

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: TCU vs Kansas State

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

Kansas State Wildcats
Coach Chris Klieman
Deuce Vaughn
Daniel Green

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas State - 31, TCU - 28 (OT)

THE MODERATOR: We have with us head coach of the Big 12 champion, Kansas State. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH KLIEMAN: Big 12 champions has a nice ring to it. And what a great football game, two great teams. TCU should be in the CFP. They're one of the best four teams. And we went toe to toe with them. I thought we could go toe to toe with them and found a way to win.

It was an exceptional football game. A lot of ups and downs, between both teams, and great resolve by our guys. And the overtime stop, it's incredible. We get a third-and-1 and fourth-and-1, as good as they are up front and good run game as they have -- and our defensive line stood up and stuffed them back-to-back plays.

I thought it was important for to us get a first down and not make it a 40-some yard field goal but get it a little closer. And we were able to do that. And then executed to perfection, what we call our Wisconsin, getting the ball to the middle of the field for Ty.

And then I would say over the last five to six weeks, there may not be a more valuable kid on the football team than Ty Zentner. And Ty was huge again today. And what was just so poetic for me was the ball was on his foot in the last game in Big 12 play for him. And there was no doubt in my mind he was making that. No doubt in my mind.

So credit to our seniors. Credit to our leaders. Credit to the culture that they've created. Credit to player



ownership, the power of belief, all those things, because we've had a lot of tough times. A lot of people doubted that team after we lost to Tulane and said must not be very good.

And they took it to heart. And we lost to a good TCU team. Lost to a really good TCU team. And end up getting a win, and then we lost to a good Texas team.

We had to go 3-0, get some help, got some help. And those kids went 3-0 in tough circumstances at Baylor, at West Virginia, home on senior day against KU -- to have an opportunity to come here.

And we talked about it in the locker room. You can ask Daniel Green about this. We talked about it in the locker room after we beat KU. We weren't coming here for a participation trophy; we were coming here to win the thing.

And that was our mindset all week. And we found a way with great resolve by a bunch of great seniors.

Q. Daniel, that last stand, what were you seeing out there? And what do you think of what happened?

DANIEL GREEN: I just think that was great execution, just overall by just the defense. We talked about situations like that. Just happened to bow up. And that's what championship games come down to, just somebody making an extra play, especially on defense.

I'm so proud of those guys. That's a statement right there. We always say the mob, mob mentality. It don't get no more better than that, on the goal line for the game, almost.

Q. Coach, you had a lot of young guys out there today on defense. What does that say about not only them but just the culture that you talked about a little bit earlier?

COACH KLIEMAN: Well, you've got to rise up. When your opportunity comes, you've got to rise up. And I look at Jacob Parrish, didn't practice most of the week and found a way to gut it out and play.

I look at Keenan Garber, that was a wide receiver the entire year, and came to me five weeks ago and said I'd like to be a defensive back, I want to help the team.

And so he was on scout team up until Thursday of this week. On Thursday, we moved him from scout team and said, you've got to be the emergency guy in case Jacob Parrish can't go.

And that's the sign of a culture. That's the sign of not wanting to let guys like Daniel Green and Eli Huggins down.

And I thought Keenan Garber played his tail off. And VJ Payne is a true freshman playing. And Jacob Parrish is a true freshman playing, to go with the veterans like Josh and Drake and Julius. And phenomenal resolve by those guys.

Q. I've got one for Daniel and the coach, but Daniel first. On the fourth-down play, what were you anticipating and did you think Max Duggan might end up with the ball?

DANIEL GREEN: No, we did anticipate Max having the ball because usually when it comes down to short yardage or the game on the line he's the guy that usually carries the ball.

But when they got into their personnel we came out with a call that was fit for the personnel. And it just came down to executing, this good on good, everyone up front penetration.

And it was just a really big stop for our team. And I'm so proud of those guys, man, because we really worked hard for this moment and we really embraced it.

Q. Coach, I know we're in the moment here, but is there any way to put kind of the enormity of this in perspective? This is a program that's -- you've won the fourth conference championship in program history.

COACH KLIEMAN: I'll let that sink in at some point. I'm fortunate to be here. Gene Taylor took a chance on an FCS coach when not a lot of people would. But he believed in me and us.

And coming here I look at these guys that believed in us as a coaching staff when there was a coaching change and stuck with us.

And the last couple of years starting in January of 2021,

these guys will tell you, our locker room became so close and so tight. And I'm telling you that this is about the power of belief and the power of player ownership. When you have those two things, I don't think anything will stop you.

