

**Utah at Washington Postgame Quotes
Alaska Airlines Field at Husky Stadium
Nov. 11, 2023**

Washington Head Coach Kalen Deboer

Opening Statement

First of all, just really proud of our guys. Tale of two halves, kind of a shootout the first half and then the second half both teams especially the defense settled in. I thought we did a good job attacking and finding a way to put points on the board, came up short with the points on the last drive which would've certainly sealed it a little easier for us, but proud of the fight. Proud of the way the guys as a team come together when it matters most and knowing Utah – a very good football team – we knew the two-time Pac-12 champions weren't going to go away lightly. We knew they would bring everything they had, a lot of fight and they did a nice job playing their games at times and then a couple wrinkles in as well.

You talk about next play mentality, it seems like you couldn't have a better example than Alphonso having a mental mistake and then turning it around with the safety. What was your view of the initial error and your take on being able to turn that around?

It's a long way down the field but I could tell that's what happened. Unfortunately you get excited and it's a great lesson to learn from, fortunately we won the football game but you can learn from that. But the defense getting back out there, getting some points with the safety and then just continuing to pick up and play ball. I saw a lot of guys as the game was going along, going to Zo and making sure he knew that they had his back

Looks like you had a conversation [about the illegal formation penalty] with the officials coming out of halftime, did you get a logical explanation?

Yeah, we just had an illegal man downfield, so that means that someone was covered up who went down the field and it's kind of iffy on who that was or how that got called, so it's just something we'll talk about throughout the course of the week.

In the Pac-12 it's been some of the ranked teams that you guys have faced adversity against but you've risen to the occasion each time, what does that say about the make of this team?

There's things where you make your own breaks, the breaks don't always go your way, it doesn't guarantee that you're going to be able to come through. But when you prepare hard and continue to play and fight and you hear that all the time from me about our team but that's what happens. You come off the field and you try to keep the pedal down, maybe some adjustments that need to be taken care of, guys all the years regrouping and we just know that you got to play four quarters, especially in the league right now where every game is a fist fight. It's going to go down to the end and I'm just proud of the guys, that's where we're at right now, 10-0 just making our own breaks and we made a lot of big plays. Give them credit, they did too at times, but I'm proud of the guys being able to find a way to win.

Some of those adjustments defensively in the second half to hold them...

We just did a better job at tackling, the first half some short plays that they broke, things we could do a better job of. They got loose at the end of the half so just a couple of adjustments there, in detail just detailing it up, some communication things we could be better on. The staff did a nice job trying to narrow it down and get the guys back to being confident very quickly. We saw that happen in the third quarter, stepping back on the field and that's belief and trust in what we're doing, both ways, coach to player, players to coaches. You feel it in the locker room once they regrouped, it was time to go back out there and have that 1-0 mindset we talk about. They executed, they did a better job at tackling and made the plays, when we had a chance to get off the field on third down, we did that and it really showed up the entire second half.

Rome is the first Husky receiver in twenty years to go for 1000 yards in back to back seasons, with some of the injuries you guys have dealt with especially at the position this season, how nice is it to have such a consistent player like him at that position?

He's worked hard for this, Rome puts everything into it and he deserves everything he gets. He's just the ultimate team player and it's not about the yards, it's about getting the wins and he's an emotional leader for us. Physically he's doing some amazing things whether it be blocking for other guys, catching the football, he'll do whatever it takes. In regards to 1000 yards two years in a row, that's pretty special, consistency at a high level, a really high level. A couple big plays he made out there today, we've all grown accustomed to that not surprising us. He just goes out there and Mike dials him up and he goes and gets it done.

Washington Quarterback Michael Penix Jr.

On his message to the team during the game...

"Just finish, just finish what we started. We knew that that was gonna be a tough team, but we just had to finish. That was my main point, just to make sure we finish and understand that we've got each other's backs. I mentioned the fumble, and the next play the guy's getting a safety. Just lean on your brothers, trust everybody and just control what you can control. That's what we were able to do in the fourth quarter and the defense shut them out so we were able to finish it out and get a win."

On his comfortability with the running game...

"I'm always comfortable with the running game. We do whatever it takes to win. 10-0 isn't easy, so whatever things we have to do in the first couple games to win, that's what we were able to do. I've always been confident in my guys. The offensive line – they do a heck of a job, they protect me, they've been run blocking very well. We push those guys and challenge those guys in practice all week long and it shows on the field."

On the nature of close game wins...

