

#1/1 Texas 20, #14/13 Tennessee 17
Sept. 26, 2026 | Knoxville, Tenn. | Neyland Stadium

Tennessee Head Coach Josh Heupel

Opening statement...

"Start by just saying, our fans were phenomenal today. We walk in the stadium at, I don't know, 9:30, and it's 40% full. It's an unbelievable environment; they're the best, and I thank them. Sorry, we didn't have better execution to come away with the win. Credit to Texas, good football team.

Loved the effort, how we played defensively, a lot of our special teams, offensively, just not anywhere close to being good enough to beat a team like this. Everybody will have a hand in it when we go back Monday with the tape, with the guys, but up front, not good enough. Quarterback, not good enough. Everybody's got a hand in it ultimately. We've got to be better.

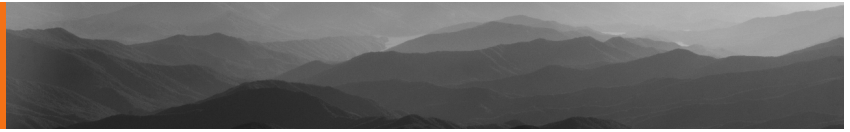
I do love how the team continued to fight, play, and play until the last play. We didn't play smart enough, but I'll take the effort. Playing the next play and fighting until the clock hits zero"

On what he notices looking back on the 10 sacks of the game...

"It is a lot of everything. The O-line has to be better. It can be better. At times we were giving up pressure off of chip protection, and we have to be able to execute that better. There is times with the quarterback, his decision-making, not getting rid of it when there are opportunities to get rid of it, and you combine all of that together, and you play a good person on the other side, you just cannot win that way."

About what he liked about how the defense played...

"I thought the line of scrimmage controlled the game and bottled up the run game for the most part. In the fourth quarter, they hit a solid couple of consistent runs. In that last drive, they applied pressure to the quarterback; there was a lot of strength there."



Senior LB Arion Carter

On the recovered onside kick...

"We practice those special situations every Thursday and Friday, and it's falling back on the level of my training and just going out there and doing my best, keeping that warrior spirit. At the end of the day, to go out there and if the opportunity presents itself, go make the play. And it did, so I'm happy about that."

On Saturday's defensive performance...

"I feel like the game plan we have for this week was set in stone, just talking things over and just knowing what we had in front of us. They're a great offense, great quarterback, and just being able to go out there and execute, obviously wasn't enough to seal the game, but it sparked a belief in what we can do and what we can be holistically going forward in games. Just proving we're not going to back down from anybody, and we're just going to keep fighting the great fight, just being able to go out there and be relentless to the football every single time."

On how the team played for linebackers coach William Inge...

"I wouldn't say that it made me deter from being focused. I feel like it just made me lock in even more, just understanding what he would want you to do as a coach. Just having that competitive composure and fighting spirit like he has, you know, literally fighting for his life, and understanding that this thing is bigger than football. Just us wanting to go out as a group collectively, put our best foot forward and represent him in the best of our ability."

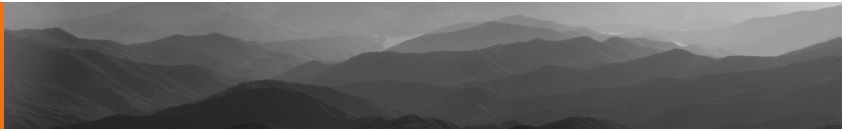
Tennessee Junior WR Mike Matthews

On quarterback Faizon Brandon's toughness...

"We already knew he was tough, composed, like a more mature guy just coming into it, but he handled what he was supposed to well. Not every look is going to be great. It's going to be kind of ugly sometimes, but it's really just knowing that he's willing to put his body on the line for us, and we are willing to do the same thing too."

On the team's belief to go win the football game...

"It's a strong belief. Heupel always says it's harder for longer, so we're always pushing to our next limit, whatever that may be. And really, just go on the field knowing that we're all prepared for the moment. Really, just ready for anything going on."



Tennessee Junior WR Braylon Staley

On his message to quarterback Faizon Brandon...

"Just keep his head up. He knows what he's supposed to do, and we know what we're supposed to do. We've got to be there for him. Just keep his head up and come back to work."

On Saturday's offensive performance...

"For the receivers, obviously we're just trying to get open as quick as we can. Young quarterback outside of our environment, with a great team that just came in here. So, we try to do our best to get open as fast as we could and get the ball."

Tennessee Senior LB Amare Campbell

On recovering after the first Texas touchdown...

