

Pac-12 Football Championship Game: Oregon vs Washington

Friday, December 1, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Allegiant Stadium

Oregon Ducks

Bo Nix

Postgame Press Conference



Washington 34, Oregon 31

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. On the late third down run, Dan was explaining about it being dime in a light box. What was your vantage point? What didn't get executed there to free you up?

BO NIX: Yeah, they had a good twist game with their defensive end. We didn't get it passed off.

We thought they would be able to play two man. They were still in man, but it was kind of more of a one look. The defensive end just made a good play.

Q. That first quarter, so hard for the offense to get going. What wasn't working for you guys?

BO NIX: Well, I think they were just really good. When you look at it, we didn't really get a first down. We didn't get a momentum play. In the second quarter, we finally did and started to move the ball a little bit better.

I just thought the explosive plays weren't there for us tonight.

Q. It was very visible how tough this loss was. I was watching you from upstairs, towel over your head. You took some time to yourself. You beelined it right for Michael. Take us through the process of the collective thoughts sitting there.

BO NIX: Well, football is a tough game. Sometimes you put it all out there and you come up short.

There at the end it was just one of those things where you want the moment to last longer than what it can. Even though we lost, it was one of those type of games that it was really fun to play in.

It was just a shocking end. It's tough when you're so used to go, go, go, go, go. When it ends, it just happens very quickly. I got all the respect in the world for Michael. He's played his butt off this year. I respect him a lot because I know how it is to play through some adversity, to play when you're not necessarily feeling your best.

He showed up tonight and he did a really good job of making the explosive play when he needed it. That just shows what kind of team they are. They battled in a lot of games down the stretch and they pulled them all out. So that's a really good football team.

I think what sometimes hurts is when you put it all out there and it's still not good enough.

Q. You had an amazing run down the left side. Did you think you was going to take it all the way to the house?

BO NIX: I thought there for a second I could. I thought I had a chance. They did a good job of keeping me down, attacking me with angles. They did a good job of keeping me inside. It wasn't necessarily a designed run. The play kind of broke down, got the corner. I thought we showed some really good effort there on that play. We had guys blocking downfield. I think Jackson was running with me.

We unfortunately didn't make enough of those kind of plays tonight. It just kind of put us back. In a game like this, you want to make those explosive plays.

Q. Knowing that you guys are the last two teams to play in the Pac-12, what does it mean to you as a player?

BO NIX: It meant a lot. The Pac-12 has been a historical conference for a long time. I don't know what necessarily the future holds or what it looks like.

To have the year we had with the Pac-12, have the conference as talented as it was for the last one, it's just huge respect level for the whole entire Pac-12, for every team.



Like I said, I don't know what it looks like moving forward. I know there's a lot of good teams in this region and in this conference. It will be interesting moving forward to watch them go.

Q. Obviously the bowl won't be decided for a couple days, but is your intent to play?

BO NIX: I knew somebody was going to ask this.

Can't we just enjoy the moment right now and enjoy our season? That's not today, that decision. I have no idea. I'm looking forward to whatever bowl game that is chosen for us. I'm just trying to get over that loss. I'm not really thinking about anything after today.

Q. With you being so close to being an undefeated team, what are the biggest lessons that you're going to take away from the season that you were able to learn about yourself and your team?

BO NIX: I think when you look at our season, you can take a lot from it, to be honest with you. I think coming off of last year, we had similar goals, similar aspirations. We fell short there at the end.

This year we were able to make it to the championship. We lost to Washington two times. They were both really close games. You can look at both games and go back and nitpick the film and say you could have done this, you could have done that. You can beat yourself up over it.

I'm in an interesting position because I've been flat on my face at times in college football. I've been counted out, just kind of thrown out. The Lord picked me back up, put me right back on the field with a great team.

I know that doesn't always happen. I think it's a testimony to many people out there who are going through difficult times. No matter what happens, I think the Lord has a plan for each one of us. He has a plan for our lives.

I'm extremely honored to be in the position that I'm in because I can have influence on a lot of people. It's an honor to me. I don't take it for granted.

At times like this, you can ask why or you can look up and pout. I mean, look where He's brought me. Look how far He's brought me. Obviously He's not done. The path is still being created. It's just up to have to have faith and follow our hearts.

I think my college career is a huge testament to that. A lot of people can learn from it, that even though you may fall

flat on your face, there's an opportunity to get back up if you really want to keep pushing at it.

Q. You mentioned the nature of the game being go, go, go. That's been your career 60 starts. Has the finality of tonight sunk in for you?

