

# Stanford University Football Media Conference

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## Coach David Shaw Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 14, Notre Dame 45

DAVID SHAW: Evening everyone. Someone asked me earlier in the week if I was going to be glad when the season is over. The answer was no. This team has worked so hard and is such a joy to be around, even through difficult times.

These seniors, some I've known for a long time now, right? Recruited Gabe Reid before he went on his mission. Came back and then did five years with us.

Tucker Fisk, played with his dad, to be with him this whole time. Dalyn Perry, Thomas Booker has become the special young man, and that is both on and off the football field. Isaiah Sanders for what he brought to this football team over the last two years.

Special group of guys. Really is. So sad to see those guys go. So many more I could name but I'm not going to go through the whole roster. But really sad to see those guys go.

You know, wish I could have given them a better senior year. But difficulties find us. It's not what happens to us but how we respond. This program will respond.

I said in the press conference on Tuesday and I'll say it again of take your shots now. I have no problem. Take your shots now. Love the guys we have coming back. Love some of the groundwork that we laid, but our standards in this program are extremely high. Extremely high.

A lot of excuses, a lot of reasons why we didn't play the way we want to play. Excuses don't matter. They don't matter. We've got some great players, great young people, great young people coming in. We have a top 15 class right now in this year's recruiting class and we're not done yet.

Going to add those guys to the guys coming back, and I'm not going to say we're rebuilding anything. We're going to

play better. A lot of things we have to do, a lot of discussions we have to have. Some difficult discussions. But like I said, the standard that we set here is extremely high. Going to take a little break, jump into recruiting, and then the work starts.

We have a special group coming back. We're going to have a special season.

Questions.

**Q. I think passing game was held to less than 50 yards through three quarters. Did you see anything in particular that Notre Dame was doing or you guys were stopping yourselves that you couldn't get the down field passing game going?**

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, we dropped three balls. We dropped three balls and missed two throws in the first half. That's a bottom line.

You know, that got us to third and down, third medium, played man to man cover one. Made some throws that were good and we missed some balls. Had Alijah one-on-one down the sideline. We've seen all the plays that he's made. Couldn't quite bring it in.

I still say Michael Wilson is one of the best route runners in America. He dropped two. We had a couple other opportunities where guys were open and missed the throws.

So it wasn't Notre Dame. It was us. Now, the pass rush was real, right? We got it out on time, we had a chance. We held it, couple plays they had some good coverage and Tanner had to pull the ball down and these guys are good. They're good. So the sack-fumble was avoidable. We should be much better technique-wise there.

But second half, settle in a little bit and got some protection, made some nice runs, made some nice throws, and still didn't see what the touchdown was called back for. Didn't see that.

But, you know, we gave ourselves opportunities in the

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second half that were not there in the first half. But, story of the season, you know. Not going to avoid it, not going to escape it. It's my responsibility. Our season was uneven. I'll say it again for this game and for the last month I've said it: You take the top 10 plays of every game and look at them and you say we're a really good football team.

Too many mistakes, too many errors. That's going to be or focus going into next year.

**Q. (Regarding unevenness - no microphone.)**

DAVID SHAW: That's a great question. I'll have a better answer for you in a month. And I'm not going to say the injuries don't play into it, right?

I mean, Michael Wilson has missed time since before training camp. Came back and played really well but was a little disjointed. Tanner missed some time, came out, came back in. Bunch of guys going in and out.

The hard part for me is when we execute. I say this kind of jokingly, it's too bad you guys don't come to practice but I don't want you to come to practice, but if you were able to come to practice you would see us go out there and execute.

A lot of plays we didn't execute tonight we execute extremely well. So for me, that's a lot of our intention now, and to translate that to gameday.

Got a lot of guys coming back and I'm going to ask for a higher level of maturity. Things that we do well all week we should come on gameday and do well. Gameday is the reward. Gameday is the day you get a chance to shine and do it full speed.

We practice well. This group practiced well the entire year. We came out and didn't always do the things that we practiced well. So some things coaching-wise, I won't go into detail, we need to look at, look at a lot of personnel things in all three phases with the guys coming back; make sure that we can go out there and execute like we're capable of.