"Every win is hard. It's not easy to win in the Pac. You've got a lot of great teams and a lot of great coaches. We've just got to do whatever it takes to find that way to win, that's what it's all about. Finding that way to win no matter what the circumstance or who we're playing. We've got to make sure that we rise up each and every time that we get on the field and that's what

we've been able to do. It would be great to win by 40 but it's football. You've got adversity, you've got great teams that you're playing against, so it's not always going to be like that. We know that we've got what it takes to finish a game and come out with a win no matter what."

Washington Tight End Jack Westover

What were you doing differently to get so many balls thrown at you?

"I think they really wanted to keep everything in front of them. When that's the case, I just try to make myself a really easy target for Mike. Maybe cutting some routes short and giving him my numbers. That's really what it was today."

On key 4th down catch...

"We've been working on that for a little bit. I was waiting for the moment and they gave us the perfect look for it. It was a little bluff play and it was good."

On power of Pac-12 play...

"It just speaks to a bunch of guys who have been through a lot. All of us, for the most part, didn't come into college football with a silver spoon, you know. We all had to work for it, we've all been through a lot so that really comes out on Saturdays and it's exciting."

Washington Cornerback Jabbar Muhammed

On what changed from first to second half...

We came in, we had a come to Jesus meeting. Eddie came in and gave us a pep talk and told us we weren't playing like ourselves. Coach Morrell made some hell of adjustments. A lot of adjustments that made us more comfortable and made us play faster and more physical and it showed.

On second half adjustments...

"They run the ball a lot, so we knew that we had to be sticky on the outsides. We knew they were gonna take their shots and a lot of times it was gonna be one-on-one. We lost a few battles in the backend, but we can look at the film and get better at it."

Washington Running Back Dillon Johnson

On this team...

"It's elite, man. I'm grateful to be a part of it. Like I said at the beginning of the season, I don't know if anybody remembers it, but I told everybody: we've got a special group of guys. I'm just grateful to be a part of it, I'm grateful to have even made this decision to come here, so it's been great."

On feeling good on offense...

“Oh yeah, absolutely. I’m feeling great now. I’m comfortable with the system, I’m comfortable with the play calls. Mike throws the easy balls, so it’s easy to catch. O-line’s blocking their butts off. I just gotta do my job, and that’s what’s been happening the last two weeks.”

Washington Linebacker Carson Bruener

On this Washington team...

“We’re gritty, we’re tough. You can throw anything our way. I know that I’ve got 10 other guys on the field and I have trust in every single one of them, and everyone else that comes in and rotates – we’ve all got each other’s backs and we play for each other.”

On playing a lot of “weird” games this season...

“I mean, I wouldn’t say I’m used to it. We want to win every single game, we want to win by a large margin, but once again, it’s football. Other teams execute, I mean, any team can win every single week, that’s just what the sport is. Especially how competitive the Pac-12 is, we’ve got to bring our A-game every single time.”

What does it mean to be 10-0?

“It means a lot. I say it every single day to the linebackers and we’ve been really saying it the last few weeks. When we came in in January after last year, we knew that we had a successful year but we knew that we had more. Obviously the two losses in the middle of the season hurt us for our postseason chances, but coming into this year, every single day we were coming in to practice – pushing sleds on the field in the freezing cold. Every single day we were working – puking out on the field, we’re dead tired where it’s something like, we have these goals set to go all the way and win every single game and we don’t want anyone to get in the way of that.”

Utah Head Coach Kyle Wittingham:

Opening Statement

Okay, outstanding college football game. I'm proud of our guys, they played hard start to finish. Played really well offensively in the first half. Not so well in the second half. I think it was a case of not being as dominant up front in the second half. Not getting our running game going as well in the second half. But give them credit, they made plays. They're a good football team, the Huskies, worthy of their ranking. And like I said, I'm just proud of our coaches and players for the fight they had in them. And just the warrior mentality, and nobody quit. That doesn't happen on this team ever, so that really goes without saying. But tough loss, it's a tough place to play, got a great crowd. And like I said, they got a good football team, the quarterback is tremendous. And it's got a great supporting cast, the receivers are outstanding. And yeah, so that's kind of the long and short of it, so questions.

Kyle, just curious for your thoughts on the sequence with the interception and the fumble at the two, and then the safety, just what were you seeing there?