BO NIX: No.

Q. Can you take us inside your head and heart, what it's like in this moment when this has been your life for five years and been chasing kind of a fairly singular thing?

BO NIX: I think that's why I'm in shock. Expecting a game next week. I'm expecting to go prepare for another opponent.

I played five really long seasons in college football. A lot of stuff has been going on from conference realignment to NIL to COVID. I think me and several other guys, our year, we're one of the few guys that got to experience normal and crazy football in college. We really experienced each year something different. Each year was something new.

So, I mean, I'm going to miss college football. I know it was my goal my whole entire life to be a college quarterback, to play and win a national championship. Even though that may be off the table and it's not necessarily something that can be obtained anymore, it was still a goal and I work for it every day.

It's disappointing to lose in a game like this, obviously, for many reasons. I just think going into the game, you don't prepare for losing 'cause that would be a loser's mentality.

When it does happen, it just kind of puts you in shock and you just kind of have to think about it, kind of battle your feelings, battle those negative thoughts.

This is a time to where, again, you get knocked back down, things didn't go the way you wanted them to. But that is life. I know tomorrow the sun will come up and the Lord will still be sitting on the throne. There's way more to life than football and college football. Right now I'm just going to enjoy the moments I have with my teammates. As crazy as it sounds, I'm going to enjoy this plane ride home around the guys because I've had many of 'em before, but not sure how many of 'em I have in front of me.

I don't know. It's just a lot of emotions. A lot going on that, man, you wish you could change. You wish you could go back and do so many different things.

I mean, they're over there on the same side. They wanted



to win, too. That's what is the good and bad thing about any kind of competition, any kind of sports, is there has to be a loser.

As bad as it feels, that's why you play the game. That's why you go out there and put it all out there, not be ashamed to do it. I think one of my critical errors was the turnover. We had a chance to go right back down and score. They just gave us one. I gave it right back, so...

It's those kind of things that just leaves you scratching your head. Just hurts. Like I said, it's life. I'm going to be okay. We're all going to be okay. We're going to get up tomorrow and go back to work and see what life provides in the future.

I appreciate you guys. Thank you.

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Oregon Ducks

Coach Dan Lanning

Postgame Press Conference



Washington 34, Oregon 31

DAN LANNING: All right. That one hurts. I thought our guys fought for the entire game, four-quarter fight. You can't start off slow against a really good team. We obviously started off slow.

They won a lot of critical situations as far as third down. We thought third down was a place we had to be good. They were effective running the ball. We didn't do a good job stopping the run. We weren't able to run the ball. You got to be able to run the ball in games like this.

So open it up.

Q. Even though you lost, what's going through your mind knowing this is the last Pac-12 championship conference game?

DAN LANNING: Really nothing necessarily. Just about this game. I know how hard our players worked. I hate to see them finish on that note. I know we're going to get a great opportunity for a great bowl game. Want to see those guys go out there and compete for that.

We have to give credit to Washington and Coach DeBoer. They did a great job. They had a good plan, executed well. But hurting for the guys in that locker room.

Q. You had to credit your defense for giving the opportunity to stay in the game. What do you say about the way your defense played?

DAN LANNING: Well, I mean, we were in the game. We didn't play well enough. We didn't play well enough on either side of the ball to be able to win against a good team.

We certainly had a chance all the way down to the very last minute. I appreciate our guys' fighting effort for that.

Starting off slow hurt us.

Q. What was the problem tonight with the run defense?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, have to go watch and film and see exactly what happened. We were putting an extra hat in the box there at the end. They were breaking for extra yards. They had some successful runs. We didn't have their number, they had ours.

Q. How much of an impact with Jordan Burch hurt early, how did that impact the run?

DAN LANNING: Jordan Burch is a great player. Certainly makes us better. That would be an excuse. Nobody playing healthy at this time of the season. They're banged up, too. We didn't finish.

Q. What's your thoughts on Bo's performance, the way he was able to rally the guys and get you guys back in the game?

DAN LANNING: Well, I think it just speaks to who Bo is. Obviously he brought us back there to be within one score there at the end. Explosive run. Showed his legs. I thought the guy ran extremely tough tonight. Opportunities he had to run, he put his head down and did everything he could to get the first or explosive plays.

Made some elite throws. That last throw in two minute was really special. So Bo did what I've seen him do all season: he competed till the very end. He handled some adversity. He responded to that. Walking away, I don't know, three touchdowns, a really long run, I'm impressed with our quarterback.