That's the game. You know, that's the game. It's a game of execution and play making. If you can handle those two you win. If you don't, it's going to be tough to win.

**Q. You said in your opening statement you love some of groundwork you've made. Maybe some people see the scores of the last four games that weren't close. Can you expand on that? (No microphone.)**

DAVID SHAW: Take a look at the last two weeks, lopsided

scores. No question about it. Second play of the game should've been a touchdown pass against Cal. Two out of the next three drives got inside the five yard line before they scored.

So that's groundwork, but that's not finishing. That's going out there and playing but not playing well enough. That's going out there and making plays but not making the plays we need to make.

Oregon State, Washington, game is over, right? We score late, game is over. Washington got a defensive stand, got ball back, game should be over, right? So multiple games this year we started fast but didn't get in the end zone. Multiple games this year we had a chance to seal it at the end and didn't.

So the record, we earned that record. But when you really watch the games and watch them close, the distance between where we were, where we want to be, is not great. It's not a big difference. Looks like it on the scoreboard absolutely.

But really good football teams, which I'm not going to forget either we had about the toughest schedule in America. You got play well at the beginning and at the end. You got to start fast, finish faster. What you do in the middle, Hey, you're playing tennis in the middle.

But you got to finish games, and we didn't finish games, and those games that we didn't start well we played well at the end, but not well enough to catch up to make up for the beginning.

Like I said, uneven, disjointed, very uncharacteristic of this program over a decade plus. For about a decade we were Top 5 in one score games, winning one score games. So got to look at a lot of different things.

There are some things here that we've done extremely well in the past that we need to do better. Some things we got to tweak and change. So we're not going to be stagnant and rest on the things we did in the past. We're going to get back to work, continue this recruiting process, which has gone extremely well, recruiting the right guys to the right place, and get to the point where we take out the bumps in our road.

And a lot of the them are self-inflicted. Not blaming anybody else. But this group coming back could be really, really good.

**Q. Quick question on EJ Smith. Noticed he didn't come back in the game. Update on him? Is he hurt? What happened there?**

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, he got tackled low. He kind of -- EJ's season has kind of mirrored our season. Started slow, came in made some big plays, every time he was right about to kind of get in there and get a lot more he got hurt, right? Put on a show at the end of the Vanderbilt game. Excited about getting some more plays, scores a touchdown, and misses the next couple weeks, comes back, had a couple really nice carries, finish the Utah game well; got hurt, missed the next game and a half.

So that's just been tough. Went into it and felt good, healthy, made it a point to get him some more touches, and he was doing great. He was averaging five yards a carry and making guys miss, being physical, and then got hurt there and had to come out.

Don't believe it's long-term thing. We do believe he has a chance to be special, and really wanted to see him get more today, but it got cut short.

**Q. Your defense performed very well on third downs and the run defense held up for a while. What was your overall impression of the defense despite you still have 45 points and 500 yards at the end of the game?**

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, we did something that you don't typically do, which is kind of tweak your defense in the middle of the season. But we had to. Did a much better job against the run tonight. Really did. That was a point of emphasis. Kyren is a really good back. He's a really good back. To hold him to 3.9 yards a carry was impressive.

Made some tackles in the pass game. It's been a bugaboo the entire year. Play well and miss the tackle and get a couple big plays.

But, you know, emphasis was to slow down the run game; did that well. Decent pressure on the quarterback, but did not defend the pass as well as we needed to.

**Q. Just one last one. Just get your thoughts on Jonathan McGill. Nice to have him back, second straight week. Just how great is it to have him back and build some momentum for next year?**

DAVID SHAW: We missed him so much. He was the MVP of our spring football. Borderline dominant. He was everywhere. It was awesome. Came back, and he would admit he's a little rusty. Missed a lot of time, missed training camp. Was out there, was healthy, was in shape, but there is in shape and then there is in shape and in the season.

So in two games he had a couple rough downs, couple

things just a little disjointed on, but he gives his team a spark. His leadership is top notch. His play making ability is the reason they call him the Honey Badger, right? He finds the ball, interceptions, pulling the ball out, made some big time open field tackles both last week and this week.

A little rusty, missed a couple also, but we're a better defense when he's on the field for us, and I'm excited about getting to play 12 with him next year.

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