

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: BYU vs Texas Tech

Saturday, December 6, 2025

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

BYU Cougars Coach Kilani Sitake Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech - 34, BYU - 7

KALANI SITAKE: Congratulations to Texas Tech and the coaches, the players and their fans. Well-deserved Big 12 Championship.

You can't make a lot of mistakes like we did. We've learned it again -- this is the second time this year -- against the best team in the country. I've said it before, I think they're the best team in the country, and I'm confirming it, they're the best team in the country.

Joey has done an amazing job with this team. It just so happens that we had to play the best team in the country twice. And they created a lot of havoc. And we fought as much as we can, but towards the end we can't make the mistakes we did and expect to come away with a victory or even have it competitive at the end.

So credit to them. Really proud of our guys, the effort. Thank you to the fans. BYU fans showed up. And, I mean, it was record attendance. So I want to tell the BYU fans, just get ready. Hopefully we'll be back soon.

But we're in our third year in the conference. Really proud of where we've been and how we built this team. We obviously have some more work to do, but I think playing the best team in the country twice will give us some good lessons to learn. And just really proud of the way they played.

I thought, looking at everything, all three phases, just fundamentally really sound. Well-coached team. Amazing environment today in the stadium.

Thank you to all the Texas Tech fans and BYU fans for bringing all the energy. It was a lot of fun. We need to make it a little more competitive at the end.

It got away from us, but I was proud of the way our guys played. They didn't give up. We put our defense in tough positions. Those guys kept battling. So we'll build from this and get better, but really, really proud of our team.

But with that said and done, I'll have to watch the film and everything, but it was an honor for us to be on this field and to be part of the Big 12 Championship game. And we could get used to this. So I'm hoping that we can be back again soon.

And looking forward to building -- we have quite a bit of young guys on our team. So the unfortunate part is that this is our seniors' last time, so they won't be able to play for another Big 12 Championship. But they've done some wonderful things in getting our team ready for it.

And they're still leading. We still need to get better and still find ways to -- we will play again in the postseason. Where, we'll just find out.

But congratulations again. I'll finish by saying in my statement, congratulations to Texas Tech. Just confirmed, they're the best team in the country.

Q. Considering that both of your losses came at the hands of the same team this year, and a top-four ranked team at that, do you think the play off committee should take that into consideration compared to other two-loss teams?

KALANI SITAKE: I think if you look at what Texas Tech has done, they're the best team in the country for a reason. Their only loss came when they didn't have their starting quarterback. And so that's difficult, and on the road. But you look at when they're a full-strength team, they're dangerous.

So, I'm not on the playoff committee, but I can tell you one thing, who has played the best team in the country twice? We have. Does that mean that you're not one of the best 12? I have no idea. I'm not in that committee. I don't make the decisions. But others will find out.

That's the great thing about the playoffs, everybody else will find out what we had to go against. And I'm really proud of our team, so I can't really speak for everybody else.

But from seeing them twice, and even as the games went and watching them and their response to some adversity, they played really strong. I'd love to have a third chance at them. But that's a really good team, and Joey's done a great job with them.

Q. How injured was Bear Bachmeier after that big hit he took in the first drive? And how much of an impact did that play into not taking many shots down the field through the air?

KALANI SITAKE: Yeah, I mean, he was banged up, you know? So when you have a lower-leg injury that causes issues for you to throw the ball. But that's not an excuse. I mean, I think -- was it Ben that made the one-handed snag? Come on, man. They made some amazing plays, great defense, and offense was efficient.

I thought overall they just had a great game plan and they just executed. They never panicked. Just really impressed with the poise and composure they had. Like I said, when they're full strength and their quarterback is full strength, they're a dangerous team.

Q. On the touchdown to Eakin, did he step out of bounds? If so, did the refs give you any explanation if it was illegal touching or if Evan forced him out?

KALANI SITAKE: I don't know. Listen, I'm not going to have ever complain about the refs. We had an amazing reffing crew today. They did a great job communicating. You know, we're biased, I'm going to yell one thing and Joey's going to yell the other.

But I thought overall the refs did a great job of communicating to us when we had a P.I., and when we were asking questions. They did a great job. I didn't have any issues with the way they reffed the game.

The explanations were all there. On that one, how am I going to say anything? I'm on the other side. I can't see it. To be honest with you I was trying to find the replay. They're not going to show all 22 on the field. But that had nothing to do with anything. We just needed to make the play.

Q. What did you see from your defense today? Put in some tough situations, just overall thoughts on the defense?

KALANI SITAKE: Yeah, it's a tough spot. I think it can be deflating a little bit when you get that many short fields. They made the play on that fourth down, a great play by them. It was a legal screen. We just have to anticipate that better.

But I think that the dangerous thing about this team is they can do so many different things. And with their quarterback, he's so active -- he can throw side arm. He can spin the ball really nicely, and they have great targets at receiver and tight end. And their two backs, those guys know how to run the ball.

It's just a difficult thing to defend. And you have a physical O line. You can't give them short fields, and we kept giving them short fields.

I like the response from our guys. Did I expect them to make a stop every time? Of course, because that's what we're trained to do. But it's hard to do against the best team in the country, you know?