Q. Obviously this is the last Pac-12 game, football. What are you going to miss the most about this conference?

DAN LANNING: Wells, just the competition. This is a great year for this conference. I think you saw a lot of really good football in this conference this year. That's the piece you'll miss.



Q. You talked about the lack of a run game. What didn't work for you guys?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I mean, they had a good plan. Hats in the box. There were times I thought we could have been running the ball, some positive looks. For whatever reason we weren't able to do that.

They played well. I think you have to give credit to them. I think I can probably dive into the film to be able to give you better answers.

Q. It was the least accurate performance for Bo tonight. We're grading on a hard curve where 62% is low. What was it, where when he's used to 70, 75, 80 as of late, that this was a tougher night for him from an accuracy standpoint?

DAN LANNING: The guy threw for three touchdowns. I thought Bo had a great performance. We started off slow early in this game. To have two 3 and outs to start the game off, that put us in a hole. We were playing catch-up a lot of the game. We talked about it at halftime, hey, we're going to go and score a touchdown here, defense is going to get a stop, we're going to get an opportunity to pull ahead. We did just that. We weren't able to maintain that lead.

Our quarterback gave us a chance tonight.

Q. What was working in the middle of the game where you scored 21? Why weren't you able to continue that success?

DAN LANNING: I thought we found some positive runs there to where we could get into a little bit more of a rhythm. We were off schedule a lot in the first half, where you're operating in second and 10, now it becomes third-and-long. That drive out of half to be able to convert two fourth downs I think was huge.

Once we got behind a little bit more, we had to be a little bit more aggressive in the passing game. You have to establish the run a little bit earlier to have that success.

Q. Your only two losses are to this Washington team. What do you say to the committee, especially since obviously 'Bama is out there, what would you say why this Oregon team still deserves to be ranked in, let's say, the top six?

DAN LANNING: At the end of the day, not really for me to decide. I think everybody saw our guys fight out there. Like I said, they never threw in the towel. They worked

their tails off this entire game. A game that we probably faced some adversity we haven't seen.

We've been down in some games this year by two scores. To be able to come back and respond... Again, I think this team has been playing really good ball throughout the season. To finish it off on that note, that's a sour taste in our mouth for sure.

But I'm excited to see what bowl game we get. I know we'll get a great one and have a great team to go compete against.

Q. Bucky Irving was pretty bottled up tonight, and Jordan James had some really good plays. What was the thinking on the sideline offensively with when to go with one guy versus the other?

DAN LANNING: Just trying to find a rhythm. Both those guys are really good players. Jordan certainly had some successful runs. They were certainly clued in when Bucky was in the game that he was going to be touching the ball.

I'll have to go back and look at the film to see what existed there. Have you two talented players. You want to figure out how to use them both.

Q. When you were leaving the field, you 180ed, stopped, turned around and looked. What made you do that, and what was going through your head in that moment?

DAN LANNING: Just thinking about our players. I just want to be around our players, let them know how proud I am of them. Grab a couple guys. There's disappointment in that locker room because of how hard these guys worked. I haven't been around a team that works this hard. I hurt for them because I wanted them to have this one.

Again, credit to Washington. They earned it, deserved it, played a four-quarter game. We probably played the last three quarters. We didn't start off very well in the first quarter.

Q. What makes them so hard to defend?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, you can't take away one guy because they have other guys. I thought they did a good job in protection tonight. We tried to be aggressive at times with pressure. They probably made us pay for that.

Didn't have the tight matches that we needed in the back end. They finished. We didn't. Right? There's times we're hitting them, getting close, but the ball is getting off just before. They made some big-time explosive plays.



We didn't have as many explosive plays offensively for us. So credit to those guys.

Q. You said the standard here is very high. 11 wins has only happened three other times. How do you want this team to define its season?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we want the standard to be that expectation. We have a high expectation for ourselves. There's nobody outside of this room that wants us to do better than those guys in that locker room, these coaches. They know what we had this year. We have a special group this year.

But it's a building block, right? We're in year two. This is an opportunity to build on to this and set the expectation for what it should look like in the future.

And we've got an opportunity to go play in a really good bowl game, right, and cap this thing off the right way.

Q. The three games you've played against this team in the last three years have been three of the best games in college football the last two seasons, decided by nine points. What is the difference between you guys and Washington in that they've been able to finish these out?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I'd say critical moments. Like I said, we were good on fourth down tonight, but we were three of 10 on third down. They were 10 of 15. You got to be better on third down. You got to be able to establish the run.

