

# Valero Alamo Bowl: Oklahoma vs Oregon

Sunday, December 26, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

**Oklahoma Sooners**  
**Coach Brian Odom**  
**Patrick Fields**  
**DaShaun White**  
**Reggie Grimes**  
**Woodi Washington**

Press Conference

**BRIAN ODOM:** Just like to begin by thanking the Alamo Bowl and the staff that works for the Alamo Bowl, and what a great job that they do putting on the bowl game throughout the week. You can tell that the people of San Antonio are happy to have us here. We feel very welcomed, and I knew that going in because I was part of this bowl game 11 years ago. I know the organization and the efficiency that it's ran, and it's a top-tier bowl game. We're excited to be here and very appreciative.

Secondly, I want to actually give a public thank you to Alex Grinch and how he has ran the defensive side of the program over the last three years. The thing with that is I don't envision the last couple of weeks going as smooth on the football side of things if -- that's a credit to Coach Grinch and the culture that he installed on the defensive side of the ball. It's made the last two weeks run pretty smooth. Very appreciative of him on that. I think the mark of a great leader is if you're not around, how does that organization run, and it's been pretty smooth on our end on the football side of things.

I'd also like to thank Coach Bob Stoops, obviously somebody that I have a tremendous amount of respect for. Obviously I had the privilege of being a player for him some years ago. Obviously kept in touch throughout the years. I know he's had to make a lot of decisions over the past couple weeks, and with him entrusting me to be able to take on this role, I can't thank him enough just because it's great experience for me, and I'm excited to do this for this program.



I also want to thank Coach Calvin Thibodeaux, Coach Jamar Cain, Coach Austin Woods, Coach Will Johnson and Coach Parker Henry. Those guys have helped me so much over the past couple weeks. I've leaned on them a lot, and none of us could do this alone, but they've done a great job with it.

On to Oregon, I think that Oregon is going to be a tremendous challenge for us on the defensive side of the ball. I've always had a lot of great respect for the offense at Oregon and how they do things and how they've done it in the past. I faced them multiple years when I worked in the Pac-12 Conference. They have always done a lot of things with speed. They've always had a quarterback that's been able to run the ball.

But this year in particular their offensive line is probably one of the best offensive lines we've played all year, if not the best. They do a great job up front, a really -- actually really like watching their running back play. He plays very, very hard. Anybody who's coached by his running back coach, Coach Mastro, who I know personally, is going to be a tough kid and he's going to play hard.

But their backs are really good players, and obviously their quarterback is a really, really great athlete. With that being said, he can beat you running the ball, he can beat you throwing the ball, he can beat you distributing the ball.

We've got a challenge in front of us that's going to be huge. They're going to have some young receivers go out, and I know they're excited about getting those young receivers out there and doing some work in the passing game.

Obviously a tremendous amount of respect for the University of Oregon football team, and I know a lot of those coaches personally, and they all do a great job. We've got our work cut out for us on game day.

At the end, just kind of want to introduce these four guys. These four guys are one of the reasons why it's been a joy to come back and work this bowl game for these four in particular. These four are great students. They're great individuals. They're great teammates, and they're really, really good football players.

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I've been blessed to be able to be around them for the last three years. They'll always be close to me individually and my family, and I consider them family.

First we have Pat Fields, one of our starting safeties; Reggie Grimes is going to be one of our defensive ends; next guy is Woodi Washington, one of our corners that's done an outstanding job; and lastly, the guy that has started more games around here for me in the past three seasons, is DaShaun White. All four of these guys are, like I said, great teammates. They do a great job on the field. They're great leaders. But really, really have enjoyed being around them the last three years.

With that, I think we're good to open it up.

**Q. Brian, could you just talk about your decision to come back and coach the bowl game? When did come to that decision, and how did you come to that decision?**

BRIAN ODOM: I don't think it was really ever a decision. Just as long as it was worked out between both universities, and as long as they allowed it, then I was all in. I never hesitated about doing this.

You know what, I'm here to be able to go do a job and do it for the locker room and for these guys sitting right here. But there was never any kind of hesitation on my part, and with that being said, I'm excited about doing it.

