

Stanford University Football

Media Conference

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Tavita Pritchard

Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 37, Hawaii 27

TAVITA PRITCHARD: First and foremost, really proud of our guys. I'm proud of the way that they finished. It's been a theme throughout our entire kind of early goings together through the offseason in the spring up until training camp, and it's how we finished, and we finished tonight.

I was really proud of the way that the offensive line blocked. Aidan Kilstrom went out, and I thought the offensive line did a great job of just surging ahead. Micah ran behind his pads all night and just kept it going.

For the defense and the way that they finished, again, we faced some adversity. That's a tough team, and hats off to Hawaii in the way that they battled back and took the lead there.

But just, again, proud of the way that our guys finished. I thought the exclamation point by the defense at the end to stand up and the strip sack by Zach Rowell, the score by Teva just shows our finish. It shows our finish.

Not to mention, go to special teams, the big kick return that we have from Chris Davis. It had been kind of tough sledding in the return game throughout the night, but he cracked that one. Great job by the blocking unit, and then hats off to the special teams also for that blocked punt for a safety. Chucky got through there.

Again, just a lot of good all over. A lot to grow from, and there will be. We'll make our biggest jump from Game 1 to Game 2, but really excited for our guys to get this first one under their belt.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. What did you learn about Davis, especially the way he responded in the last drive?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: No, absolutely. I think his leadership showed, his maturity. You know he didn't blink. Our offense didn't blink. We got that ball back, and we just

went right down the field, and he led the charge there.

It was calculated, and Benji had a big drive on that one for him. He had time in the pocket, and yeah, I was just proud of the way our offense just marched down. He was obviously at the helm there.

Q. So, Coach, this is your first game. I'm sure there's a bunch of nerves going on there, but what was your tension level like when you guys gave up that lead and they came all the way back and probably had a chance to take the lead themselves? What was going through your nerves and all that knowing that this is the first game, and it's going to be a seesaw or roller coaster ride?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: For sure. I told the team this before the game. Nerves are a funny thing. We all knew coming out here for Game 1 together and just Game 1 of the season, there were going to be nerves. There was going to be emotion. One, it reminds you you're alive, right, and, two, it reminds you that you care, and our guys care. They take it very seriously, and they put a lot into this.

When it comes to kind of the swing of momentum, you learn in this sport that it's all about response. It's all about response. If you get too caught up in what that emotional response is, then you lose focus on what you have to do.

For me that was calling plays, and that was getting with our offensive staff, and I can't say enough about the job that Coach Heff did and Brian Lindgren and the way that we came up with the plan for that last drive. But honestly, it just snaps you. When you get those nerves and you're in a situation like that, it just snaps you back into, okay, what do I got to focus on now. That's what we ask our players to do, and it's sure as heck what we have to do.

Q. I want to get your thoughts on looks like you were targeting Benji Blackburn more on the last drive to retake the lead. Was that something that was intentional? It looks like towards the last drive that you started finding him.



TAVITA PRITCHARD: You know what, of course, Benji -- the ball finds Benji a little bit too, but absolutely, as we work through the game plan, Benji is a guy that needs to get targets. He's a guy that he blocks his tail off in the run game. He creates separation in the passing game, and I thought he did a nice job on that last drive. He was targeted on a few of those.

Again, hats off to them. They did a better job of applying some pressure on us in the second half. We missed on some third downs, but I thought, again, when it counted, our guys finished. Benji showed up in those moments just like Micah did. Obviously Liam had the big catch. Atticus Joseph, a couple of big catches in the game, but certainly towards the end there. Hats off to the O-line for punching that last one in.

Q. Really a brand new receiving corps, especially without Caden today. Just your thoughts on how they acquitted themselves? You had a lot of guys make big plays today.

TAVITA PRITCHARD: Love the way that those guys compete, and so much about our receiver room is their ability to show up when the ball may or may not come their way in stretches, but they stay ready.

Again, you talk about Liam, you talk about Atticus, you talk about Zion in that game, you talk about JA. Every guy it felt like at different times had their number called, and they were ready. Just proud of the way that those guys prepare, because we've talked about competition throughout our entire program, and those guys were ready when the moment came because of the way that they compete in practice and the way that they show up in practice.