But I'm proud of the fight, and at the end, just thankful that Joey and them decided to kneel the ball and show sportsmanship. It was a classy move. And our guys, it was a hard-fought battle, and really proud of the way the guys are. And we wish Texas Tech luck as they go on. They're in the playoffs. I mean, they deserve a first-round bye. So, a dang good team.

Q. What is your sense of your playoff hopes now?

KALANI SITAKE: I don't know. This is the first game. So I don't know what's going on in the other games. But I know -- like I said, who's played -- they're the number one team in the country. I don't know what the other rankings are. This team is really good. So you go play the number one team in the country twice, one in Lubbock and one in a neutral site, which is the same state. I thought our fans showed up and made a lot of noise. I'd love another crack at it.

But they do that to everybody. If you watch the film and you see what they do, they basically grind it out, and they end the games like they just did against us.

I like who we are and I like what we've been able to do. I think we have a great resumé. But I've got to watch the other games, too. I just know that when they're doing comparisons, hopefully they put it out there and make it fair. At least put us in the graphic; that would be nice.

Q. Second quarter, you go for it on fourth down, fake punt. What went into that decision in your own territory?

KALANI SITAKE: We thought it was going to be a good play. I mean, give credit to them. They had one player that sniffed it out, and I mean we were aggressive, tried different things.

I like it. I told K-Pop and I told our coaches, don't practice something if we're not going to call it in the game. We called it. It didn't work. I think we forced a missed field goal. So no harm, no foul. We're good.

I like being bold and aggressive. And usually the fortune will go our way. But you have to give them credit. They made an incredible amount of plays and forced some turnovers. We have a tough team, man, but they were really aggressive and they made some big-time plays and big-time stops.

It's hard for us to advance the ball when we're not converting third downs or we're putting ourselves in third-and-long. It's hard against this team. We didn't convert a couple of fourth downs, and then obviously the turnovers. But I was proud of the way our guys played and the way they fought.

Q. Are you concerned about Will Ferrin and his having missed a lot of kicks recently and the special teams woes you've experienced?

KALANI SITAKE: There's a bunch of different areas going into kicking the ball. I wish they could just kick it and put it on their tee and kick it. But there's a snap, a hold, a protection that goes into it and the nerves. So I think it's easy for us to criticize kickers. I've seen some amazing kickers in the Big 12 miss field goals. And on both sides that happened today.

But I think the environment can play into that, and we trust him. He's won games for us, and he's going to be our guy. We've just got to get him ready for the next one. But there's a lot of different parts that go into it.

Q. You said lessons were learned potentially against the best team in the country. Just initial thoughts, like, what was the biggest lesson you learned going two times against this team?

KALANI SITAKE: Well, the game felt different than the first one. Let's be honest, the first one was really hard. This one I thought we were competitive and we were in it, and the turnovers started happening towards the end. And then it just got away from us. We could do a lot of things differently.

I like that we were physical. They couldn't just run the ball

up on us inside, and so we were physical up front on both sides. I thought they tackled really well and obviously forced some fumbles. They forced a couple of fumbles and had a couple of interceptions. And I think that was the difference in what could have happened.

I felt like we held it to one-score, two-score game for a while, and all of a sudden the negative things started to happen and it just got away from us.

Listen, this is a really, really good team. They're the best team in the country. I wish more people would be saying that.

Q. How did you feel about just the overall week of preparation leading up to the game for a second time against this Texas Tech club? And did you feel like maybe there was anything lacking coming into the game today?

KALANI SITAKE: No, I thought we started off fast and with a lot of energy. We got the lead early. I liked the way the guys -- I mean, their mindset was good. We were physical right away and went into halftime with a score being 13-7, still felt good about where we're at. And that first drive coming out, I think we missed a field goal and had a good drive.

The stuff that we did is really hard to do against this team, and we just made too many mistakes. You have to capitalize. You have to convert third downs and turn them into first downs. And when you have moments for points, you just have to make them.

Otherwise, this team will figure out a way to just squeeze it out of you, man. And that's what championship teams do. That's why they deserve to win the Big 12 Championship, and so we've got to learn from all these things. But they just beat us a different way than they did the first time.

But it was really cool. Like I said, it was an honor for us to be here. But that just can't be the only reason. We've got to learn from this and build on it and be a lot like them. I think they put a lot of pressure on teams to make mistakes and maybe stress them a little bit. And that's just great coaching and great veteran leadership on their part.

Q. How concerned are you for whatever the next game ends up being with that lower leg injury with Bear, his availability going forward, how concerned are you with that?

KALANI SITAKE: Yeah, always concerned. But I mean, that's not the reason why we lost. I mean, it is part of the reason why he wasn't able to play his best. But I mean,

he's going to be hurting a lot more tomorrow, you know?
But I thought that wasn't -- we made a lot of mistakes. It wasn't just Bear. He wasn't the reason why we didn't score enough points. It was a lot of different things.

The fumbles forced because we didn't have the right protection going. And I thought Texas Tech had a great game plan for trying to eliminate the quarterback run game. So we just didn't make enough adjustments to that.

But, like I said, they just kept you guessing on a lot of different things and a well-coached team. You just weren't going to get anything cheap on them. They basically covered all the areas and dotted their I's and crossed their T's. And that's when you can tell they're a well-coached team, their culture that they have and everything that they're doing. They're a dynamite team.

And so that was a really cool experience for us. But I think there's a lot of things we can learn from this game still.

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