**Q. Brian, the logistics of what you're doing and what you did and where you're going is just unique, it's fascinating, it's interesting to me. Could you kind of describe that process from your perspective individually as a coach, being the linebackers coach and then DC this game, and then, boom, you're going to join Lincoln and USC?**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah, as far as any other institution, I think just kind of in speaking on that, I think it takes away from this locker room. I think that every bit of information that's talked about today needs to be about these guys and this locker room and how they're going to play, and all the work that's been invested in order to have this bowl game.

But for me individually, man, I'm thrilled and honored and excited to be able to be in this role, and my job is to put them in position to play well, give them the keys and let them go get after it.

That's kind of what we've been talking about in terms of how things have been going over the past three years, the culture that's installed, and it really is very evident in times

like this.

**Q. It's your first time calling plays; how has that been for you? Have you leaned on -- I know Coach Venables came in there. Have you leaned on him a little bit in terms of calling your first bowl game or --**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah.

**Q. Also how much has Coach Cain, Thibodeaux and those guys helped you as far as working on all that, as well?**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah. Well, to be honest with you I've talked to anyone I have on my phone that's ever called defensive plays, so I've talked to a lot of different people. But on top of that, with Coach Cain and Coach Thibodeaux and the rest of the guys in that room, it's been a collective group effort. We're going to lean on each other and we'll have obviously constant communication.

The other people that I've talked to around this are the safeties and the backers, what do they like, what do they not like, what do they feel comfortable with, what's the best way to fit this. Part of that is I want them to take ownership of it, too, so we're all doing this together and trying to go get a win.

**Q. It just seems like yesterday you were a senior in high school and your career has really flown by. Can you talk about this game, what it means to you and just wrapping your career up playing with your teammates?**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah, and the easy answer is it's the next game and it's a game just like any other on the schedule, and that's really -- I'd be lying to you if I said that. It's going to be a special game.

For me I think it should be a special game for these guys here, but again, at the end of the day I'm from Oklahoma, played at Oklahoma, I've been an Oklahoma guy for a long time, and I want to finish it the right way, and I want to do it for the kids in the locker room and these guys sitting up here.

To me it's very selfish for a 40-year-old dude to talk about how special it is for me. It's about these guys.

**Q. The same question for Pat.**

PATRICK FIELDS: It's big time. I just appreciate the university so much for just helping me grow and develop as a man, and I think the biggest thing I can't emphasize enough is like the family feel that we have here, and I think

Coach Odom hit on it earlier whenever he spoke, but Coach Grinch, Coach Cain, Coach Thibs, Coach Odom, Coach Manning, all those guys I consider them family, and I think everybody who's been through the speed D era with them considers them family because every single day they've challenged us, they've pushed us, they've made us uncomfortable, but because of that, all the older guys can appreciate how much we've grown and we've developed as men.

So you know, just going out in this game last with all my guys, with my coaches who -- I consider Coach Odom, that's my guy, that's my coach. Same thing with everybody else; I wouldn't want to go out any other way. I think we're going to make it one heck of a game and one heck of an experience.

**Q. DaShaun, just wondering as a guy who's a senior, a team leader here, what have the last few weeks been like? Does this feel like a normal bowl game given all you guys have been through, and if it does, at what point did it start to feel that way?**

DASHAUN WHITE: I don't know if any of the last few months having normal, but I would say for me it's really just been about enjoying the moment, embracing all the opportunities I have with my teammates, the coaches. Just spending a lot of time with them on and off the field. It's as simple as that to me.

Just trying to make the best of every situation with this team, and we've got one last one to go after, and that's the one we're focused on, and honestly just can't wait to be able to go out there and hit the field with these guys.

**Q. DaShaun, to lose Coach, not looking too far into the future, but it's probably been a strange transition, what you just talked about, part of it is knowing he's the guy you've been closest to among the whole coaching staff and now he gets this moment to call plays and then he's moving on. What's that feel like personally?**

DASHAUN WHITE: It's a little confusing to be honest with you. I love Coach Odom to death. I'd do anything for him. I've tried to do my best for him, and I think that we've complemented each other very well over the years.

