

# Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: Texas vs Oklahoma State

Saturday, December 2, 2023

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

## Oklahoma State Cowboys

### Mike Gundy

### Alan Bowman

### Nickolas Martin

#### Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 49, Oklahoma State - 21.

THE MODERATOR: We have been joined by Coach Mike Gundy, Alan Bowman, and Nickolas Martin.

Coach, if you'd start us off with an opening statement. Then we'll go to questions.

MIKE GUNDY: That was a really good football game. Live they're actually better than what they look like on tape. Very fast, very explosive.

We didn't get off to a good start. I felt like we needed to get off to a really good start to kind of maintain the blows back and forth. We didn't really get off to a good start. Then we got into a multiple score game, made it difficult. Gosh, they're really explosive, on a roll right now. It's a good football team.

I told our guys -- these guys had a great year. What our guys were able to accomplish, I mean, they had a great year, and I couldn't be any more proud of what they did and what they accomplished. They deserved to be in this game today.

We came up short. They made some plays. We didn't. They made some coaching calls. We didn't. So I give them credit. They did a good job.

But gosh, our guys, they had an unbelievable year. I told them that. Sometimes you don't win. You come up short. But there's no way taking anything away from what these guys were able to accomplish. I couldn't be any more proud of the way they competed to get to this point.



Week in, week out, they stayed with the process. They didn't lose their train of thought. They didn't lose the process of preparing each week. We're lucky. We get to play another game. We're going to find out where we're going to go in a bowl game. We'll get to go play again.

We'll give these guys a week off. I've never given a team seven days. I'll probably give them eight days off. Normally it's four or five, and we're right back at it. This team, they need a break. They're tired. We practiced harder in the last eight weeks than I have ever as a head coach in 19 years.

I wanted them to know how much I appreciate that and what they brought to the table and that there's nobody taking anything away from this football team, in my opinion, as we move forward to a week off and then get ready to play in a bowl game.

**Q. The way the game started out with them scoring quickly, how difficult did that make to use Ollie the way you guys maybe had wanted to with the run game? Did you feel you were forced to go to the pass game more?**

MIKE GUNDY: We were going to use the run game some, but we knew we had to try to throw the ball more than what we had done in most games. They're really good up front. They've got mass, and at times it can be a little difficult.

But what you're saying is correct. Early we didn't get off to a good start, so we ended up being a little more one-dimensional offensively than what we would have wanted to.

**Q. On the other side of the ball, seemed like maybe they had -- did they have some stuff maybe you guys hadn't seen, some schemes? It seemed like they were really trying to attack your linebackers in pass coverage a lot early on.**

MIKE GUNDY: There's things we needed to do against them in man coverage to try to get the extra guy in the box at times. They did a good job on cross-concepts and such

and got us in some trail technique.

They did a good job, as I said. They had some good concepts and schemes. When we went into the game, we felt like we had to be in a little bit more man than we needed to, just to kind of match up up front.

We didn't get as much pressure on the quarterback as we needed to. It's not easy to get pressure on him. We rushed three people at times. There's times it worked for us, and there's times when he sat back there longer than what we wanted. We kind of knew that going in that might happen, but we tried to rush three, we rushed four, we rushed five, there's times we rushed six.

They had some good concepts on scheme. I don't know that there was a lot. I didn't hear there was a lot of what we hadn't seen. They did a good job of getting the ball quick into the hands of skill kids and getting kick-out blocks and getting down the field and making plays.

**Q. How tough was those Texas pass receivers in the open field? You get out in space, and they seemed to make a lot of plays.**

ALAN BOWMAN: They got athletes that are really skilled. They've got speed on the perimeter. They really played the perimeter game early on. It seemed like we started playing catch-up, trying to figure out. Those guys got players. They made the plays. Yeah, solid players. They got speed out there.

**Q. You lose Korie early in the game in this one. How did you feel the young guys in your secondary held up against Texas receivers and pass catchers?**

MIKE GUNDY: They looked good. They got good experience. I looked out there, and there was three freshmen at once. I think one time we had four freshmen out there at once. So they had to grow up really fast.

They competed. They went after him. Texas saw it, and there was times they tried to mass protect and go down the field and throw it. They didn't hit a deep ball on us against those young kids, so I was proud of them for competing.

But that was tough for them. Korie is one guy we have who is experienced, and he's used to competing in situations like that, but we lost him early. So the freshmen had to go in and play.

