

Stanford University Football Media Conference

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Stanford, California, USA

Coach Mario Cristobal

Postgame Media Conference



Miami 45, Stanford 6

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Start by saying hats off to Stanford. I know they had a lot of injuries coming in and whatnot. Got a good bunch of talented players and schematically they do a lot of really, really good things.

Really proud of our players for coming across the country and staying in preparation and staying focused and certainly efficient and productive on both sides of the ball.

Certainly some things we want to clean up. Couple different looks that were a little bit muddy that we had a couple issues with, but I think as the game went on we rectified those things and certain players stepped up in the absence of others.

Third down was phenomenal offensively; 8 for 11. Defensively we held them to 5 for 15 and 0 for 2 on fourth downs. Darian Mensah was I believe 20 -- whatever he was, he was pretty good.

Malachi Toney did a good job. Young offensive line I though did a really good job in pass pro, albeit that first touchdown. Actually that's more on the back and communication.

But besides that, thought we kept the quarterback relatively clean.

And then in the run game they gave some tough muddy looks. A lot of people in the box. They went away from some of their nickel stuff and kept base in there. They got that extra defender and then tightened down the safety as well.

Some good stuff. Some good stuff. Almost had an issue with the punt return but luckily it was (indiscernible.)

Questions, please.

Q. Mario, the ability to open the field for Malachi Toney was obviously massive key to the game.

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Well, I mean, you got to have one to have the other. The way they were crowding the box it lends to that. You have to execute it. He's an elite route runner. I think Darian Mensah, his accuracy, the timing of his throws, his ability to read the field really stood out.

Just he brings a ton of energy to the team as well. So I thought Malachi, I thought Cooper did really, Upshaw with the touchdown catch. There is a lot of guys that stood out. I know Josh Moore had himself a couple great grabs as well. Couple guys had their first catches. Wingo had his first catch. Lofton had a great third down conversion; the out route as well.

The ball got spread around. I mean, Malachi had the bulk of, but it did get spread around in a manner that we felt if they were going to load the box like that we were going to make it hard for them.

Q. (Regarding Mensah.) What did he show you throughout camp that he could have this kind of serious first game?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: His skill set really fits what we do. His ability to read the field and his ability to bypass concepts and to continue to see the ball is really, really impressive.

Really he is a guy that we always felt sky is the limit. When the lights come on, as you saw and as you've seen before in his career at a couple different stops, when the lights come on the game for him is fun, it's exciting.

He gets after it and he doesn't allow -- he had the one time we didn't score offensively was when we took that shot that was barely out of the outstretched hands of Coop.

So a lot -- he shows a lot and he wants to get back on the tape and get better. But really good start to the season.

Q. With Malachi Toney in-game having the ball as much as possible, great thing. 35 to 6, you were returning punts. Is that something that you guys will monitor or will he be kind of the go-to guy?

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MARIO CRISTOBAL: No, we put Cooper in there as well. Caught some balls purposely, so pretty mindful of things we do with our players. So we got that.

Q. How important was it to kind of get going early, especially on the offense looking back at the Cal game two years ago. You guys started slow. So to get the ball rolling right from the first drive, just how important that was?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: It's important to put a whole game together. You know, the first drive is not going to win it and it's not just about the last drive. You've got to put together your best four quarters.

We did use a process throughout the postseason last year that we felt was really effective for traveling out west, and we did that. We came out here on Tuesday and practiced out here locally at San Mateo and our players, they acclimated really, really well.

By our day two here, Wednesday, they were feeling great. Certainly the weather, this is really good weather as compared to the sauna that we practice and play in all the time.

So just credit for the focus. Rueben Bain said, I believe said there were 228 days since we were all in that locker room tomorrow. Rueben Bain, CJ Daniels, Akheem Mesidor, Keionte Scott were some of last year's team members that came out.

They spoke to the team before we left hotel, knowing that -- they knew we were going to play against a really good ACC opponent. We haven't played against an ACC opponent at least not during our time here, my time here with -- in a game one situation, so it was good to see our guys come out, take care of business, and never took their foot off the gas.

Q. First look at the O-line in a game situation, I know you have to watch film, but first impressions of that group?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: We had some solid moments. I think pass pro was really good. That first hit on Mensah, that's more communication with the back. He's got to get over there in that front and bring in that A gap blitz.

And then the run game there were some pluses and some other areas we got to clean up some. Again, the crowding of the box, it's -- you know, that's their choice, and if they choose to do that, we still have to get push and get some money yards.

I think at times we did. Other times. Maybe not so well. But a positive first step for guys like Max Buchanan, SJ, Jackson, all these guys played in there. They rotated at the guard position. Invaluable repetitions. Invaluable out there in this real game-time situations against a good opponent.

Q. Were able to keep them out of the end zone even though they had a couple long drives.

MARIO CRISTOBAL: You know, they have really good offensive players and their quarterback, you know his story. He's been through a lot and he is as tough as it gets. He nailed some unbelievable throws now under pressure.

They got in the red zone. We were able to keep them out and force field goals, and just kept getting the ball back and forcing punts. Third down was huge for us as well, forcing penalties, right? Couple holding calls. I believe hands to the face. Some other things that just put us in some really advantageous situations, and our guys took advantage of it.

So really good job by our defense.

Q. O.J.?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: We'll see. You know, got to check him out. Obviously got banged up and had to pull him out the game. Hopefully it's not too bad.

Q. Jake's leg kicking off, that field goal was a 46 yarder. Got a chance to try to make that. How do you think he did?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Yeah, that was a decision. We he got on our guys about midway or a little bit later than that in the third quarter, most of our reserves. And then when you get in that situation either want to get your reserve quarterback fourth down reps or you want to get your kicker his first rep of the year.

Went with that. Thought it was the right thing. Luke got a lot of reps and did some really good things as well at quarterback. So did Mallory and Pringle. A lot of guys that we were counting on to play did a really good job.

It was great to see us nail that one.

Q. (Indiscernible.)... how did you feel about that?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: I'm sorry.

Q. I don't your edge rushers, how did you feel they did?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: You know, I thought they set the edge pretty well in the run game. Now, they chipped and they ran every boot in the waggles you could imagine, so it really kind of nullifies your ability to get to the passer. Credit to their tacklers. Those guys are good players as well and they get hands on you and they're tough to break off.

We'll watch the film. Go to see Armondo get a little bit banged up and tape it up and go back in there and keep playing. He's always been such a tremendous force off the edge and inside for us.

Thought the interior did a good job knocking back the run. Have to see it on tape. Obviously have a lot of time to watch that on the way home.

And all in all, again, lot of progress but a lot more to go.

Q. The greatest playmakers... (regarding Santana Moss, Hester.)

MARIO CRISTOBAL: You know, I don't like comparing guys. I leave that for you guys. I do. And I think it's -- for him the type of young man he is, when you mentioned his name, among those names, he's completely flattered and he's blown away by it and it energizes him to come back and work harder.

I do promise you this: As much as he loves touching the ball, and whether you believe me or not, that dude is just as happy sticking his face in there and blocking for the running backs to get free. That's the kind of young man he is and you know what? I know he's talented but you're not going to outwork Malachi Toney.

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