"I would say just getting settled in. It's a big game with a big atmosphere. A lot of new players on the team. We just have to get settled in earlier. We have to be better earlier, from the start."

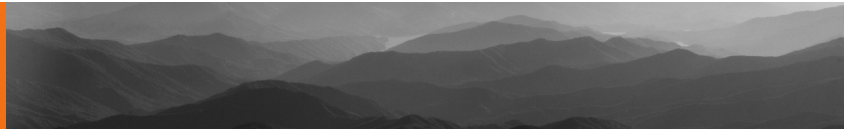
On moving on from a big loss...

"It hurts for all of us. Just week in, week out, we got SEC play. We feel it today. We feel it a little bit tomorrow but next week we got to game plan for the next team. We have to shift our mindset to the next team. We can't let it haunt us."

Tennessee Fifth Year P Jackson Ross

On if it motivates him to up his game when the opposing punter is having a good...

"Yeah, it does. Obviously, I'm prepared to kick as many balls as possible going on. I think I had seven today, which is probably on the upper end of what we would probably want and what I've had in my career. There is always room for improvement in my own game. (Ryan) Niblett is a great returner, and we knew he was going to get some chances, but trying to shut him out is a tough thing. I think 57 return yards for him is probably 57 too many from what we plan to do but there's always room for improvement."



On the onside kick...

“That’s the first onside kick I’ve ever done but we put hours of time into things like that. We’re getting alignment, assignments, things like that. To execute on my first time and Arion Carter to recover is awesome. I’m proud of him and it just goes to chance to call the game back to our favor.”

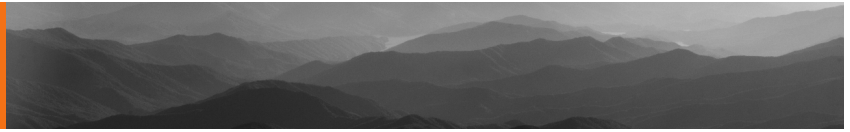
Texas Head Coach Steve Sarkisian

Opening statement...

“I think coming into the game today no team in the country had more wins against top 25 teams since 2023. So we were kind of used to this environment. We are used to this arena. I know we may not always be our best and play super clean football and I get that. We are held to a different standard than other places. We win big games around here. We do, you know, and I know we don't win them all, but we have won a lot of them. What an incredible performance by our defense. I don't know the final amount of sacks we had, it felt like 12. It could have been more or less I'm not sure. I think Colin (Simmons) had 5 sacks. But we were not perfect, we had some penalties that we have to fix and have to clean up. We couldn't get out of our own way offensively on 1st and 10. But when we got down there we scored and took advantage of that. It was a great way to start the game and Ryan Wingo really stepped up when we needed him. You know, a couple big plays in the fourth quarter before Raleek (Brown) scores. It was a crazy deal. You give up a punt return and you give up an onside kick. The next thing you know you're fighting to finish a game, which we were able to do so. Proud of our team. It is never easy in the Southeastern Conference going on the road going against a good team like that in this environment. What an incredible environment that Tennessee had today in Neyland Stadium. So I thought that the guys fighting through all that, was a good win. I think the bye is coming at a good time for us. We got to get healthy here. We're a little nicked up right now.

On how Texas can win in multiple ways...

“We were playing really good defense. One of the keys we said coming into this game was that we needed to stop the run. We wanted to hold them to 100 yards rushing, you know, so 36 carries for 61 yards and that is exactly what we were able to do. We were able to do a lot of things that we wanted to do. We talked about how we think it's going to be 4th and 20 something and we get an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty that extended their drive. We give up a punt return for a touchdown. And then the second to last play it could have been a hold



and then we give up the fade. And then we give them an onside kick. So outside four or five plays, we played really good football. When your defense is playing like that, you start leaning on them and take less chances and take care of the ball, and try to not give them a short field. And that is how the game went.”

On how the defense performed overall..

“When was the last time that someone had five sacks? So no, I haven't seen anything like that before. What was our final sack number? Ten. You know it could have been 12 and like the one sack we had at the end with the facemask. It wasn't just him (Colin Simmons), it was a lot of guys playing the right way. The coverage was tight. We kinda executed the plan, which was good.”

Texas Senior QB Arch Manning

On Tennessee's defense and the pass rush...

“Yeah, they're a good defense, well coached, so it was definitely frustrating.”

On junior wide receiver Ryan Wingo's performance...

“Ryan did a hell of a job. Really proud of him. He worked so hard. Need to continue to get all these receivers back in the games going forward.”

On having big wins early in the season...

“I think just being in these big-time close games is going to help us going forward because we have a lot of big games coming up in the schedule.”