**Q. How challenging of a matchup was this going to be, just going in, from what you saw on film?**

MIKE GUNDY: I don't want to repeat myself. There's no

secret that matching up with them across the board can be difficult. I will give Sark credit offensively. He did some good things -- I mean, Nick can run with them. He can run with those backs and stuff on their routes. They brought them across and kind of got caught up in the trash.

He had good concepts out there. It's not something we haven't seen, and I will give him credit for that. I will say this, I'm just going to call it like it is. When you start getting multiple scores, you can start dialing stuff up a little easier. I've always said that.

The reason I know that is because I've been in situations where I'm calling plays, and things that I have that I might not get to, I can get to them easier if I'm at multiple scores. Then the matchup on the other side was trying to handle the interior group.

We had good concepts. We got the ball out there in the flat. We were effective on the perimeter, short passes here and there, which is what we thought we had that gave us the best chance based on I'm trying to protect against those big guys.

Those guys that we played against today in the inside, they're going to be playing on Sundays. We'll be watching them on Sunday. We competed against them. I thought our offensive line run block, they held up, and I thought for the most part pass block we held up. When we became a little more one-dimensional, it's more difficult.

You guys can go ahead. I took all your time.

ALAN BOWMAN: Obviously watching them on film, we knew it was going to be a good game. It was going to be a hard fought game. The best way to win is to execute, execute at a high level. Obviously we didn't come out and execute. When we don't do that and they get up and run, then we become one dimensional, and it's really tough.

Obviously when you're playing a good team, it's like any game, just execution, and we didn't do that.

NICKOLAS MARTIN: To touch on that, I feel like we knew what type of game it was going to be. We knew it was going to be a heavyweight battle. We knew they were going to have blows and we were going to have our own blows. Ultimately, they had more than we did.

Yeah, we all expected to play all quarters, heavyweight the whole game. What we saw up there is what we saw all along. They had a few kinks here and there, but ultimately they ran their offense.

MIKE GUNDY: One thing we did really well is special

teams. I didn't have an issue -- I told you guys on Monday I was really concerned about the return game. Our concepts in the punt game and kick coverage was really good. We had good return yards.

I know there was a couple times they got us on the 12 or the 20, but we had 89 yards in kick returns. So we did have good schemes, good concepts. I was pleased with our special teams and our coverage.

ALAN BOWMAN: Talking about freshmen on defense, I think Sesi, offensive running back, coming in a true freshman playing at a high level. Obviously catching three and four passes, first real live action in a Big 12 Championship Game. Shout out to him. He played at a high level when we needed him. He came up in third down and fourth down. Shout out to Sesi.

MIKE GUNDY: That's a good call. You need to be a coach. I should have already done that, Bow. Thanks for covering for me. He did a really good job, competed.

**Q. Alan, I know Mike just talked about the short pass success. Earlier you were going deep a lot. Is there something you saw there because it worked and sometimes it didn't. Something you were seeing there?**

ALAN BOWMAN: They're a Cover 4 team, that's what they want to be. They're not going to be a Cover 1 team, so we knew we'd kind of have shots on the outside.

Like Coach said, those interior guys are kind of a load, a mass to deal with. We liked our match-ups outside. A couple shots we just didn't make. Maybe a call could have gone our way, maybe it didn't. Overthrown a couple guys.

Definitely our game plan was to take those shots outside in our one-on-one match-ups because we liked those, we thought we had the advantage there. So when you talk about matching up against them, that was one place we thought on offense we thought we could attack was those outside guys, and we tried and came up a little short.

**Q. Mike, you mentioned you're going to give these guys about eight days off. With the portal open, with signing day soon, what's your staff the next couple weeks look like?**

MIKE GUNDY: They're gone. Everybody's out here -- I say everybody, most of them will be out of here tomorrow morning, and the rest will be out Monday afternoon or Tuesday. Everybody's gone, hitting it, and back at it. We get 12 hours off. It's awesome.

**Q. Mike, is Texas sort of blossoming under Sark? They've always had players, but they seem to have got it figured out now. Is it a good time for them to be going from OSU's perspective?**

MIKE GUNDY: Changing conferences? They're very talented, we all know that. It's no secret. I told my guys, I like our guys. They're on a good run right now with -- I was told during the week they have 11 players that are going to be drafted. Now, I don't know. I don't keep track of that.

My point being is that would put him on a good run talent-wise. It's a high number, and they went through a period when the quarterback is out that, when I watched tape, they looked a little vulnerable at times. They lost the running back. They had a good running back, I heard, but other than that, they've stayed really healthy, and they're playing good football right now.

So they're a good team. I don't mind telling you, to be honest, I told the guys in here, I would guess that team can play with anyone in the country right now, just from what I saw live. Maybe I'm wrong. Whoever, they're ready to play.

