

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: TCU vs Kansas State

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

TCU Horned Frogs

Sonny Dykes

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas State - 31, TCU - 28

SONNY DYKES: Well, that didn't end the way that we wanted it to obviously. It was a helluva football game. Got to give Kansas State a ton of credit. Did a great job, really played clean football, as you would expect Kansas State to do. It's kind of the way they play.

Love our team for battling back. Got down eight, didn't look real good. Excuse me. Got down 11. Didn't look real good. Like we've done all year, we made a bunch of plays to get ourselves back in the game.

Griffin Kell did a nice job kicking a field goal. Defense got a stop, just like they've done all year. Offense went down and scored, just like they've done all year. Got the two-point conversion.

Was disappointed obviously the way the game ended. We felt like Max scored on the scramble. I was trying to get him to replay it. I don't know. I don't know what the issue was. Thought the spot wasn't right, but it is what it is.

Then we've got to do a better job of getting the ball in the end zone. We had two cracks from inside the 1 yard line, and we didn't get it done. We were obviously in that situation there. You got fourth and less than a yard, you've got to figure out a way to get the ball in the end zone. We didn't do it. Again, you've got to give Kansas State credit for getting us stopped.

Q. On that third and goal, Kendre, it looked like on the replay he might have broken the plane.

SONNY DYKES: That's what we said too. That's what our people told us when they saw the replay upstairs.

Q. So they didn't review it?



SONNY DYKES: I don't know. I'd love for somebody to come give somebody some answers. I was told they did, but I don't know.

Q. What was the thought process in kind of maybe going with Kendre as opposed to Max on those last two plays?

SONNY DYKES: We just felt that Kendre has done it for us all year. He's been really, really good at converting those short yardage situations. He's done it consistently. We've just got a lot of confidence in him. Obviously if we had to do it over again, we'd do it different.

Q. Sonny, I know it's just coming off the loss and it's not in your hands, but do you think this team belongs in the College Football Playoff?

SONNY DYKES: For sure I do. We went through the Big 12, 12-0. We've been figuring out ways to win games like this all year, and today we weren't able to do it. I think we're certainly deserving.

I think the league is one of the best leagues in the country, to go through undefeated in the league, certainly we ought to get in. I don't think we should be punished for coming to the Big 12 Championship game. I don't think the way this stuff is designed to -- you know, the conference championship games, I don't think are designed to punish teams and prevent them from getting in the playoffs.

We were 3 last week. My hope is we stay at 3 and go tee it up and see how we do.

Q. Max had over 360 total yards, a couple touchdowns today. What can you say about his performance today?

SONNY DYKES: Typical Max Duggan performance. Gritty, tough, made plays when he had to. Did everything he could do to give us a chance to win. Did exactly what Max does.

Again, I think if you watch this game today, I think it's pretty

clear that he's certainly deserving to, if not win the Heisman Trophy, to certainly be in the conversation. His performance has been gritty week after week after week. He does -- he gives us an opportunity to win, does what he has to do to give us a chance to win.

The guy is one of the best players in college football. I think it's pretty obvious.

Q. Were you guys hesitant at all to not try and get the field goal at the end of the game?

SONNY DYKES: Not really. Look, if it's fourth and three, obviously we kick the field goal. If it's -- but we have to be able to convert inside the 1, two downs, and we just didn't do it.

Again, you've got to give Kansas State credit. And we've got to do a better job. I think that's one thing that I'm disappointed in. We've got to figure out a way to get that ball in the end zone.

Q. Sonny, that pick in the end zone by Max, was that a big turning point in the game?

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, I think if we could get anything there, field goal, anything like that, that was a big, big turning point.

We just had some kind of things -- not talking about that play, but in particular down at the end of the game, go against us. Got a holding penalty and a long scramble for Max and an offensive pass interference penalty on Jordan Hudson as well. Those two penalties really hurt us.

I don't know exactly what happened on that. I don't know, I think there was some miscommunication apparently between Quentin and Max. Obviously it was a bad play.

Q. Obviously 12 times you were in there with a message about winning. What was your message to the kids today? And then the anticipation that they're going to have tomorrow to find out their fate.

SONNY DYKES: Yeah, that's kind of what we talked about. I just said, hey, a couple things. Number one, how proud of them I was and I am for having the fortitude to get back in this game. When you look up and you're down 11 points with seven minutes to go, it doesn't look very good.

To our guys' credit, man, they gave themselves an opportunity to win, and they just battled, and they stuck with it. They stuck with the plan. They believed in each other. They did the things that we've done all year, and we've been able to make enough plays to win.

