

Stanford University Football

Media Conference

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Stanford, California, USA

Marcus Freeman

Postgame Media Conference



Notre Dame 49, Stanford 20

MARCUS FREEMAN: A chance to, as I told them, to earn this year's Legends Trophy. Last year's trophy was earned by last year's team. Proud of the way they did that.

You try to get them to focus on the opportunity they have right now. I know there's a lot of talk on what happens after this, but we couldn't focus on that. We have to focus on this opportunity right now, and they did. They came out and played really, really well.

Obviously didn't finish the game the way we wanted. But got to a point where they got to continue to -- doesn't matter what the score is, got to continue to go out there and play.

So proud of them, how much they've improved from really week one to now, how consistent they're playing. We're going to enjoy this and fly home and figure out what's next for this football team.

Q. Take us into the fourth down, fake punt. What was the play call?

MARCUS FREEMAN: It was something we've been working on for a couple weeks. We knew if we got a certain look, we would check to it. We got the look that we wanted. We checked through it. We executed.

Credit to Coach Biagi, special teams unit, the punt unit. They've been practicing that for quite a while. They executed just like they practiced, really flawlessly. Proud of the way they executed.

It really helped. The game, got to 21-0 out there. Really kind of put this game into a position I think we knew we were pretty much in the driver's seat.

Q. All along it's been focusing on the here and now, don't worry about the rankings. Today a lot of the teams in the top 10 won. What would your message be to the board now?

MARCUS FREEMAN: I mean, (indiscernible) you talk about a team that is probably playing as well as anyone right now, won 10 straight games in a row, I think all of them by double-digits maybe. You want the 12 best teams now. I know you have the conference champions and the Group of 5 highest ranked teams. You talk about who are the best teams now, not week one, but now.

Q. The conversation at halftime with Jeremiyah that you had you were going to go, what went into that?

MARCUS FREEMAN: I told him you know how you feel. I know you're hurting, but you know how you feel. You have to make a decision about what's best for you.

You feel like you can go, that's what is best. I know he wanted to go out there and put on a Heisman Trophy worthy performance. We owed it to him to say, If you feel like you can go, go.

That tells you the type of competitor he is. I know he's hurting. It was safe for him. We wouldn't put him in harm's way. I left that up to him.

Q. As a coach and competitor, what is it like to have these fourth quarters, reserves, what they do mattering to the committee? How do you navigate that?

MARCUS FREEMAN: We were at a point where we felt like we had the game in hand, so you have to make decisions when you're in the game that you believe are best for your team, right? What's best for our team is that moment is you have a chance to get some backups in that might help them improve. You might need those guys this season.

When I know we have a game won, it's more important for me to make decisions that are best for our team, which is going to be getting some younger guys, maybe some backups in, because they'll get valuable reps in that game.

Same thing happened in Pitt, same thing happened versus Syracuse. We're going to put these guys in because it's going to help our team improve when the backups and



third years get some real work.

Q. Can you take us through the whole process with Jeremiyah from going out there to see if he's okay on the field? When he goes back to the locker room, how much are you aware of what's happening there?

MARCUS FREEMAN: I went out there and saw, you could tell he's hurting. I think it's a rib injury. We're going to get it checked out, x-ray it. Went and did that. Came back in, said, Hey, he's going to try to give it a go. He gave it a go. You could tell he was hurting. That was probably close to the end of the half.

Again, I just had a conversation and explained, Hey, if you can help us, this is what is best for the team, you make that decision.

Q. How hard was it this year to focus on what you guys had to do in winning these 10 games in a row but also knowing there's a lot out there College Football Playoff-wise beyond our control?

MARCUS FREEMAN: Personally I don't do those things. Maybe some other people in our program might. It doesn't help us take advantage of the opportunity we have in hand. That's what I kept trying to tell those guys. You have to value what you have. We have this opportunity right now.

It was like this every week. If you don't value what you have, you'll lose it, you'll lose that opportunity. You won't maximize it. If you're not thinking about this opportunity, which we just had, then you're wasting this opportunity you have on things that don't matter, that you don't control. I don't want to say that don't matter, but you don't control.

It's so true to life. If you don't focus on what you have and what you can control, you're not going to maximize that opportunity.

Q. (Question regarding Aneyas.)

MARCUS FREEMAN: It's like every time you go into the game, he's scoring touchdowns, man. He's a guy that's an example of working with what he has, right? You hear me often say work while you wait. He had a small role. Maybe it was a kick returner. If you're the third back, we get to that point.

But he practices and works and waits for his role. All of a sudden when he gets a bigger one, he maximizes it. That doesn't happen by chance. It's because he works his tail off preparing for that opportunity.

Q. With so many teams on the bubble of the College

Football Playoff, what about Notre Dame's résumé sticks out compared to the others?

MARCUS FREEMAN: I'll repeat it for the third time. Just answered it.

We are improving as much as any team in the country, right? We have improved as much as anybody in the country. We're playing as well as anybody in the country. 10 straight wins, double-digit wins.

We have to me, in my opinion, the best player in the country. That's what you want. You want the best teams in the country now, right? Who is the best teams for the Playoffs right now. I truly believe we're one of them.

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