If we would have got a couple breaks early, we would have been able to punch back and kind of stay in the ballgame, but we didn't get those breaks. So that's kind of a situation for us.

I do want to say again that this team is special. This team had a great year. I mean, not good. They've had a great year, and we're looking forward to playing one more time. I'm excited about walking out with them and getting on the bus with them and getting on a plane with them. I'm proud of them for what they did.

They stand for all the right things. They compete. They're humble. They keep their mouths shut, and they're willing to do what it takes for somebody other than themselves. That's why this is a special group, and I appreciate that.

You guys gave me nice and easy questions, and I appreciate you guys.

**Q. You guys kind of showed a knack for being able to come back in games the past two weeks. What did Texas do especially well today that kept you guys from really digging back in?**

MIKE GUNDY: We came out and got a stop. Then we rolled a little bit, and we had a high snap. We were on second and two or three. We had a high snap, we got sent back, and they stopped us. Ifs and buts, you know all that.

To me, I envision and think about what if you go down and score there? At least you may kind of clamp them a little bit on play calling.

But I don't want to take away from Texas. Today they were really well coached, and they played good. They have good players, and they have good coaches. So I don't want to take anything away from anybody. I still like my team.

**Q. Just kind of following up on Mike's message to you guys about how proud he is of you, I know it's probably hard to elaborate on now, but just being here on this stage playing in this game, can you just sort of reflect on what it took to get here this year?**

NICKOLAS MARTIN: It was definitely just a blessing being able to play in this game. Out of my three years of college, I've been in the Big 12 twice, so it's nothing but a blessing. Ultimately being able to play with my guys, in the postseason nothing's guaranteed, so just being able to go out here and lay it all out on the field one more time.

We've got another game after this, but definitely we never take it for granted even when you come up short, even when you win, you know what I'm saying, everything is a blessing.

ALAN BOWMAN: I would say I don't think anybody in this room expected us to be here at the beginning of the season. I think we were picked ninth in the Big 12 preseason. So to be playing in the game and be able to compete at this high level with those guys. Obviously a loss to South Alabama early, a loss to Iowa State early, 2-2, 0-1 in the Big 12. Everyone checked out on Oklahoma State.

We came together in that bye week, we go on a run, and we won 7 out of 8, and come in and play this game. So I couldn't be more proud to be a part of this team.

Obviously I just got here in January. So for them to kind of bring me in and to be able to become a leader and play for those guys, it's just awesome to be here. I know it's hard because you want to win every game you play, but looking back from where we came from to where we are now and the comeback games that we played, the tough road games, to come in here at halftime, I mean, we were down more than we've ever been than maybe, I don't know, UCF.

Nobody was yelling at each other. Nobody was upset with anybody. Everybody said, yeah, we can do this because we've done it before. We came up short today, but just to be here is pretty special.

**Q. You threw to Brennan 15 times today. What did you like about that matchup today, and what has he meant to you all season, what has he meant to this team all season?**

ALAN BOWMAN: B.P. is an elite player. He's almost unguardable. To find him as many times as we can, we're going to be better on offense. Obviously we have the big guys outside we can throw up to and make plays.

Yeah, I think he's an elite, next level player. His ability to go get the ball even though he's a shorter guy. So as many times as I can find No. 80 to get the ball in his hands, he's going to make plays and make guys miss.

**Q. Nick, two quick ones. First one, how do you get hurt right there on your face? Something get inside your face mask?**

NICKOLAS MARTIN: This has happened like five times this year. I don't know how, but I keep getting hit in my cheekbone and it swells up. It's weird. It's war, you know what I'm saying? If I got to do this and go through all the pain inflicted for my guys, I'd do it a million times.

**Q. My main question for you. You talked about their speed earlier. Was that the biggest difference maybe seeing them live versus on tape, or was there something else that stood out about this team that gave you guys trouble early?**

NICKOLAS MARTIN: I wouldn't say the speed was unexpected. We knew what type of team they were. We knew they have speed. We knew they had some good wideouts.

Ultimately, I just think that we just came up short. We took some heavy blows early in the first quarter. Our first possession on defense was backed up on the 39. We had our backs against the wall coming out.

It's never an excuse, but, yeah, we just took some blows. Tried to fight back, and we just couldn't fight back in time. Ran out of time.

ALAN BOWMAN: I would say it's a game of momentum. I think they had the momentum the whole first half, and we couldn't stop it. I think it just kind of poured on. It's a momentum game.

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