I'm really looking forward to this last one. That's kind of what everything boils down to with me. I'm really just trying to enjoy this last experience with everyone that was a part of this team that has been so close to my heart for honestly so long. Yeah, that's what I'm really looking forward to.

**Q. Reggie, with the opt-outs and stuff you've kind of taken a leadership role. How has that been now that**

**you're here reflecting on the last couple of weeks as the voice of the defensive line and stuff like that?**

REGGIE GRIMES: It's been great. This whole transition has been kind of smooth. I think guys have taken to me well, and this is -- we all have one common goal, and that's to win, wanting to make plays, to be the guys that we came here to be. You don't come to Oklahoma to not be a dude; you know what I mean? I think it's been great. It's been an easy transition. We're having fun.

**Q. Woodi, what's it been like playing for Bob Stoops and the preparation for this game? What was your relationship with him like if there was one at all before November 29th? And I also want to ask you about Isaac Stoops, what's it like having him around?**

WOODI WASHINGTON: It's been great. Obviously Coach Bob Stoops' resume speaks for itself. He's been doing great things for however long, and as far as Isaac and even Drake, I kind of worked out with them during quarantine when we had the COVID outbreak. Those are great guys. I love Coach Stoops and I love his family.

**Q. Pat, kind of in the same vein there, you're a home state kid. What's it been like having Bob coach you, and have there been moments where you've seen Coach Bob come out instead of the guys you've known the last two, three years?**

PATRICK FIELDS: Yeah, it's crazy because I've kind of known Coach Stoops from I guess more of a unique position than other guys because me and Drake and Isaac, we played against each other back since high school, so I know them both as like a coach who recruited me and also kind of like as a person.

But just having him here, I think like Woodi said, his resume speaks for itself and he's like a legend, and I think the way he's come into things and embraced things kind of like solidifies him that much more as being a legend and speaks to the type of program that we have that we can call a Hall-of-Fame coach literally off the golf course to come in and coach.

I think that speaks to what the University of Oklahoma is, and then also as well as seeing all the players that reached out on Twitter in support, I think that speaks to the university, but just having Coach Stoops as a coach, I think it raises the intensity, the competition of practice, and I think all of us want to play up to the standard that he set. It's like we're playing for a legend, so everybody has to take and elevate their game to the next level.

I think he's been pretty cool with us. We got to negotiate

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our curfew and all that, so he's been very cool with us.

But I think the biggest thing, he doesn't really have to take it out of us. I think we want to elevate our game because we're playing for him, if that makes sense, so he doesn't even have to come crazy, it's just everybody wants to live up to the legend status of him so everybody is kind of taking their games to the next level.

**Q. Brian, you mentioned everybody you know, called them by phone, talked to them by phone. What did they tell you about calling plays?**

BRIAN ODOM: Be yourself. Be yourself. Let your personality come through. A lot of it was just kind of -- they know me. They know the preparation habits that I have, and trust your preparation.

**Q. Would you say it was a couple dozen? How many people would you say you talked to?**

BRIAN ODOM: Probably close to 10.

**Q. Brian, I assume Bob wasn't negotiating any curfews with you guys, was he?**

BRIAN ODOM: No, we didn't get that negotiation.

**Q. Reggie and DaShaun, you guys I think are around some of the coaches that decided to come back for this game. What have you seen in just the challenge? They obviously wanted to be here. They wanted to coach you guys. But they're probably thinking about moving and new housing and families, all those sorts of things logistically. Have you noticed any stress or do you sense them sort of able to balance it all?**

REGGIE GRIMES: Not necessarily. I think it's more of focus on the main thing, and that's this next game. It is a little bittersweet just realizing that they won't be our coaches next year, but they'll still always be our family. As far as that's concerned, we're just going to go out and play balls to the wall for them.

DASHAUN WHITE: Really agree with him. I'll keep it at that. I agree with him.

**Q. Woodi, just wondering what your early impressions are of Brent Venables, the guy who will be leading this program moving forward, and the staff he's putting together and all that, or have you mostly been focused here on the Alamo Bowl?**

WOODI WASHINGTON: I've just been focused on this next game, kind of like Reggie said. We all have one

common goal and that's to win, but as far as Coach Venables it's kind of like Coach Stoops, his resume speaks for itself. He did a great job at Clemson, a great job when he was here at OU the previous time. Right now I'm just trying to focus on this next one.

**Q. Woodi, I want to follow up on that question. I know that you want to look towards this game only, but I've got to ask you, I know you're a guy who has an opportunity to move on if you'd like. Do you know about your future? Is this going to be your last game at Oklahoma or are you still trying to decide that?**

WOODI WASHINGTON: No, I'm definitely coming back next year.

**Q. Brian, I know this is kind of more of a news question, but those COVID-19 protocols, what are the players following, and is there testing? What's involved with all that?**

BRIAN ODOM: Well, you know, being a part of the COVID era at the University of Oklahoma was one -- the university did an outstanding job being able to get us through the 2020 season. The majority of our staff and players are vaccinated. We are masking within meetings. Other than that, we're following our typical protocols, which I would envision would be as strenuous as anybody in the country. The whole point of that would be so we can play the game.

Furthermore to that, you can't control what goes on 24 hours a day, especially whenever you live in a hotel for a week, and they're going to have free time. There's certain things you can't control, but on our end of the university, speaking for the university, we're doing our fair share of our protocols to ensure that this will go on.

**Q. Brian, I've got a two-part question for you. We talk about the importance of quarterbacks, you mentioned it with Oregon. Can you talk a little bit about Caleb and what you've seen, his maturity grow through the season when you guys go good-on-good, and when Bob Stoops arrived to take over the program, do you see any similarities to how he entrusted himself with that team back in the late '90s compared to what he did this year?**

BRIAN ODOM: You know, being able to go against Caleb Williams, I'll just go back to spring ball, and one of our linebackers named Shane Whitter. Shane is one of the fastest guys on the whole team. Shane was playing a position where he would be responsible for the quarterback in a quarter one zone read. Caleb outran him to the sideline, and I was really confused about -- I thought Shane wasn't giving great effort because Caleb beat him to

the sideline.

Come to find out, Caleb Williams runs about 21 miles an hour, so he's obviously a threat when he carries the ball. He's got a tremendous release.

The thing I do like about Caleb, though, is his energy and his leadership ability from the quarterback position and just being able to be a likable guy, and a lot of times you can kind of measure that when my own son goes up there and he goes to practice and he goes and -- handshake or dap up my 12-year-old son. He doesn't necessarily know that that's my son, but that's kind of who he is. I think he's a special one.

What did you say the second part?

**Q. When Bob arrived is there a lot of similarities between the two times?**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah, there's a definite -- in the team meetings, at practice when he's got everybody around, you definitely kind of have that same feel that we had back in the day. His genuineness, how genuine he is, the way he handles the group, the way he speaks to them, you know, it's very sincere.

He's serious about it. He wants to win, and there's no question about that. I think that he's made no secret of that. But he definitely commands the room whenever he talks.

**Q. You mentioned in your opening remarks some of those guys that have taken on defensive duties who were largely analysts or in different roles. Can you talk about how you all decided who to pull in and how it would all be divided up?**

BRIAN ODOM: Yeah, well, the NCAA has certain rules about how many people can wear headsets, how many people can actually have headsets with microphones. Austin woods is one of those that he's an analyst so he was not able to wear a headset with a mic. So elevating him to be a full-time coach for this game allows him to be able to talk on the headsets during the game, which is going to be very valuable because Austin is extremely intelligent, does a great job in the box.

Will Johnson and Parker Henry were already on-the-field assistants, so we kept their roles basically the same. Will is taking a bigger role in the defensive backfield, and Parker has taken a bigger role in the defensive backfield, as well. But we've been meeting -- a lot of our meetings have -- whether it be the whole position meeting or portions of the position meeting have been the whole back seven.

So that's actually -- I've really enjoyed that from my point of view because I got to see how good these safeties are and the nickels are in meetings and how they communicate in meetings and how they are able to identify stuff in meetings.