Today on two downs inside the 1 yard line, we didn't do it. That's the difference between winning and losing. That's what we talked about in there. We'll get better because of that. We'll obviously address that issue for us and make sure, when we get in that situation again, that we're more comfortable and we can go out and execute better than we did in a short yardage situation, particularly when the game is on the line like it was.

I think that -- like I said, I love this team. I love these guys. There's a bunch of hurt players in there, some guys that were really upset. We wanted to win a Big 12 Championship, and we didn't make enough plays to do it. It's disappointing, but my hope is obviously we're going to get another game, and my hope is we're going to get into the tournament and have a chance to go and compete for a National Championship.

Ultimately that's the goal at the beginning of the year is to put yourself in that situation. We wanted to do it ourselves today. We didn't want to let anybody else make that decision. We wanted to go 13-0 where they were forced to put us in, but we're going to be 12-1, and my hope is they do.

Q. Sonny, not just that you lost, but the way you lost today, you think, if you had to lose, is that a good endorsement for the committee? A top ten team, you went overtime, you're down, you come back, all that kind of stuff.

SONNY DYKES: I think so. Look, we were literally an inch away from winning the game or certainly having a chance to and being 13-0. My hope is they see it the same way I saw it and realize, hey, look, this is a team that certainly the resume is good enough and we deserve to be part of it.

Again, our hope is to not have to rely on a beauty contest, you know what I mean? Our hope is to kick the door down and make sure that we were Big 12 champs and there was no discussion about it.

Q. Sonny, what went into the decision to kneel out at the end of regulation instead of going for it there?

SONNY DYKES: There wasn't much time left, and we felt at that stage of the game we would have to go about 60 yards in 26 seconds, I think it was, and just felt it was the most prudent thing to do. Didn't want to take a chance of throwing an interception or fumbling and having a turnover.

Then when they punted it to us, if we get the ball at the 20, it's a whole different line of thinking, as opposed to getting it at the 5 or 6 yard line. A lot of stuff can go wrong. You

can get caught in the backfield and get a safety. There's a whole chain of events that could happen that's negative.

So that was kind of the thinking was let's just get to overtime. We felt like we had all the momentum as well. We felt like that was where we wanted to be.

Q. Sonny, you mentioned earlier this week how this team, every time you guys move on to the next opponent, you're just focused on that and not getting too far ahead of yourselves. You don't know who the next opponent is going to be until tomorrow morning. What do you think this afternoon and evening and even tomorrow morning might be like for you and your guys? What can you say to them?

SONNY DYKES: Probably a little bit of anxiety for all of us. Again, I got a lot of faith in the committee. I know they've got a very difficult thing to do, but I believe that those guys will take a look at what we've been able to accomplish and what this team looks like and what we've done and put us in.

As I said earlier, my hope was to celebrate a Big 12 Championship tonight and not worry too much about it, but it's going to be a different course of action.

Q. You say you have faith in the committee and you also know this can be an unpredictable process. Are you nervous at all about not seeing your team in the final four?

SONNY DYKES: I think, again, to go back to 2014, I think that TCU has been through this. Lost a close game to Baylor in 2014 and didn't have a conference championship at that time.

I really believe that was a different time in college football. I think the Big 12 is in a different place than it was then. I think they're going to see it different, but at the same time, you just don't know.

I'm concerned, obviously, but again I've got faith in the committee, and I believe -- I know that we deserve to be in, so my guess is we'll be in.

Q. Can you kind of take us through that drive Max put together? You saw him almost looking sick. You saw him almost passing out. What was happening during that drive?

SONNY DYKES: He was doing what he does. He was making plays. He was finding -- figuring out things to give us a chance to win. That's what the guy does. I mean, you see that he gives every single thing he's got on the field,

leaves it all out there every single Saturday.

It's like he goes out and he does what he does. We get him back on Sunday, and it's like we tape him together and do what we can to get him to the next game. To his credit, he puts the work in. He puts the work in and grinds through injuries, grinds through discomfort. He's just one of the toughest football players I've ever been around.

He's the consummate winner and a guy that, again, raises the expectations of every single person around him. I think our team sees Max and is challenged to approach the game the same way he approached the game.

I think a big part of our success is because of that, because of that mentality that he has and everybody watching him every single day and watching what he does and how much he cares about his teammates and how much he loves those guys and how he would do anything in the world for them.

So this was a game that I think, again, we made a lot of mistakes. We haven't turned the ball over like we did today very often. We've taken care of the football a lot better than we did today. There's a lot of plays, a lot of things that could happen that would give us a different result. Again, everyone is going to focus on the end and overtime, and I certainly understand why.

