

Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Purdue vs Michigan

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Purdue Boilermakers

Lucas Oil Stadium

Coach Jeff Brohm

Aidan O'Connell

Charlie Jones

Postgame Press Conference



Michigan Wolverines - 43, Purdue Boilermakers - 22

JEFF BROHM: Really proud of our football team. They've done a great job this year. They've battled through a lot, like other teams do, but some ups and downs, and they continue to play hard and work hard. They found a way to get in a championship-level game, like we did today, which is tremendous. We had a great atmosphere. Our fans really turned out, as well as Michigan's.

We hung in there. We had our chances. I thought we played hard. I thought we competed. Unfortunately, the other team came out in the second half and exposed their will on us a little bit and got after us. We couldn't answer the bell.

So credit to Michigan. A really good football team. They're well-coached, but I'm thankful for the effort our players gave.

Once again, I'm really thankful for our fans. It was tremendous to see them out there. It really motivates our players to work hard, and even the ones that watch on TV. Our fans have been great all year.

Q. Aidan, first, my deepest condolences to you and your family. If you don't mind, what has the last week and a half been like for you leading up to this game?

THE MODERATOR: Question for Aidan.

AIDAN O'CONNELL: It's been very difficult, as you would imagine. You know, when you first hear of news like that, it's shock and denial and just a lot of emotions.

So last week was tough. Going into the IU game, my head wasn't really there, if I'm honest. The coaching staff was gracious enough to let me go home for a few days and spend some time with my family. I think that was much needed.

I felt a lot better this week than I did last week, but it's been a little crazy. It's going to be good to get some time to relax and spend some more time with my family hopefully.

Q. Jeff, just talk about the missed opportunities tonight, settling for too many field goals and not being able to get in the end zone. What were some of the issues in the red zone and the inability of the offense to turn those field goals into touchdowns?

JEFF BROHM: I think probably the main one is that's a really, really good football team. Once you get inside the 20, it's tough to run the ball in the first place on them; and then, secondly, they tighten up the coverage.

And they did a good job. We couldn't score touchdowns, and we tried. So they stopped us, and, unfortunately, it for sure hurt us. Field goals aren't going to be good enough to win in those type of games.

Those are things that you have to look at and figure out what maybe we could have done different, but I'm going to have to give them a lot of credit. That's a good football team. We found a way to move the ball up and down the field a little bit, but they stiffened up once we got inside the 20, and they did a good job. I give them a lot of credit.

Q. Coach Brohm, could you sort of explain what it is that Michigan has or does that makes them a difficult team to play against?

JEFF BROHM: I think when you look at Michigan, they're very talented, so they have the players at all the positions, the size you'll want, the speed, the athleticism. You combine that with really good coaching, where they're going to win with their running game and great defense and try to force you into making turnovers.



They didn't panic when the game was close in the third quarter. They came out and established their will and ran the ball right at us and created some big plays and extended the lead.

So they're just a really talented football team. They played a lot of good football all year long. It's hard to go 13-0, and they did, so you have to give them a lot of credit. Of course, now they have a chance to do something even more special.

Q. Charlie, you've known Aidan virtually your entire life. You know his family. What have you seen from him the way he has handled all of this, played well against Indiana, played well today? What have you learned about him through a very difficult process?

CHARLIE JONES: Yeah, I just think it proves how tough he is. Obviously it's super tough to get news like that, and with such a great family and to see him come out last week and want to be there with the team and help the team do something special is just amazing.

And then on top of that, to play the way that he did, it just really shows the leader that he is and how much he means to this team.

Q. Charlie, the monster numbers for you, I wonder if you could speak to having kind of a fearlessness when you are going up against a big opponent like that and the determination you showed kind of embodying the Purdue engine, if you will?

CHARLIE JONES: Yeah, I mean, I feel like that just comes with preparation and believing in the things that we do here and believing in the training that I've put in this, this team has put in just to be able to go out there in games like that and be able to perform.

Q. Jeff, now that you've been through this experience of this week with this championship game, how much should this and can this fuel future potential success for this program?

JEFF BROHM: Well, it's great for our program to reach this point, the championship level game. Our fans to experience it. Doesn't mean it's going to happen again. Every year is new, and you've got to continue to find ways to improve the next team and go out and compete.

Now hopefully some of your guys get the feeling of what it was like to play in this type of game because it was awesome. It was awesome for our guys. They love competing. They love practicing this week. They wanted to come out here and try to put on a good show.

So sometimes that motivates guys to want to work harder, and you hope that happens. So, you know, we'll see what the future holds. I know our team is built on hard work and grinding to get better, and we're not scared to take on anybody, and we're able to take some hits in the chin and punches in the gut and get back up and keep competing. So I hope that our team -- that's what it takes to win.

On a side note, these two guys next to me, Aidan and Charlie, in my opinion exemplify what college football is all about. Both those guys started at the bottom, and they worked their way up, and look where they're at now. You have Aidan O'Connell who put on a tremendous passing performance, and he has since he has gotten here and just continues to work and get better. He is a great teammate and hangs in there and makes throws and competes to the end.