Q. Deuce and Daniel, after Ty hit that field goal, the first thing he says in the camera is, I would die for this team. When it's a special team like this, everyone talks about, we're a close group or this or that. How much different does this feel? It's not just a cliché, it's an actual thing?

DEUCE VAUGHN: Yeah, it is. Whenever I got recruited to come here, Coach Klieman said we're going to build a culture that's going to win championships. It's going to be built on team, player first, a player-led team.

And we built that. And for what Ty said, that's exactly how I feel. That's exactly how everybody feels inside that locker room right now.

It's just been battling through adversity. The good, the bad and everything that we've been through together has brought us so close together. That's my family.

Q. Coach, you guys ran out there, when you needed at the end there, Damian Ilalio, a redshirt freshman from Manhattan, Kansas. What does it mean to see him do that -- he doesn't get a ton of snaps? When you needed him on the biggest play of the game he got it.

COACH KLIEMAN: Everybody is counted on in those times. And Damian came in, did his job, as well as everybody else up front and the linebackers.

This was a pure team win. I mean, offense, defense, special teams, guys that you expect to make big-time plays like these two guys, to guys that maybe a little bit under the radar.

But that's what championship teams do. And championships teams have resolve, and they count on each other when it's crunch time.

Q. Daniel and then for Deuce, just to the team's perseverance this season and today throughout the game?

DANIEL GREEN: Like Coach said, it started in January, this team coming together and believing in each other. And belief is what won us this game.

We came into this game knowing it was going to be a dogfight and we was going to have to earn it. But not one

second of that game we didn't believe that we wasn't going to come out with the victory.

It just shows the character of the team, the culture we got and the brotherhood we got that we can fall on each other and believe in each other. Even through all the adversity that hit us, we kept believing and fighting.

DEUCE VAUGHN: When it comes to that perseverance you talked about, I feel it's the team motto to go back to work, whether it be after a loss getting back into the coaches' office, the recovery on Sunday and getting back to work on Monday and understanding that the preparation we do Monday through Friday is how we win football games.

Today, whenever adversity strikes, the perseverance to say we're going to go back to work as an offense and defense and take it play-by-play. That's how you win football games.

Q. Deuce, you didn't have a lot of opportunities for explosive plays today, but the one time you did you made it count. Could you walk me through the 44-yard touchdown?

DEUCE VAUGHN: Yes, we ran a man scheme, like our no-pull power play. And the D ends slanted in. Great job by I believe it was KT to mash them down and it opened up a seam.

Once we (indiscernible) through Kade, it brought the corner out and a little bit of space and after that it's one-on-one with the safety. But I'm not doing that, I'm not doing anything without those guys up front and everybody on the perimeter.

Q. This was a game of momentum swings. Every time one team tried to pull away, couldn't happen. Winds up in overtime. How did you manage it?

COACH KLIEMAN: Just stay in the fight. We talk about it all the time, that you're going to have adversity and you've got to stay in the fight. We talked this morning that field goals aren't going to beat you. I thought the defense did a phenomenal job a couple times on them moving the ball and holding them to field goals. And then we were able to hit a few explosive plays.

And just I can't say enough about these guys and the leadership of this crew, because once we got it to overtime, and went on defense first, we knew we were going to get a stop. I'm telling you, if we didn't get a stop we were going to score a touchdown and go for two. We were going to end this thing. Will knew it. The offense knew it. Once we

got that stop, we were going to position ourselves and let Ty win the game.

Q. Daniel, Deuce, what does it mean to be part of this team that's just captured the program's first Big 12 Conference championship since 2012, from a player's perspective?

DANIEL GREEN: It means everything. You know, when we come here, and like Deuce said earlier, Coach came here to build a culture that wants to win championships, like if you're playing Power Five football you're playing at this level, Big 12 football, it's what you came here to do.

And to be able to do it with the group of guys that's on this team, great group of men, great group of coaches and coaching staff. And it's really amazing feeling to see the journey we was on just since January, after the last bowl game, and just come in here and do everything that we had set out to do and come out with a victory like that in overtime. That's really amazing.

DEUCE VAUGHN: I feel like he hit it on the head. Everybody contributed in some way or fashion throughout this year, and in the building, on the team and on the coaching staff. And everybody just went to work in January, understood that this is what we wanted to accomplish this year.

And so it's big time. So a big "thank you" to everybody that's poured into us as players from our perspective to go out there and play as hard as we can to go out and do things like this.

