll come right back to Columbia, and we got 2 home games left to finish this thing out.

On the offense in the second half...

COACH BEAMER: Our whole thing was being the most physical team, and they certainly, kicked our butts in the run game in the second half. We couldn't get anything going from a run game standpoint. We had some open receivers that we weren't able to connect to on for whatever reason all the way to that last drive. They just did a good job of playing better in the second half than we did.

On Marcel Reed's passing game...

COACH BEAMER: "A&M came out and made plays. Marcel [Reed] is a weapon, and I am just really disappointed with some of the things in the second half. I don't know how many yards they threw for in the second half, but for them to throw for 439 yards against our defenses it's inexcusable, frankly, with the defensive backs that we have back there."

On the toughness of the SEC...

COACH BEAMER: "Coach Elko and I were talking before the game, people don't understand what a war this league is week in, week out. It's an absolute war that's unlike any other conference in the world and the margins are just that small. We're not making enough plays on the other side of the winning margins that we need to right now."