Last time we played these guys, we were able to run the ball. We didn't have that success tonight. But again, credit to them. They've been good in critical moments. We didn't finish.

Q. How challenging was it to go up against that receiving corps with guys coming in and out?

DAN LANNING: That's a cop-out for us. We have guys that practice really hard and prepare all week. You're banged up. It's that point in the season. They have talented players. We're going to challenge ourselves to be able to handle those players when they're running the ball with the success they are. You have to load the box. That's going to put guys outside on islands a little bit.

Our guys came in and competed, they just outplayed us tonight.

Q. You mentioned the third downs. On the third and nine late, looked like a design run by Bo that got

stopped. What was the thinking on that third down call?

DAN LANNING: They were in dime. They were in a light box. We didn't pick up the movement well. When you're playing dime in a light box, that's an opportunity to have a advantageous run. We emptied the box with a bolt motion. They had less hats in there than we did. We had enough in there to block 'em up. We didn't get it blocked properly and they made a great play.

Appreciate it.

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Allegiant Stadium

Oregon Ducks

Jeffrey Bassa

Postgame Press Conference



Washington 34, Oregon 31

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Jeff, you have been a top 10 run defense. What was about them tonight that gave you guys a lot of trouble?

JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, overall I think it just comes down to execution. We didn't execute. We weren't in the right fits from what it seems like on the field. I still have to go look at the film, see what particularly went wrong.

It just came down to execution. That was really it. I don't think Coach called any bad calls or nothing like that. We're a good defense, like you said. I think it just came down to execution.

Q. How disheartening was it after the Traeshon Holden touchdown, your defense has a chance to stop them and they didn't?

JEFFREY BASSA: When Traeshon scored that touchdown, it gave the whole team a lot of confidence. (Indiscernible) was going up and down and stuff like that. It's up to us on the defense to go out there and get a stop. We failed to execute.

I think that's what the moral of the game was, really just execution. It wasn't that we were letting dudes run free down the field and stuff like that. It just came down to little details.

Q. In the second half, you were seen up on the bench yelling at your guys, getting them going. What were you saying to your defense? What did you see from the fight?

JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, so right after Nikko Reed made that amazing play on the corner blitz, I kind of just went

over to the team, I got everybody up, I just told everybody don't let our highs get too high and our lows get too low. We still have a full game to play. One play isn't going to save the game.

Telling guys to keep their poise. Not letting our highs get too high and our lows get too low.

Q. You guys are so close to going to this goal that you had, going to the CFP. How does it feel to have it ripped away so close?

JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, it feels great. I'm so blessed to be in this position, to even be here right now with Coach Lanning, year two under his system, just the team, the little improvements we've made since last year.

Obviously we didn't get the result we wanted tonight, but I'm so blessed and grateful to be in this position to even be playing for that College Football Playoff national trophy, so...

Q. What do you think it says about the depth of this defense that you guys were able to hang in this game despite missing so many key guys?

JEFFREY BASSA: We have guys in the secondary and guys obviously up front with Jordan Burch getting hurt early. We have young guys that are ready to step up. We feel like they've been showing it in practice.

I think it goes down to our preparation with throwing young dudes in the fire, for them being ready in those big moments, like today was a big moment. I seen Cole Martin out there making huge plays, other guys like Teitum Tuioti and Amare Winston going out there and doing their job.

It comes down to trusting and believing in the system, trusting and believing in each other.

Q. Early in the game it looked like you were sending a lot of pressures at Michael Penix that weren't getting home. Can you talk about the play that Washington's offense had in those sequences, how you adjusted?



JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, we were trying to send some pressures up the middle very early. What they did was they kind of used max protection. They kept the tight end and the running back in protection.

Sending pressure right up the gut is not good against a full man slide. That was one thing they did a good job of that, their coaches. Penix did a good job from him, seeing it early, getting the full slide.

We came into halftime and adjusted. We went from there. But overall I don't think that it was -- I don't think it was just a certain play called that was bad. It was just they had a good counter fit for it.

Q. I know Brandon nearly had the strip sack late there. In the box score it's going to read he had no tackles. That hardly ever happens. People don't scheme him out of games. What do you think they did to be able to take one of your best players, make him not contribute in the box score tonight?

JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, I think just with how much of a force Brandon Dorlus is. Obviously a top dude in the nation, defensive line. Teams are going to look at his film and scout him up. He's been causing havoc since his freshman year, since he started playing this game.

I'm not surprised that they probably started to double-team him and stuff like that, little things like that. I mean, I think their coaches did a great job with Burch going down. But obviously we need guys to step up. That's what we did.