Q. Coach, you knew this TCU team would come back. They've done that. Most of our games this year, watching that last drive where Duggan breaks off a couple runs, ties it up, what's going through your mind there as you're potentially going into overtime?

COACH KLIEMAN: To try to get our offense ready to go, to try to get a field goal. We were close. We had a good drive, Will threw a strike to Deuce on a slant, on a third down, that got us past midfield. And then they did a nice job stopping us. We were trying to win that thing in regulation, and weren't able to do it.

Once again, Ty pins them down inside the 10 so they can't mount a drive, so that they can win it in regulation.

And I want to say on behalf of the three of us up here, K-State nation came today. That crowd was electric and it was an unbelievable atmosphere.

When we were on defense, that crowd was phenomenal

and can't thank our fan base enough for coming down here in droves and cheering on these guys because we were playing for them as much as we were for each other.

Q. I remember Coach Klieman talking to you, Big 12 media days when you stated about Will Howard and him to stay at K-State and not transferring. How do you think he's taken it as Adrian Martinez has gotten injured and he's now the starting quarterback?

COACH KLIEMAN: These guys will tell you, everybody in that locker room has so much confidence in Will Howard. And Will Howard's a flat winner. He's a competitor. He wanted to play.

But I credit both Adrian and Will for how this has gone this year as far as both kids helped us win a Big 12 Championship for sure. And both kids rallied around each other when the other one wasn't playing.

And that's a culture. That's a sign of a group of guys that love each other. When it ended up being Will's job when Adrian got hurt, Adrian was his biggest fan and helped him a bunch.

And Will Howard deserves everything he got today. And these guys will tell you, the kid works his tail off and is a great, great leader for a young player.

Q. Daniel Green, this time last year, you immediately said you were coming back because this is what you were playing for. How rewarding is this experience when you reflect back on that moment?

DANIEL GREEN: It's a great feeling to do it with a group of guys that came a long way. Like this journey has been so long, and it's been a ride that I wouldn't trade for anything. A lot of adversity, a lot of ups and downs.

But we believed in each other. We believed that we could do this. We is it out from the first time we got back from the bowl game in the wintertime. And we said we were going to do this. And just to come out and do it today how we did it today is just an amazing feeling.

Q. Coach, you mentioned at the start of this, the losses that this team had to kind of respond to. How did you see this group of guys go back to work after Tulane, after the first TCU game, after Texas?

COACH KLIEMAN: Just the fact that they were more upset about it, that they let an opportunity slip, whatever it may be. We lost to a Tulane team that might be a New Year's Six bowl team. Maybe they're actually a pretty good football team.

But you can't trip on something that's behind you; you've got to focus on the next game. I thought we played a phenomenal game the next week against an Oklahoma team that's ranked fifth in the country and fought after that.

That's the thing we kept talking about is, guys, don't have an edge after a loss, have an edge after a win. And these last four weeks, I think our preparation and the final 48 hours prior to us finishing practice on Thursday, to teeing it up on Saturday, has been as good as anything I've ever been involved with, of guys owning it, locking into the final details and playing with unbelievable focus and unbelievable resolve for each other. And these last four weeks our guys have been so locked in and razor sharp.

Q. Coach, Julius battled with Quentin Johnston throughout the whole game. How big was that pick today?

COACH KLIEMAN: It was huge. And Quentin Johnston's a great football player. He's a first-round draft pick. And we gave Julius a tough task. You know our defense, there's a lot of one-on-one situations and you're going to lose some. That's part of being a defensive back. You're going to lose some of those situations.

But you've got to make sure and stay in the fight. And we called a great blitz on a third and goal from the 8, and Julius got flipped on it and makes a huge, huge pick to keep him out of the end zone. But that's Julius. Julius wants to be on that stage and that's why he's the player he is.

Q. And RJ Garcia got pushed into duty for Malik after he got hurt.

COACH KLIEMAN: I'm going to let Deuce answer that question. I'm so happy for RJ.

DEUCE VAUGHN: RJ Garcia, ever since he got on campus, he's somebody I've taken under my wing and called a friend. For him to get in there after all year he's behind three seniors, three great football players for us. And, man, he just went to work every single day, frustrated a little bit, being the younger guy that feels he can play on this football team. That's the competitor he is, but understanding and just going to work every single day. You see it in practice and going to work, going to work.

And I told him yesterday, I said, man, why not score your first touchdown in a big-time football game like this. And it's actually -- I saw him run down the football, see the ball get thrown. And when he caught it, I screamed to the top of my lungs and I chased him down. For him, big

confidence, big confidence for the football team. Shows you the type of football player he is.

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