

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: Arizona State vs. Iowa State

Saturday, December 7, 2024

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

Arizona State Sun Devils

Xavier Guillory

Xavion Alford

Cam Skattebo

Sam Leavitt

Postgame Press Conference



Arizona State 45, Iowa State 19

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the players.

Q. Xavier, this had to be like a whole redemption tour for you after being denied by the NCAA eligibility last year. Talk about what are your feelings right now. You definitely put in the work and the sacrifices to be where you're at right now.

XAVIER GUILLORY: It's surreal. I can't put words on it. I'm blessed to be in this room next to these three guys, being on this team.

When I made the switch, I want to credit Coach Dillingham and the staff and the university. They took a chance on me off the portal knowing I could be ineligible. When the news came back, the only thing that changed was I couldn't play.

These guys stuck by me the whole year, motivated me, kept me going. Each and every day, I showed up in the building even though I knew I couldn't play. It's a blessing because we all talked about winning the championship, and we knew we could do it. We put the belief in each other.

So whenever I was granted eligibility and the next year came, it was a clean slate. I could sit and pout about it, or I could be ready for this moment.

It's just a blessing to be here. I just can't put any words on

it, really. Can't put any words on it.

Q. Xavier, you've played state championships in this stadium. To do it in front of your friends and family, doing it at the collegiate level, what does it mean to you, being a kid from Texas?

XAVIER GUILLORY: It means a lot. You see this game a lot growing up and dream of playing in it. You see this stadium a lot and dream of playing in it. I got to play here before now at the high school level. I got to do it again. Third time.

The last time I was in here, confetti was raining. I took it as a sign this time the same thing would happen. Especially with these guys and the belief we had in the team.

Coming into the game, the whole week, we knew we could win this game, and I told them that. Everything we've been doing the whole year, our culture has been a championship culture. Even though we don't say that. Even though we don't say, oh, championship culture, we've been building a championship team the whole year.

To come out and finish it off like that, to continue pressing and twisting, not be done, it shows we're here to work, and we'll be here regardless of who believes in us, each and every week, each and every day. We love being the underdog. We love when we see that on the media. We feel like we're in our place. Coming in here, it's a blessing to be on this team with these guys.

Q. Sam, I'm curious, can you tell me a little bit about how Cam is on the sidelines, especially when you guys aren't in the game? What's he kind of like?

SAM LEAVITT: He's a little bit of a spaz, you know, but he's just talking over scheme and telling me what he sees on the field and exactly what he's thinking. Talk about a super cerebral player. He's one of the best that I've played with, if not the best.

I think back to his little run around and throw. Shouldn't have done that, probably, but he knew where I was at so it wasn't going to be intentional grounding so it was a super

smart play. Yeah, the kid's just unreal.

Q. Cam, you were having a lot of your teammates sign your belt after you got that. Why did you want to do that?

CAM SKATTEBO: My O-line because we wouldn't be in this position if we didn't have them. Me and this guy scoring touchdowns, those guys have put in the effort to get better every day. You see week in and week out, they get better and better and better.

I don't know how many yards I have this season, but they're the reason for it. Even being in the Heisman talk is awesome, and those are the reason -- that's the reason. Those guys up front. And I just want to keep spreading love to those guys because they deserve it.

Q. Cam, playing at a non-Power 4 conference or a smaller school, something like that, what did that do for you to make that transition to a Power 4 conference and become a better player?

CAM SKATTEBO: I had coaches at that level who were better than that level and developed me to become to the level I'm playing at now. Coming to ASU and having Coach Aguano and Coach Dillingham pushing me and making me better because they know what it takes to be successful at this level, I've been set up for success because of the level of coaches I've had and the teammates I have that trust and believe in me. The reason I'm here is because of them.

Q. Sam and Xavion, obviously, you know, DB, quarterback. When that targeting play kind of happened, what were both your initial reactions, and what was your reaction as to the explanation of why it was targeting and why you got ejected?

XAVION ALFORD: Honestly, with the different types of targeting, I thought it was a clean hit. His head was up. It's football, you know. It happens. Obviously, you know, we can't really -- we don't really have the outcome on that, can't control it.

Obviously, in good spirits and next man up. Keep the next man up mentality throughout the team. Even offensively, everybody talked about we had JT go down, but the offense was the offense. We believe they do what they do. They score points. Skat, Sam, X, all the receivers, everybody stepped up. We're one team, and that's the thing about this team. We're just together. Until that 60 minutes is erased off the clock, we'll play our hardest, play as hard as we can and compete. That's all.

Q. Sam, on the fourth and 1 in the first half, you were deep in your own territory, what did you see in the buildup of the play that led you to gamble out there? That's a tough decision to make. What was the discussion? Ultimately the play turned into a big gain. What was the reaction?

SAM LEAVITT: We know on fourth and one they were going to play cover one or cover zero, essentially, whether it was all out or zero route. So we knew we would have a stutter and go. If we gave big action, we've got Number 4 in the backfield. Everybody has to account for him.