I think their coaches did a great job. I have to look at the film to see if they did double him, but just getting to him, so...

Q. Tonight was the last game of a Pac-12 meeting between you two schools. Not only that, you won't be able to play USC, UCLA. What does it mean to you as a player to have the opportunity to play in the Pac-12?

JEFFREY BASSA: I'm so blessed and grateful to play in this conference. This conference is full of amazing players. I feel like we're a very slept-on conference. We play some great football here on the West Coast.

The amount of quarterbacks that I seen this year from week to week was insane. The great teams, the history behind all these games with all these rivalries being shut down and stuff with all these schools moving to different conferences.

I'm so blessed and grateful to be a part of this history.

Q. As one of the leaders of this team, what is your message to the other guys in the locker room?

JEFFREY BASSA: The message was simple: we can't bow our heads down. We can't bow our heads down. We've got to keep going. We made so much improvements from the team last year. That was something we brought up in the locker room.

We've made so many improvements from a defensive standpoint, me speaking defensively. Being a top-10 rated defense. A better tackling defense, better at attacking the ball, little things like that.

There's been so much growth, there's so much more to go. The sky's the limit for us. I fully believe this program is going to be amazing in the next coming years.

Q. Obviously not the result you wanted. How do you rally yourself and your teammates for what should be a pretty big bowl game?

JEFFREY BASSA: Yeah, just getting them together. Obviously there's going to be guys that are going to make decisions to leave, go into the NFL. There's going to be guys that are going to leave and head into the portal.

This team might look different. But we got to rally up the guys that want to be here, want to be in this program. We got to get them ready to go.

I know we're going to play in a great bowl game. I know Coach is fired up, and I know some of the players -- a lot of the players are fired up, actually.

The guys that are going to be here and stay, they're fired up and ready to go to work. Some of the guys already in the locker room are talking about, I want to see who we play.

I know the mindset on this team and the guys on the offensive and defensive side of the ball is amazing. I'm so blessed to be around a team like this.

Thank you, guys.

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Allegiant Stadium

Washington Huskies

Coach Kalen DeBoer

Michael Penix

Postgame Press Conference



Washington 34, Oregon 31

KALEN DeBOER: Wow, what a game. Didn't expect anything less. Just got to give a nod and tip of the cap to Coach Lanning, Bo Nix, the entire Oregon football team. They've had an amazing year. We've had two battles with them that just, as you know, went down to the wire. We knew it would be that.

Just proud of our guys and the way they continue to just be resilient and find a way. Just always playing in the present, in the moment. Never having regrets. Finding different ways to do it.

Proud of the way we stepped up again, physicality both sides of the ball. Ran the football. Offense and Michael, probably back in sync. A lot of that has to do with just getting the guys and the crew all back together again. Had a couple weeks now where J Macs joined the mix. You can see that timing continue to develop, the rhythm in practice growing. They just found ways to make those big plays.

It took a team effort. Defense did a nice job getting off the field early in the game. Started fast. Got us off to a great start. That lead, we lost it at one point, but that lead was important because it still put us in a small deficit a great drive there in the first quarter by these guys. Just again, proud all the way around.

THE MODERATOR: Michael Penix has joined, as well.

Q. You've had some critical third and fourth down moments late in games where other teams may have ran it, worked clock, but in each of those games you put the ball in Michael's hands... In those moments, what is it about your temperament as a coach and this team where there seems to be this no-hesitation

mentality?

KALEN DeBOER: It isn't even playing the percentages. You want your best players to win football games for you. It's exactly that. I think you said it all. When you got 9 right here, give him the chance to touch the football, make plays. He's been through it all. He's got all these experiences to draw upon. He knows when to take the risk, when not to, how to put the team on his back and just keep moving.

He's the guy we're going to let pull the trigger when we feel like we got a call, put all our trust and belief in him. Other great players around him, of course, that are going to come through him, of course. Rome, even J.P., J Mac had big games tonight.

Just want to give these guys a chance to go win a football game, not play scared, not play just to try to be close, but play to win.

Q. The slants. They kept going to it. Was that just something that you practiced, were able to improve on? Looked like they thought they could beat you in those one-on-one situations. This has never been done before, Pac-12 is over, it ended with an undefeated team. Never happened. You're new-ish to it. But this is huge. What does it mean to you to finish by doing something that's never been done before?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think, first of all, with our coverage on some of their routes, they're going to what they've -- they're looking at film. It's also what they do. Some RPOs and things like that where they're trying to move defenders, get a guy isolated.

Our guys do a great job of film prep on a short week. Really proud of the way they just got bodies on bodies, played physical, but didn't get pass interferences and things like that over the middle.

Proud of the way we continued to respond. They made a play. They got a fourth down. Hit the slant. We lined up and kept playing.



It means so much, your second question, with the 13-0. It's hard to do. It's hard to go 12-0. To have to beat a really good football team a second time in one year, that's just the tip of the cap to our guys, just how they didn't worry about the last game, didn't worry about who was supposed to win or anything like that.

Just focused on us. It's always been about us. We believe that we have what it takes. If we just play in the present and control what we can control, that's what happens is what you see out there today.

Q. I know you weren't thinking about this during the week, but this game did have a symbolic aspect to it, being the last Pac-12 game. Your thoughts on being involved in the last game in this conference, your thoughts about the conference in general, maybe some nostalgic moments for you?

KALEN DeBOER: I think probably two things. Just the historic tradition of what this conference has done, the great teams throughout all the years. We've had many of 'em at U-Dub, historic moments there. Conference championships, national championships.

It is sad to see it happen, that be the last football game. But I think the other part is, just understanding how strong the conference was this year. There were eight teams at one point I believe that were ranked in the top 25. We played the best ones. We played one of 'em twice.

I don't think there's anyone else in the country that's gone through what we went through. We did it not just at the beginning of the year, it was spread out, we did it at the end of the year. We won four games against four top teams here in November, and now in December.

That's tough to do. We did it at home. We did it on the road. We did it in wind, we did it in rain. This team, okay, can do it because we have all those different pieces. We got a defense that will take advantage of opportunity, and we have an offense, you get in a fast track like we had tonight, you see how explosive they can be. We can do it in the air and on the ground.

Being back to the Pac-12. We did it against one of the best years ever the Pac-12 has had when it comes to the depth of the league.

Q. Michael, could you comment as well.

MICHAEL PENIX: Yeah, I'm just super excited to be here and to be in this moment. Obviously, like Coach said, it's sad to see. For us to be able to do the things that we did this season, it's still going on, but to do the things we've

done so far, it took a lot of hard work and dedication.

Like he said, we played a lot of great teams in this conference. We're just super blessed to be a part of it. Just look forward to what the future holds.

Q. You've had pretty special moments in this conference. What do you think makes it unique? What are you going to take away from it as you make this move to the Big Ten?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think getting all the rivalries. For us, it starts with the northwest Pacific area. The rivalries that are built in. Each team kind of has those within the conference.

There's been so many big games, so many great players that have stepped on the football field. I know I vowed to make sure the guys that won championships for us and had those great individual and team efforts, we'll always remember and make sure we celebrate those teams that did great things, that got us to having the program that we have today.

Q. You've played a lot of close games recently. How much did those experiences matter in a game like this?

KALEN DeBOER: I think we always draw on our experiences. There is a deep, deep, deep belief right now in our football team that when the moments get tough, we can really hone in and guys will just do their job. Not get overwhelmed, go execute.

I think, again, can you go back to one game and learn from it. You can go back to all of a sudden two or three. Everything has happened in a different way. We've won it in different ways.

Man, we got a brotherhood in that locker room that is super proud, wants to continue to showcase who they are collectively and how hard they play, how much they love each other. It shows. It shows.

They're just going to leave it all on the football field.

MICHAEL PENIX: For me, I would say the love and trust that we have on our team, it's unmatched. It's unmatched. Man, we've been do it each and every week. We are not going to say we want those games to be close, but to be able to find a way to win each and every week, day in, day out, keeping that 1-0 mindset, it's us versus us. Not worrying about the things on the outside that could possibly be a distraction for our team. I feel like that's what makes this team so special.



We're all about each other. We want to see each other succeed. We know we've done it before. Coach Mac, our strength coach, he put us through a lot of hard times during the off-season so we could be prepared for those moments so whenever we face these great football teams, we're able to come out on top at the end of the day by our perseverance, the love and trust that we have for each other.

Q. Michael, at the end of the game your teammates were chanting Heisman, Heisman, Heisman. What would it be like to take part in that ceremony, potentially win the award?

MICHAEL PENIX: It's just a blessing to be able to be in that talk. For me, it was always the main thing was to win. To be able to do that today on a stage like this, it's incredible. I'm going to always savor this moment.

I'm just super excited. Right now I'm just really living in this moment. Whatever happens come next weekend is going to happen. It's already written. Obviously I couldn't do it without the guys around me.