Yeah, well, I didn't realize he had dropped it prior to crossing the goal line. It was way out the other end from where I was standing. But great hustle by Michael Moncovici. He was right there

pursuing the football and ready to jump on it. And just a tremendous heads up play by that kid. I mean, he's 330 pounds and ran the distance and never stopped on the play. And had the wherewithal to understand that he had dropped it early. And so, just I can't say enough positive things about his effort on that and his awareness. Unfortunately, the next play, we get tackled in the end zone for a safety. And it's still better than giving up a touchdown, but it took some of the wind out of our sails when that happened. But yeah, that was something you see in college football, not in college football, in football on rare occasion. It's not unheard of, and it happened today.

Was Washington doing anything differently defensively to take you guys out?

Not really, and that's something, I gotta watch the tape closely, which we obviously will, and see, you make that determination. But like I said, I just don't think we played quite as well in the second half. Well, I know we didn't, as we did in the first half. And I have to see on tape if there was nothing dramatically different, I can tell you that. But they did make a lot of plays in the second half and held us to a much lower offensive total than what we got in the first half, that's for sure, and shut us out in the second half. We didn't score a point in the second half. So yeah, congratulations to them.

You said you didn't get much up in the front in the second half. Was it something that Washington was doing?

Like I said, I have to go to the tape and see, but it didn't appear that they didn't make any wholesale changes. And we just couldn't get in sync in that second half. We just couldn't get in the rhythm. And it was completely different than the first half. First half, we were in a great rhythm. We were up and down the field, and completing passes, and making plays, and we just weren't able to be as productive in the second half.

What did you think of the game between the two halves? It seemed like you guys were very aggressive early on.

And didn't make as many plays in the second half, and a lot of that was due to they elevated their play. You talked about this obviously being a tough venue to play, they're a tough team.

With everything that you had still kind of on the line, how difficult is this loss with that?

They're all difficult, and it would have taken a lot of things to happen to stay in the race, even if we would have won. There's no guarantees for anything, we would have had to have quite a bit of help. But that's not really at the forefront of our mind right now. It's just disappointment that we didn't find a way to win that thing. And that's the biggest thing. And so we'll just come back in Monday, watch the film, correct our deficiencies and our mistakes. And get ready to play another game on Saturday. They just keep coming, and we'll be ready. We'll be ready to play on Saturday, got another tough road trip down to Arizona. They're playing really well. And we're gonna have to have another good week of practice and preparation just like always.

You mentioned in the lead up how quickly Penix gets the ball out. It seemed like you guys were getting good pressure on him and just missing out on getting it. How frustrating is it to see the big plays happen time after time when you're that close to the end?

Yeah, we're very close, but that's who he is. He's probably gonna win the Heisman Trophy. I mean, that's who he is. And so I would say he's the front runner right now from my perspective. And he's a lot like the kid at Oregon, Bo Nix, who gets it out so quick. And all the great ones do get it out quick. You sit there and hold on to the ball. If you hold on to the ball, you're not gonna be very effective. So he does a phenomenal job of getting the ball out, and he's got a strong arm. He can make every throw in the book. There's not a throw that he can't make. Price almost had 300 yards in the first half. Yeah. I mean, are you seeing the development in real time, or are things starting to click a little bit better for him? Yeah, they are. And what was it, like 14 or 17 in the first half, or some? He's really efficient in the first half, and the receivers were making plays. And we were protecting well. And it just seemed like we weren't as good at anything in the second half.

Utah Linebacker Levani Damuni:

Just what did you think about that game today and how it went, I know its a loss but-?

Yeah, I'm part of the defense you know I think everyone they all left it on the field but at the end of the day they just made a few more plays than us and we knew they were gonna get theirs but there just wasn't enough protection from us. Just one on one where we just need to get home and get those blitzes.

Utah Wide Receiver Devaughn Vele:

What was working for you in the first half?

Just appreciating Bryson giving me chances, we had the matches that we wanted, we made the right calls and its just a blessing that I made the plays that I made. just being in the right spot at the right time.

How does it affect the team mentally when you had that play where it's a tough sequence of events to navigate?

Were used to adversity, we practice it all the time, we go through things. I mean theres always going to be plays in the game that are going to test us, they're going to push us, its just how you respond. It was a whole myriad of emotions that was going on that whole sequence and we were just trying to do our best to respond in the correct way that we needed to.

Utah Quarterback Bryson Barnes:

How tough of a loss is it for you guys?

I mean obviously it's not great, we were rolling on offense in the first half, just wasn't able to find something in that second half and losing is never fun but I love our group of guys, love my teammates and we're going to get through it.

Was there anything they were doing differently defensively?

I mean halftime everybody is going to make adjustments, we just got to figure out what they were adjusting to and we weren't able to find that spark like we did in the first half.