So I just gave good action, pulled the safety down, and then Melquan was able to give a bluff and go and just take off down the field. Great call by Arroyo. I was pretty shocked that he called it that early in the game. We practiced all week, were successful 100 percent throughout the week. Big-time players make big-time plays in those kind of moments. Essentially, I'd call Arroyo a player for that.

Q. Cam, you broke out the Heisman celebration today for the first time this season. You got do it three times. Can you go into your reasoning why you decided to hit the pose today?

CAM SKATTEBO: Because I've been disrespected my whole life. I've always been the underdog. Nobody respects the fact that I'm the best running back in the country. I'm going to stand on that. If people want to disrespect that, I'm going to keep going and proving people wrong.

Whatever NFL team takes me is going to get a gem. I'll give everything I've got for them. Whether winning or losing the Heisman, I should still be in that situation.

Q. Cam, 2,000 yards from scrimmage never happened in ASU history, and Kenny Dillingham has coached two of those players, one in 2018. What is it about the scheme that helps enable your position to be so successful?

CAM SKATTEBO: There's so many options you can do with me. The receivers don't get the option to run the ball. They have to catch the ball for the most part. I get the option to catch the ball in the backfield, run the ball, throw the ball possibly, kick the ball possibly. I have the option because I'm there with the quarterback. I'm blessed to be in this position. He understands what he has. Coach Arroyo uses me to the max position. That's why I'm here and why I stayed. I knew I would be in a position to be successful. I love playing for this football team.

Q. Xavier, we all talked about Jordyn Tyson going down and what a blow that was. Can you talk about getting your chance at really stepping up and helping?

XAVIER GUILLORY: Yeah. We knew last game when he went down, that's our brother. It hurt to see the work he put in, he wasn't going to play. When one man goes down, somebody steps up. We all collectively as a group chipped in, top to bottom. We had Malik out in Week 4, came in and made a great play down the field.

It's trust. We play with Sam every day. We have trust. One man goes down, we feel confident the next guy will step up. Melquan had some great plays today. From top to bottom, I was proud of how everybody reacted to the pressure situation. Big 12 Championship, nobody tucked their tail. We all stepped up to the challenge. I'm proud of how everybody reacted.

Q. Sam and X Guillory, can you just speak to the connection that you've continued to develop here these past couple weeks where X has been able to find the end zone four times in three games?

SAM LEAVITT: It dates back all the practices, just getting on the same page. We talked about exactly how I want the route ran. So last week, we caught Arizona in a cover zero look. I told him if you're ready for the ball, it's going to be cover zero. I'm going to put it up there. Stutter step and go. Massive play.

And then come out here and catch two in some big-time moments, so nothing but props to him and the work we put in and so I'm just super happy and proud of him.

XAVIER GUILLORY: Sam makes it easy. He works hard, one of the hardest workers on the team. When he stepped on campus, we were by ourselves on the field, getting our timing down, and that's with everybody from top to bottom. Doesn't matter. Sam can throw to anybody. He makes it really easy for me.

I was glad I was able to run my route. We practice that every single day. That ball's in the air, it's like we already repped that thousands of times before the season started. So that was just 1,001.

SAM LEAVITT: I did not make it easy. I don't know if you all saw that catch.

Q. Xavier, the defensive back room was incredible today, holding two 1,000-yard receivers to minimal yardage. What do you make of the performance of your group as a whole and your game plan and how you were able to execute?

XAVION ALFORD: Them guys step up for the challenge each and every week. The DBs, when we got together this summer, we wanted to be one of the best secondaries in the country. We felt we put in the work to do that. We needed to show it throughout the season. We've gotten better and better each week.

All those guys, I want to say I made first team all-conference, but each and every one of them guys I play with should be on that list. There's no way possible that they don't make those lists and there's no way possible I make that list without them. They make my job easy.

The way they communicate, the players they are physically, Javan getting the tackle, Keith with the interception, Shamari coming in for a fumble, coming down and making tackles. We're one of the best secondaries in the country from top to bottom. We challenged each other throughout the summer. I challenged them myself. Sometimes it was uncomfortable.

DBs, you gotta be tight. We're like brothers. It's just us five out there. Each and every ball that's thrown behind the linebackers and D-line, that's on us. We step up to the challenge every week. Two 1,000-yard receivers, we'll step up to the challenge every week. Don't matter who we play, which logo. We've got the best secondary in the country.

Q. Cam, I'm wondering, was it during camp or was there a point during the season when you knew that you had a special group, that this team had a chance to compete for a Big 12 Championship? When was that moment?

CAM SKATTEBO: When we had guys pushing other guys in a positive way. There was a time where it was very negative from last year to this year, and for some reason there was a switch that flickered, and we hit that switch, and it's been different ever since.