A lot of that stuff was very beneficial for us as backers to be able to be in the same room and hear it and see it, and it gets you excited every time you go to a position meeting that you're going to get feedback and you're excited about the things that these guys know.

**Q. Coach Odom, you talked about Will Johnson. He's a younger guy that played here. He was also, I believe, you had him during the transition between coaches out on the road recruiting. Can you talk about his growth in coaching from the time you first got here up until now?**

BRIAN ODOM: Will is one of those guys that you knew he always had it in him, but his growth from year one to year two has been -- I mean, it's been pretty substantial.

The places that Will does a really, really great job is the one-on-one -- if he's sitting there talking to a kid, talking about technique, or if he's talking to a kid watching film with him. He's really, really good as far as technique and his knowledge of the scheme is outstanding from the back end's perspective.

But his growth, being able to take ownership of that and his growth as a coach I think has been very valuable for us as a staff, but also it's going to prove he will benefit from that in the future for sure.

**Q. I know one of the first things we asked Coach Stoops about when this match-up came out was the last time OU and Oregon played and I know you know all about that, as well, but curious how much about these guys know about that last time in 2006 because they were all a lot younger. Has that come up much at all during bowl prep?**

BRIAN ODOM: No, not really. I think in terms of -- something we talked about early on, the first time I talked to the defense, they're in a very similar place that we're in as a program. Now it's going to come down to our locker room versus theirs and who's going to be more excited about being out there, who's prepared the right way over the last two weeks, because these guys are smart enough to know that the game in -- you said it was 2006, doesn't matter. It has no bearing on this outcome, on this game. I think they've done a great job of buying into the fact of it's about what we do and our preparation that's going to

determine the outcome of the game.

**Q. Brian, with your relationship with Alex, I wonder if you could maybe describe some of the things you learned from him that you're going to impart in this game. As an additional question, how much of what we're going to see Wednesday night is going to be what Alex's defense looks like and how much is going to have your imprint on it?**

BRIAN ODOM: Well, we're going to see a completely different defense. We're going to run cover zero the whole game (laughter). They said put your personality on it, so that's what -- no, I'm joking.

My job is to reduce any kind of stress or any kind of things that would weigh our guys down. Go out and play fast, play the defense that we know, that we've ran for the last three years.

In terms of play calling and things that -- in talks with Alex over the years, what's your next call, and who is now put in stress by that formation or that play call. So what person on the defense am I trying to protect, what person on defense am I tried to hide, what person on defense in a certain situation do we want to take out of the game.

There's some things that go into it. Obviously I'm not going to sit here and act like I know what I'm doing because I haven't done it yet, so we'll see how it all goes on game day.

**Q. Pat, obviously a month or so ago fans of the program, you guys within the program, a lot of turmoil when Lincoln leaves, and I think when Brent got hired there was a renewal of people's spirits. This is obviously the first time you guys have been on the field since then. How important is it internally to play well, but do you feel like there's some impact on the larger Sooner Nation, if you will, how you guys play?**

PATRICK FIELDS: I think it's just living up to what the standard of what the University of Oklahoma is, not particular to a coach or a situation or whatever. I think the university demands a high level of football play because that's what we've done historically, even before Coach Stoops, before Coach V, talking Barry Switzer and all the legends that have come through here, like the standard has always been to play excellent football. For us we're just the 2021 team and we're doing our part in ensuring that the standard is upheld.

But I think Coach V, he demands a very high standard, and I think -- I'd be naïve to say this game doesn't mean a little bit more because obviously this is my last game here, this

is my last game with Coach O, my boys and all my other coaches, so I'm willing and ready to give whatever it is that I have for this game and to come out with a W, and I think there is a little bit of emotions that are going into it, so I'm not going to negate that, but I think we've just done an incredible job of keeping the main thing the main thing, and we have our duty and responsibility whenever we signed to come to OU to live up to the standard that OU has created, not a particular coach or player or situation or anything like that.

**Q. Pat, we saw you practicing your Spanish the other day and know that you were on a quest to find some horchata. Have you been able to find some or any other Mexican food?**

PATRICK FIELDS: So I found horchata last night for the first time and then I went to La Margarita or something like that my first night here.

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