I got to thank my offensive line for all the work that they put in each and every day to allow me to stay clean on Saturdays, or today on Friday. I'm just super blessed for the guys I have around me. Coach DeBoer and the staff, as well, for sure.

Q. Mike, you had the whole team around you between the third and fourth quarter. What was your message to them?

MICHAEL PENIX: Yeah, just keep believing, keep fighting. The game obviously wasn't over. We just got to continue to stay 1-0. We've been in this position before where it gets tight at the end.

For us it was about trusting in each other. I was telling them just look at the guy next to you, trust that he's going to do his job to help us win this game. That's what it's all about. Loving each other, trusting each other when those moments get big, those moments seem to get tough, having that belief to know we'll be able to make it happen.

Q. Why was it so important for you to be able to establish you can run the ball?

KALEN DeBOER: That's been a work in progress the second half of the season. D.J., along with the offensive line, it's important for us if we want to win a championship, Pac-12 Championship, national championship, for us to have that balance, the ability to be balanced.

If a team has taken Michael and the receiving core away, to be able to move the chains, get those hard yards, we're going to be critical.

We've continued to work on it, plug away. That was a big deal a big part of the game. Especially the way we finished it off there at the very end, the last drive.

Q. Michael, your last touchdown, your pass to Quentin Moore, was that the play call? Was that a check-down? Was that something you saw? Also, I know you've had Jalen McMillan back for a couple weeks, but he was back tonight. How much did that change the offense?

MICHAEL PENIX: That play call to Quentin Moore, that's the play call we've been holding for the past couple weeks. We knew once the moment came, we were going to be able to execute it at a high level.

A special moment for Q. I know how excited he was. You should have saw him in practice when we were installing it, he couldn't stop smiling because he knew he was going to get a touchdown on that play.

It just comes from that belief, belief in Coach Grubb, his play calling. Towards the end of the game, it was a key third down when I threw it to Jalen McMillan on the out route, we were coming off a timeout or -- I think it was off a timeout, and I was talking to one of the other quarterbacks, and I'm like -- it was like third and four, and I was like, We need to go this certain play. On the headsets Coach Grubb called in that same exact play that I said without us even talking about it.

It was crazy to be able to have a quarterback and offensive coordinator be on the same page like that, our connection and bond, our trust we have with one another. I knew it was going to be special and we were going to make it happen.

J Mac, Jalen, he has been tremendous. He's been battling with stuff, but always kept positive energy. He's the ultimate team guy. He wants this team to be successful. He always said he's going to do whatever he can to help this team win football games. Today he definitely showed who he really is.

Thank you. Go Dawgs.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



Pac-12 Football Championship Game: Oregon vs Washington

Friday, December 1, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Allegiant Stadium

Washington Huskies Edefuan Ulofoshio Dillon Johnson Postgame Press Conference



Washington 34, Oregon 31

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. As leaders of this team, heading into the College Football Playoff, where do you expect to put most of your emphasis on?

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: Man, it's kind of funny because in the training room, me and D.J., we actually kind of talked about the schedule, the things we have to do. We were absolutely confident we were going to be able to win all these games. I'm dead serious, we really thought we were going to be able to win all these games, have the opportunity to be in this position.

It's just so special. It's such a blessing to be able to do the work, for it to come to fruition.

Q. Coming into this game as an undefeated team, with a win already over Oregon but being a big underdog, was there an element to feeling disrespected, and then coming into this game and proving you do belong as one of the top teams in the country?

DILLON JOHNSON: Absolutely. I think it was 10-point underdog, which is absolutely insane. We definitely took that personal and we knew coming into the game that we were going to win this game. We've been preaching that all this week. We came out and got the W.

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: It was just kind of crazy just seeing it because, like, who do we play after Oregon? We played one of the best teams in Arizona, we played Utah. All these teams gave us their best punch. The rest of their schedule, they were playing basically everybody else's second punch. I thought it was super disrespectful just to see how hard we work.

We could have lost those games. Yeah, I mean, we do want to win those games by 50, but a win is a win. They're all hard to get. This is the best conference in the United States for a reason. You shouldn't knock us because the opponents are good, too. You know what I mean?

It was huge. A huge disrespect, for sure.

Q. When Oregon went ahead with the touchdown, what was going through your mind?

DILLON JOHNSON: Man, it's a game of momentum. They got the momentum. We just had to go and get it back. We knew our defense was going to get a stop for us. They've been playing great all year. We knew what we were going to do when we got on offense, and that was score.