I think there's a lot to be learned from this and a lot of ways we can improve as a team and as a program.

Q. Similarly, how is Max?

SONNY DYKES: I haven't gotten a report. I think he's fine. I think he was more just tired than anything, I think.

(No audio).

SONNY DYKES: He played excellent today. He does what he does. He had a couple of huge plays that resulted in us scoring some touchdowns and scoring points. At the same time, like I said, when you haven't played, there's always a little bit more rush maybe than there is if you've been playing.

I thought he played really well. I thought he played hard. He's been courageous all year battling through the injuries he had and made a ton of big plays today. I think, if you ask him, he'd probably say wish he had made one or two more.

Q. I think you played seven or eight of these kind of games in the Big 12 and won them all, except today. Did you feel like in any part maybe the law of averages

caught up with you a little bit?

SONNY DYKES: I think maybe to an extent. It's like anything else. Once you believe you can do something, it's a whole lot easier to us. There wasn't anyone who didn't believe we were going to win this game. That's why you got to give Kansas State credit for making the plays they made down the stretch and doing what they had to do to win.

This is a confident team. We feel like we can play with anybody. Our hope is we'll have an opportunity to play against them in the tournament because that's what we want and that's what we believe we deserve.

Yeah, it's like anything else. I think you get on a run sometimes, and if you do some things that are pretty improbable, then at some point it becomes a little bit more difficult to continue to do the improbable.

Q. Did you all feel like you all were at any kind of disadvantage without Johnny Hodges today, or were you all pretty comfortable with the next man up?

SONNY DYKES: Johnny has been a very, very good player for us, obviously our leading tackler. We've been really fortunate this year to not have a lot of injuries.

The position we've been hit pretty hard at is the linebacker position. We lost some guys in preseason camp. Obviously lost Marcel Brooks. Shad Banks has done a great job of learning to play the position and coming in and filling in. There's been some weeks where all we've had is three linebackers, and Shad's had to be the backup for all three of those guys.

Today Shad was the starter. I thought he played well. He has a lot to learn. He just doesn't have as many snaps as some of those other guys. I think that's what makes Johnny such an effective player. You look at his history, he's played a lot of snaps, first at Navy and now here at TCU.

Not having him out there certainly hurts from an experience standpoint, but Shad Banks has been a helluva player for us.

Q. Sonny, two things. One, how many times, if you have any idea, have you all been in that sort of goal line situation this year? I'm assuming that was your goal line offense?

SONNY DYKES: Yeah. It's something, again, we spend a lot of time on. Something we obviously need to get better at.

I think that's the one thing if you say -- you know, if you ask me what this football team needs to improve, I would say it needs to improve our short yardage situation. This year we haven't been as good as we want to be. It's been something that we've been working on all year, and I think it's something that obviously needs to continue to get a lot of our attention.

Q. The game tying drive, when Max ran the ball, I think, six times, how much of that were called and how much of that was him?

SONNY DYKES: A couple of them were called. Probably three were called, and probably three were improvised. A couple times you drop back -- they did a nice job of playing some two man, covering those receivers up, having some safeties that could run back there. When they did that, then that gave Max an opportunity to pull the ball down and make some plays.

Again, that run to get down to the 1, that was a heck of a run. What a great play. You guys saw.

Q. Feels like a microcosm of your season is overcoming adversity, whether it's quarterback situation, injuries, being down in games. You lost for the first time today. How much confidence do you have in this team to overcome adversity? Because there's still a lot more to play for here.

SONNY DYKES: I certainly believe in those guys. I told them in there, I've just never been around a group of young people that are as invested in each other as this group is, and I think that's been what's been such a pleasure to coach these guys and to work with them every day and be around them.

It's just been the regard that they hold themselves to and their teammates to. They don't want to let people down, and I think that pressure to work hard and to do the little things right kind of started with our players and just spread throughout the team.

It's hard when you lose a game like this. It's kind of your first chink in the armor in some ways, but I think at the same time, we'll learn. We'll go back, and we'll look at all those plays, the culmination of a bunch of plays in that game. Again, the focus is going to be on overtime, but there will be a bunch of plays we can improve on and we can get corrected.

Obviously we'll learn things as a coaching staff. There's some things we have to do better obviously down the stretch as well. I thought we got back in the game the right

way, kicking the field goal to cut it to one possession, scoring, and having a two-point play and getting the stops and everything we had to defensively to get the game to overtime. But we needed something a little better in overtime.

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