

Stanford University Football Media Conference

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Coach Lincoln Riley Caleb Williams Max Williams Postgame Media Conference



USC - 41, Stanford - 28

LINCOLN RILEY: We're really excited about the win. We came down here for one reason. This series has been really one-sided over the last 15 years, especially here, so we took that personal.

Kind of the two sides of you right now, I'm thrilled for the victory, and that overshadows, I think -- not overshadows. That's definitely the number one thought and take-away.

Just look at 12 months ago. Look at 12 months ago. This is a good Stanford team and a lot's changed. I'm proud of the way our guys responded. Getting road victories in conference are like gold. I told you all that at the beginning of the week, and that was huge for us.

The good is really, really good on all three sides. The bad is not good enough right now. The bad is -- and that's coaching. That's offense. That's defense. That's special teams. There's too much inconsistencies. For us, that would be great to raise the ceiling of our play, but more than anything, we've got to take the bottom part of our play, the not good plays, we've got to raise those up. That's the number one thing for us right now.

But I thought the sides complemented each other, took care of each other. The turnovers, I think, were the biggest thing again two weeks in a row defensively. Obviously, the two red zone turnovers were huge at that point, and offense did a good job of taking advantage of those turnovers in the first half and built a pretty nice lead.

Didn't play very good -- didn't play up to our standard offensively in the second half. Had some opportunities, had some good field position. We didn't do a good job on third downs. The Rice offensive PI was a huge play in the game. Wasn't very good by me; wasn't very good for the offense in the second half.

Loved our defense closing it out. Still had a few too many mistakes, like you're going to have in a second game, but we found ways to win and separate it on the road.

Proud of these guys. I know we've got a lot of work to do. Our best football is a long ways away from where we are right now.

Q. What did you think of the slow mesh offenses they were throwing, something you really hadn't really seen before?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's their RPO game. It's unique, kind of how long they take, especially to not have any linemen downfield calls with that, I would consider that not a minor miracle, but a major miracle.

But you've got to defend it. You've got to defend it. You've got to -- we missed a couple of gaps in the run game. I thought we defended the throws honestly pretty well. We had a lot of PBUs. We had a couple with a pick. I thought a couple of the interference calls were -- I'm not saying they're bad calls. They're competitive calls, but I thought a couple of them we were in really great position, and we take that exact same technique all season.

But we needed to do a little bit better job in the run game. So we were explosive defensively -- the sacks, the turnovers were great. We've got to be more consistent.

Q. What do you attribute the (indiscernible) of the defense to? What's the one area you can fix?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think the easiest fix is just that we're still making a few too many mental mistakes throughout the course of the game where we're not in a gap or not lined up or not playing a call the way that it's designed.

Because I thought we did a pretty good job tackling. We're getting the ball out. We're playing really, really hard. There's a lot of good physical plays out there, but we've got to clean up the mental execution.

Right now in this game we gave up a few too many plays



where we're not in the gap, and against a good offense like that, you make it a lot easier on them than obviously we planned to.

Q. How much of that is just maybe -- I mean, it's a new coaching staff, so many new players, and just a function of time?

LINCOLN RILEY: We're just not going to use that crutch. Our opponents aren't going to play us any different. We've got to get better. We're doing a lot of good. We know we've got to get better. Coaching-wise, we've got to get better. Playing-wise, we've got to get better.

Should it get better as we go? If we're the team we think we can be, then yes.

So you definitely expect constant improvement, but I'm not the guy who's going to sit here and say, well, it's just not good enough right now because we haven't had enough time yet. No excuses. We can play better. We can coach better.

That's offense too. Look at offense in the second half. No excuses from us. We know what to do. We know how to coach. We did it a lot. There was much more positive than negative tonight, so I do not want that to be the vibe walking out here, and it's darn sure not in that locker room right now.

Again, look at 12 months ago. But the best teams do continue to improve throughout the year, and that's our expectation.

Q. Caleb, could you walk us through that long touchdown to Jordan Addison?

CALEB WILLIAMS: Caleb Williams. Yeah, we worked it all week. We got a lot of practice with it. We got the right look at the right time, and we just executed the offense overall. All 11 guys on one page. Jordan did his job. Our routing receivers did their job. All the linemen and the tight ends, running backs, everything like that, we all executed all as one at one time, and it worked out perfectly.