Q. Defense held Hawaii to seven three-and-outs and nine drives, and Hawaii broke through with the three touchdowns. What do you think? Was it a matter of just getting tired? What happened in the fourth, and what were you able to do in the final drive to turn it back around?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: Yeah, in terms of what happened later in the game, a little bit has to do with, of course, the offense and putting them back out there on shorter drives. That's where we've got to convert on some of the third downs and run it better late.

I will have to watch the film just on exactly what are some things that we can improve on defense, but like you mentioned, they did a great job especially early on of getting them forcing three-and-outs and really pushing the envelope on that offense, which is a tough style of offense

to stop.

I mean, you think about Coach Chang and what he's been over his career with the spread and run and shoot and that quarterback. He's a competitor. The way that those guys go out there, I thought it was a matter of time until those guys' timing and offense started to click.

Again, hats off to our defense that when it counted they got the stops that they needed and put the exclamation point on at the end.

Q. Today was the Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration, and obviously you have the stripes on. Everybody was wearing it with the helmets, and you have it on you right now. Can you just speak on that significance just for the overall celebration of it? And, two, did it mean anything more to get that win today, your debut win, on a celebration night like this against Hawaii?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: I'm so proud of my Pacific Islander roots, my family from Samoan. I think about my grandparents what emigrated here from American Samoan to find a better life for their family, my dad and his siblings. Just what that community means to me is they're one that's lifting me up and allowed me to do what I've done today and supported me in every imaginable way.

So for us as a university and as an athletic program and a football program, to be able to try to honor them in this community, especially in the Bay Area. We have a huge Pacific Islander community of Samoans and Tongans and Hawaiians and Melanesians, Micronesians. It runs the gambit. To be able to honor them as best we could through that it means a lot.

In terms of the game, you try to separate those things a little bit, because when it comes back to the football, it's about our players, and it's about giving them every opportunity to go out there and excel. Couldn't be more proud of the way that they showed up tonight and finished.

Q. I know you barely had a chance to celebrate this first win, but in six days the mighty Hurricanes blow up here. What are you thinking about then? I'm sure probably before the season started you saw them on the schedule. What do you think about going up against that team? I know they're not the same as they were in the '80s and '90s, but what is the mindset playing against Miami?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: When you think about even just playing on a short week, right, we know that we're going to have to move on pretty quickly from this, but our guys will



take tonight and enjoy this.

That's part of this game that we play is, you know, being able to focus on what's important now means when you have a win like this, to be able to take it in and process it so that when we show up tomorrow, we're ready to put this game behind us and move onto the next.

When that time comes, we know that -- I know that -- and you're right, I've been able to look ahead because we've had an offseason and knowing this was a short week. Miami is a formidable opponent and one that's going to get our full attention when the time comes, and that's in not very much time.

But for the time being, we're going to enjoy the heck out of this one.

Q. Just thoughts on Micah Ford's performance. He found the end zone three times. Just talk about what he gave you in this one.

TAVITA PRITCHARD: Yeah, hopefully the one yard shy motivates him a little bit, you know what I mean? Proud of the way that he ran behind his pads tonight, and he broke tackles. He ran tough, inside-outside, different schemes. He has worked incredibly hard.

When you think about the body work that he's put in from spring ball to now along with that whole -- and I'll say this about the whole running back room, the way that they have just grown in this scheme. I'm really excited about Micah. I'm really excited about that running back room and was proud of the way that he ran tonight.

Q. The offensive line kind of makeshift. Do you have any updates on the center, and do you expect any of the other guys to come back by Friday?

TAVITA PRITCHARD: No update on Aidan yet. Obviously we'll get more of a report here either later tonight or tomorrow, but like Michael brought up, we'll have to figure that out very quickly and just kind of what that looks like next.

But, look, it's been the MO of this team and this offensive line so far that they just keep growing, and they keep developing. That's where our focus is going to be. No matter what five go out there on Friday, they'll be ready to go.

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