Q. You guys have been good against the run and the pass all year long. What makes you special?

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: We go against the best offenses in the United States. We have Rome. We have D.J. You don't know how much of a pain it is to go against this guy in practice. When it comes in the game, it's simple (smiling).

We really just play up to our training every single day. We have the fricking Heisman at quarterback throwing impossible passes. The margin for error at practice, you know how it is, there's a ton of bragging rights. Dillon talks the most brag in practice, too (smiling). By the end of the day, iron sharpens iron. We're trying to be the best team we can be, and the results showed, for sure.

Q. Pac-12 Media Day you talked about the bitter feeling you had, everything was left on the table. You went back and all the losses you had last year you made up for it. How does it feel to do that? Is that feeling better now compared to last year? D.J., the game you had, cramping up the last drive, what did you say to each other before the big run? What were you thinking going up against that defense?

DILLON JOHNSON: Man, get the first down. Double up,



get the first down. That's the only thing that was going through my mind.

We knew that coming in it was going to be a tough game, and it was. It was going to come down to whoever had the ball last, whoever was the most physical team. We were the most physical team tonight, and we got the win.

Q. Coach DeBoer talked about the deep belief you have that you're going to win. Can you speak to that idea, going into a game with that sort of expectation for an entire season.

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: One of the things that Coach DeBoer brought, the phrase that he brought, was winners win because that's what winners do. You kind of think it's corny until you really see it come to fruition.

The way that these guys prepare, the amount of attention to detail to every single thing, the meals, the meetings, even the practice groups. They're so detailed. These guys don't sleep. They're nocturnal. If you go at any time, there's a coach working, trying to improve this team.

When it happens in the games, when it's up in the air, it could go either way, there's this full belief that we can win because we put the work in. Every single scenario that can happen in a football game we've seen by the time the game starts.

It's a culture thing. That's the best way to explain it. We win because we're winners. That's what it is, you know (smiling).

Q. You always prep hard, but it seemed like this was different tonight. Was there a bigger commitment, more than before, going into this one?

DILLON JOHNSON: I think so, absolutely. I mean, being a 10-point underdog, the No. 3 team in the country, like he said, it's outrageous. We had a chip on our shoulders coming into the game. We were blessed to have this opportunity, man, to be out there with a whole bunch of fans and do what we did. It was a special moment. We tried to take it all in.

Q. You made a tackle in the fourth quarter while you were prone on the ground. Did you see the ball carrier? How did you make that play?

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: I mean, obviously Bucky is one of the best running backs in open space. When he caught the ball, clearly I saw him. At the end of the day, I slipped, but my mindset was like get him down by any means. There's no excuses.

I just felt I knew he was cutting in. Even though I slipped, I kind of mentally kind of just processed it. I kind of just like extended my arms and grabbed for dear life and wrapped him, got him down as quick as possible.

Q. That is an example of the effort it takes to go 13-0 and win a championship like you just did?

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: I mean, it's not easy. You got to understand that this guy came from literally halfway across the country to get us better. Frick, Mike has how many surgeries? To be able to persevere and get to this moment. Winning isn't easy.

Even this year wasn't guaranteed. There's a whole lot of work. We were 12-0, still a 10-point underdog. You have to fight for every single thing you get. You can say what you want, but we earned it every single game.

Q. What does this performance feel like and how did you achieve what no other team achieved against that run defense?

DILLON JOHNSON: Man, I don't even know what to say to that (smiling).

It's unreal. I'm blessed to be in this position, man, to have this opportunity to go out there and just do what I do, man. I got the trust from the guys, the coaching staff. Everyone believes in me.

They knew I was banged up, but I told them I could have lost a leg, an arm, a forehead, my foot, whatever, and I was still going to be out there giving them everything I had.

I'm just blessed to be here and blessed to be a part of this culture.

Q. Three wins in a row against Oregon. Beating Oregon is different. Beat them last year. Underdogs going into today. Was this different preparation? Where does this rank?

EDEFUAN ULOFOSHIO: I mean, shoot, to be honest with you, I slept at the stadium for three straight days because I was trying to get ready for this game, man.

I knew how big it was. The moment was huge. I just knew that we beat 'em twice, but this one would be a lot sweeter if we get this one. I'm not going to lie (laughter). Just to beat them in a neutral field, everybody was saying...

You can't say nothing. You can't say anything. That's three in a row. That's when it all matters, too. They beat



us. They didn't go to the Playoff. You can't say that Washington isn't back. I mean, put respect on our name.

Thank you. God bless you guys.

DILLON JOHNSON: Thank you.

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