Q. Lincoln, where do you feel like the offense is given that it's week two for this coaching staff? Does it feel on schedule to you?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't really try to decide like if it's on or off schedule. Like to me, it's just -- I believe that group, like the other groups in our team, can be really, really good. We've had some really good moments here in the first two games that I'm extremely excited about. We have a lot to clean up and a lot of consistency to find again

coaching-wise, playing-wise.

We're just on our climb, right? We're just on our journey. I think all three units of this football team can be really, really good, but we've got to continue to improve and do it more often.

Q. How do you think you did physicality-wise on both sides of the football tonight?

LINCOLN RILEY: I thought for the most part we were pretty physical. I did. I thought we hit. I thought the O-line for the majority of the game did a nice job up front. I thought we tackled. We knocked the ball out. We held onto the ball. We ran through tackled, like we did most of the things you need to do.

Can it get better? Sure. Of course it can. But we are certainly improving there and embracing the team we want to be in terms of physicality.

Q. Caleb, what did you see when you audibled at the line on Travis Dye's touchdown run?

CALEB WILLIAMS: I'm trying to think. You talking about the one where he split down the middle? That was actually Coach. We had another call. I looked over at him, and he ended up just checking me. So that was on big dog.

LINCOLN RILEY: No, that was him. (Laughter).

Q. You called timeout before a screen play to Jordan for a touchdown.

LINCOLN RILEY: I'm trying to remember. Yeah, play clock was just getting down. Play clock was low. Glad I didn't, right? No, no, no, yes, yes, yes.

Q. Max, what have the emotions been on this journey coming back from the second injury to be able to make a big play like that, get involved? What does it mean to you to have some impact plays once again?

MAX WILLIAMS: I would say this time last year I was on the sideline rehabbing from injury and not being able to contribute. It just makes me much more appreciative. I'm having fun out there. I'm healthy, and it's just a blessing to be out there making plays.

LINCOLN RILEY: I say too this guy's been a warrior for us. He had a little medical thing done after spring. He could easily not push through spring and had it done then. He didn't do it. He waited and got every single rep he possibly could, fought for it, got everything cleaned up, and was back full go in fall camp when he wasn't quite 100 percent.

So this guy in a lot of ways embodies what we want in this program, a toughness, an edge, a desire to be out there. And that's why you see him making some of the plays he is and improving like he is. He's been an absolute warrior for us.

CALEB WILLIAMS: Also to add to that, he's played -- since I've gotten here, he's made me better. Two, like Coach said, he fought through all those little injuries, anything like that, all the little medical stuff. Then he came back in the fall and played five different positions on defense, wherever they needed him. Like Coach said, that's kind of what we need and the type of players we need mentality-wise.

Q. Next week is Fresno State, Coach. That's a program that has a lot of momentum. What's your early thoughts on that matchup?

LINCOLN RILEY: It will be fun. An in-state matchup. I have a ton of respect for Jeff Tedford. I coached against him a long, long time ago when I was just getting started and obviously watched the jobs he's done at his various spots. He was always one of those guys you looked up to.

So it will be very cool to get to coach against him. We'll be excited to be back in the Coliseum. I'd imagine people back home are pretty excited about this team, and you've got to come watch them. They're pretty fun to watch.

Q. What's been the biggest challenge of just -- you've got a new coaches, new scheme, and a lot of new players. Just trying to get that all to mesh.

MAX WILLIAMS: Probably just adjust to the speed of the game again. I was out for a while. So just getting back, adjusting to the speed of the game again, learning the techniques again, getting my body right, pushing through things. So, yeah, that's about it.

Q. Is there anything about integrating all these new things since you've been back?

MAX WILLIAMS: What do you mean by that?

Q. Just new coaches, new scheme, a lot of new players.

MAX WILLIAMS: I would just say we all came together really fast. So it's not -- I don't really look too much into that because like when new coaches came, when new players came, we all bonded so fast. We all came together fast during the workouts, locker rooms. Just bonded really fast. So it's like truly a brotherhood.