

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Oregon Ducks

Malik Benson

Press Conference

MALIK BENSON: Do what we gotta do. Last time we didn't play good team ball, but we've grown from that moment. So just getting another opportunity to -- we got Coach Lanning trusting us that they're going to make the calls and trust us to go out and execute.

Q. Can you describe the vibe now that you're here?

MALIK BENSON: Man, it's really just a blessing. Back when I played here, I never thought that I would be playing here again in another jersey. So you know, for a lot of my teammates, it's going to be their first time, but I'm just telling them we can't make the game bigger than what it needs to be.

Even though it's a playoff game and things like that, we gotta come out here and next game mentality and just come out here and have fun. Obviously the goal is to make it to the National Championship, but before we can do that, we gotta handle this one.

Q. You go to different stadiums --

MALIK BENSON: Yeah, for sure it feels a little different because it's the Falcons stadium, but not really. Like I said, just telling my team we're playing in an NFL stadium, and it's the same 100 yards. You just gotta go out there and do what you need to do.

Q. (Indiscernible)

MALIK BENSON: They're able to click a lot. With an older team like that, they've had a lot of looks and for them to be in college football so long is for sure slowed down for them.

Q. Can you talk about the go ahead touchdown?

MALIK BENSON: On third down, the hot boys, we gotta be at our best. So knowing I got the call and knew I was



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on the backside, and like I said earlier, the work that me and Dante have put in all throughout the season, it came alive and he trusted me to be in the spot. And I was at the spot, and I knew he was going to give me the ball and really after that, it was me trusting my speed and trusting my training up to that point and finding a way to get into the end zone for our team so we could win.

Q. -- when you see all the players around you, like how many guys you outran?

MALIK BENSON: So it's crazy, I saw it once it was on film. But in the game, I just seen the furthest guy and the safety. I didn't know that there was five guys right there.

Q. What is it like for you knowing that you are going to have some teammates who get an opportunity in this game that maybe haven't had as much of an expanded role this year?

MALIK BENSON: I mean, I'm just really excited for them. This is one of the biggest stages. So we're Oregon, we got good players, and they got good players at Indiana. But it's really just whoever wants it more, honestly. And just to know that my teammates, we've all been working just for this very moment, I just can't wait to see everything unfold.

Q. Obviously offensively it probably wasn't the game that you guys envisioned in the last one, especially in terms of the sacks. It's not really a "you" stat per se, but what have you worked out offensively?

MALIK BENSON: We really watched on that film, and one thing we learned is with this team, you can't have a lot of mistakes. They're a well-disciplined team. So just going out here and everybody is doing their 111 and not worrying about the next man 111. Just for me just knowing that I'm doing what I need to do in the blocking game, in the pass game, for the quarterback, things like that, just knowing if I just do my job, I know that my team is going to do their job too.

Q. Are you taking any moments this week to kind of think about more on your journey and you kind of --

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you went through a few different places to finally be here to be where you wanted to be and have you taken any more time to reflect on that?

MALIK BENSON: Yeah, just a little bit, but not too, too much. But I do just want to say, God is amazing, you know. Transferring as many times as I did, having to go to junior college. You know, as a little kid, I never thought that. I thought I was going to be at one school and that's what it was going to be.

But just knowing that I'm here at Oregon, they gave me an unbelievable opportunity. Coach Stein, Coach Lanning honestly just tell me what it is and just allow me to be myself. That's honestly what's made me be able to have the season I'm having.

Q. What do you think it allows -- about Oregon allows so much guys to transfer in and have success there like you've had?

MALIK BENSON: Honestly, everybody is going to look at the football side of it, but I truly think that the reason why me and my teammates that have transferred are able to come in and have impactful seasons is because guys like Poncho that have been here, they welcome us with open arms, and just the connection, like that's the one thing you get kind of nervous about when you're transferring is like am I going to fit in because you don't know these guys. Especially like me, I transferred from Florida to Eugene, that's on the other side of the world.

So it's like am I going to fit in, things like that. But knowing that Coach Stein, Coach Lanning, all the coaches stress connection and things like that, just being able to be around my guys and being around the other transfers that have been in, they were able to give me a heads up on what I could expect.

Q. Was it the same kind of anxiety walking in the door not knowing how you'd be received or did you feel pretty confident?

MALIK BENSON: I was very confident because I knew what type of coach Coach Lanning is, and I knew when he was recruiting me in junior college, he was telling me that connection is just the biggest piece. So I knew once I was going to come to Oregon, it wasn't going to be an issue for me to get along with my teammates because like I said, they all welcome me with open arms.

Shoot, I never met any of them because on my visit, they were out on their little break before we started back up with winter workouts. But them guys were calling me, checking in with me, asking me if I needed anything, they got my

back. Like I said, just that connection piece, I feel that's the reason we're able to have the success we're having.

Q. When you see Coach Lanning how intense he is and how he motivates, what is something about him that we don't know that you guys see being around him?

MALIK BENSON: Man, he's really a player's coach. In practice, you would think that he's going to be just this serious type of guy. But when you see like your head coach smiling and cracking jokes, and outside of football, he's allowing you to come to his house and he's cooking food and he's doing things like that, like there's really no bridge like of coach to player. We just all feel like a family.

Q. You've probably already been asked this, just strength in numbers, Coach Stein said you've done it all year. What gives you the confidence that you can do that on this stage?

MALIK BENSON: Man, it just gives me confidence knowing at one point we were down receivers and us receivers stepped up. So I know we got a lot of great dudes just all around the team. And everybody is trying so hard for this moment. And on a stage like this, this is the stage that everybody dreamed of. So I know that whoever goes out there, no matter who it is, they're going to be ready to play.

Q. How have the running backs responded this week?

MALIK BENSON: We got a fantastic coach in Coach Stein. He keeps them humble and keeps them ready for their moment, and we got great coaches at Oregon that put us all in great position to be able to go out and do what we do.

It is just everybody knows the game plan. Shoot, if we gotta come out, you know, other guys gotta align at running back, we're all just ready for that.

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