Of course, Charlie was fearless. Not only how he plays, but also taking chances, going from one school to the other just to go out and prove what exactly what he can do. He came here, and he has been a great teammate. Our players love him. He competes every day. He has been injured quite a bit of the year and not able to practice as much as you like, but he comes out here and works.

Just really great people that exemplify what a Boilermaker is, and we couldn't be prouder of these young men.

Q. Jeff, basically the same question I asked Charlie. What you have learned about Aidan through the past two weeks or so.

JEFF BROHM: Well, with myself I knew what Aidan was all about. He has always had strong faith. He has always been a hard worker. He has always been able to figure out what was right and how to handle it.

Of course, when something like that happens, we just want to be there for him. There's not a whole lot we can do other than just try to support him because it's tough. It's tough. No one wants to see that happen to anybody, but we knew what Aidan was all about, and I'm glad the whole country does now. Because he is a terrific young man. He does everything right off the field. I can't think of anything bad to say whatsoever.

He competes on the field. He is a great teammate, and I know he has a bright future.

Q. Coach, you mentioned that you felt like field goals alone weren't going to be able to take care of it today. Any of those five opportunities in or around the red zone did you ever think of going for fourth down to try

to either convert or get a touchdown to light some fire and get some more points on the board?

JEFF BROHM: Yeah, we did. I think a lot of them were third or fourth and longs. Unfortunately, from, like, the 10 or the 12 or even farther. So those chances aren't very good.

Then we looked at kind of the points and trying to measure how many touchdowns or points we needed since. So, yeah, we could take a lot of things back. I just think we do not convert down in there.

They got up on us. They guarded us. They got pressure. You couldn't hold it too long. We weren't really being real efficient running the ball in that area either, so it's just they did a good job.

So, unfortunately, I knew at some point it was going to cost us, and, of course, in the second half it cost us because they turned it on offense and really picked up the intensity on defense as well.

Q. Aidan, I'm wondering your thoughts on how tough it was facing Michigan and what your thoughts will be when you walk out of here as far as the game goes?

AIDAN O'CONNELL: Yeah, obviously a very good team, as Coach said. Not only good scheme and coaching but great athletes, and they recruit well. Obviously, a storied program.

You know, they were tough to beat. We were going to have to play a near perfect game to win, and, you know, just touchdowns and turnovers is what football is about, and we turned the ball over and didn't score touchdowns, so it's hard to beat a team like that.

But I'm proud of our guys. We did a great job of battling. Guys playing hurt, guys playing backs against the wall, and just finding a way to make plays. Obviously it wasn't enough, but super proud of our team.

Q. Aidan, just wondering how you felt at halftime and whether you felt that you guys had maybe outplayed them or even how did you feel going into that second half after the first half?

AIDAN O'CONNELL: Yeah, we were confident. We felt we played a good half, and obviously down one, but we needed a fake punt to put points.

But we felt like we were moving the ball and playing pretty good defense. Obviously J.J. made some good plays scrambling, but, you know, we were moving the ball. We

just needed some touchdowns. I think if we scored a couple of touchdowns early on instead of field goals, I think it feels a lot different.

I remember in 2017 my freshman year we played Michigan, and we were up 10-7 at half, and it felt the same way. Like we could hang with them. Obviously didn't win the game.

Yeah, we had confidence going into the half.

Q. Charlie, Coach mentioned kind of the long journey that you've been on to get to this point. Do you feel like you had something to prove coming to Purdue, and why do you feel like you've been able to fit so well with this system?

CHARLIE JONES: Yeah, I feel like that was the purpose of making the transition to Purdue to come in and prove that I'm a receiver, and I'm capable of doing that as well as special teams.

Just thankful for that opportunity in coming here and being able to do it with people like these guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, fellows. Jeff, I think we're going to ask you to take a couple more. Anything else for Coach Brohm?

Q. Michigan second halves have been kind of magical for them. The running game really gets going in the second half. Talk about what goes into that and what you saw of them turning the corner in the second half?

JEFF BROHM: Well, they do a great job of playing smash-mouth football, running the football, running it at you, wearing you out, playing really good defense with it. They came out in the second half, and they just ran a simple play right off the edge. We had a corner right there. He missed the tackle and went a long ways, but they put a lot of tight ends in, and they make your secondary tackle. You know, we didn't tackle a couple of times.

I thought in the first half we did a pretty good job keeping them in check for the most part. They also got a quarterback who can run around and make some plays, which he did.

So I just think they have a really good combination on offense of big, physical linemen, great running backs, a lot of really good tight ends. Now a dynamic quarterback. They can score points when they want to. They're going to wear out and pound the running game and let their defense help them win as well.

I just think it's good complementary football and a good recipe for a lot of wins, and they're 13-0 now.

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