I couldn't tell you the exact date, but there was a time where it wasn't going to go like this, and then a day later it was. And ever since that day, this team has been nothing but on the forward trajectory, and I respect that because everybody's pushing each other and there's no negativity in the room.

That's what makes a team. No matter how much money people are making, no matter how much things are being tossed around or names are being tossed around or who's not getting the ball, who is getting the ball, everybody on the team is positive.

That's why I respect Coach Dillingham because he's bringing in guys that love and want to play football. Even if they're not in the game, they have a positive attitude towards the guys that are playing.

Q. Sam and X Guillory, can you talk about Cam breaking off those crazy runs? You've seen it all year. He had a couple wild ones where he was winding and weaving, breaking tackles, 50-yarders. What's it like for you when that's happening?

SAM LEAVITT: I've got the best seat in the house. It's wild. I hand him a ball, carry out my fake a little bit, peek back, get ready for a gain of 5. And I see the dude weaving through traffic and randomly busts loose and breaks one and goes for 70. He's the best player in the nation, flat-out. Most dominant player. You want to talk about the Heisman race, talk about the player most dominant in the game, he does it week in, week out against the best competition. All props to him.

XAVIER GUILLORY: As a receiver, blocking for him, it's like every game, I'm blocking for him. Okay, cool. Oh, he's still running. I'll run down. Oh, my gosh, he's still running. So I'm running, like, 100 yards to block for this dude.

I was at Idaho State when he was at Sac State. We were in the same conference so I've seen this since 2021. The dude is crazy. I don't understand it. It's cool not to understand it. Like he said, we got the best seat in the house, watching the dude run through people. I can't compare it. This dude is so fun to watch. I'm able to team up with him and block downfield with him. Like Sam said, he's one of the best if not the best player in the country.

CAM SKATTEBO: Thanks, guys.

XAVION ALFORD: Not very fun to see him in practice either.

Q. Xavion, you've obviously been at places before that have lots of highly recruited kids. How does it impact a program when maybe the biggest name on the field is somebody who started at Sac State?

XAVION ALFORD: Me going to the places I've been, that's what people don't understand about the college football. It's not the logo. It's the people in the building. The people in the building. Like these people, they actually care. They're people. They have feelings. They have emotions. They're not afraid to show that.

Some places, you go somewhere, people try to uphold an ego or, you know, stuff like that. Everybody in this building love each other, and you can see that in our play. We play

like we love each other, and it's not about the logo. They predicted us last. They predicted us to be last in this conference. But I guarantee you, nobody in that building thought we was the worst team in the conference because we believe in each other and we care.

We see the work we put in. Nobody sees the work we put in. Nobody's there on June 1, 2, 3, in July. In fall camp, day 16, 17, me and this guy been going heads up every day. Sam been throwing it. Nobody sees that. Like I said, logos don't mean anything. What makes the team special is the team and the people in the building.

That's why we're sitting here right now because we believed and continue to believe and continue pushing. Through the ups and downs, through the losses, through the injuries, we continue pushing and continued believing. That's why we're sitting up here conference champs.

Q. Xavier, what was impact of getting this for Jordyn? You talked about how you can relate to being in positions of having lower leg injuries that are devastating. In this case, obviously it's a collarbone. But getting this for him and continuing to win, knowing that he'd love to be out there and just was there any type of message either pre or halftime between you and the receiver room or just the offense of, you know, we gotta get this one for him?

XAVIER GUILLORY: Yeah, since last Saturday when we found out. Like I said, beyond teammates, we're brothers. That's one of my best friends. We do a lot together. We go to church together, do Bible study together. I've seen so much of JT off the field, that's my brother.

We all felt that when he went down, you want to go out and win it for him he was the most dominant receiver in the Big 12 this year. I wouldn't have been here without him. We're glad to chip in and glad he was here to see that. That's one of my best friends. I wanted to make sure we got this win for him. Glad to see him out there coaching everybody up. He's feeling as much in the game as if he was playing. That's a testament to who he is as a person and his character.

Q. Xavier, last week against Arizona, after you won Xavion Alford was in the press conference with a Jesus Won t-shirt. After your first touchdown, you pointed to the sky, saying it's not me, it's all God. What does it mean to be able to pronounce your faith on such a big stage?

XAVIER GUILLORY: I'm glad you asked that. I appreciate you asking that. Our faith, I'm just so glad that -- the Lord had us here for a reason and brought us all here for a

reason. We wouldn't be here without him. We're talented, yes. We score, oh, da, da, da. Cam and all this stuff. We know who was there when we didn't have this. The Lord brought me through so much, brought these guys through so much.

It's a testament when we show our faith. It's most important to me. I'm sure it's most important to those guys too is putting the Lord first in our successes, in the down times and the up times. Anytime I get a chance in the end zone, I'm going to give a nod to the Lord. I appreciate you asking that question. It means a lot for me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, guys.
Congratulations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports