

# Stanford University Football Media Conference

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## Coach David Shaw

### Postgame Media Conference



USC - 41, Stanford - 28

DAVID SHAW: Bottom line, you can't turn the ball over and beat good football teams. That's a really good football teams. A lot of really good players. We gave them opportunities, and they took advantage of them.

Got an outstanding quarterback, got one of the best receivers in college football, and you can't keep giving them chances.

Offensively, outside of turning the ball over, there's some really, really good things, some really good things.

Outside of the two tipped interceptions, I thought Tanner played well. Up until the end when we were trying to force it and get the ball down the field.

E.J. Smith had a great game, outside of two fumbles. Two of our best players had two turnovers.

That being said, defensively I thought we played them pretty straight up as long as we could, but we put the defense in a lot of bad positions. Too many bad positions. We had opportunities to keep the ball a little bit longer, score some more points. Could have gone into halftime with the lead if we didn't turn the ball over.

So that, to me, is the story of the game. We gave the ball away against a really good football team, and they took advantage.

So we've got the bye week here. We've got a lot of guys we've got to take care of. E.J. came out a little bit late, had a couple other guys get banged up. The bye is so early that we still have to work. We can't just give everybody the week off. Anybody who's banged up, we'll take care of them.

Other guys, particularly our younger guys, are going to need to practice. We'll get three good practices in, then we'll give the guys some time off. Then we're going to come back the following Monday, and it's a ten-week

stretch. It's a ten-week stretch that, if we play our cards right, should be one heck of a run.

We got a lot of the pieces. We've got to grow a lot. We've got to take care of the football. If we can do that, it could be a lot of fun.

**Q. Coach, we talked about this last week, the turnovers. So how key was that to the psyche of the players? When you guys scored the touchdown, looks like it's a tie game, that's turned over, then they get the interception and it's scored immediately after that, so now it's 14-0.**

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, I'm kind of looking forward to seeing that myself on the big screen. I thought I saw grass between his foot and the white line. That's just what I thought I saw. I couldn't get a close view on the jumbotron, and if that happened, it doesn't matter what the second foot did. So I'm curious to see that for myself.

But they reversed it. We've got a 6'3", 236 pound receiver/F tight end one-on-one in the end zone, and we'll take that every single time. Ball bounces funny, bounced up in the air, and they got it. You know, ball bounced off of Ben's fingertips going down the middle versus two high. I don't know how many times we've made that throw in practice and in games last year. Ball gets tipped, tipped again, intercepted.

So two tipped interceptions, both in scoring position, and then fumbled the ball inside the 5 yard line. I mean, that's the ballgame. You don't come back from that against a good football team. You're taking away 21 points. At the minimum those are two touchdowns inside the 5 yard line and a field goal; at minimum it's 17 points.

Now we could've put 17 points on the board in the first half, different ballgame.

So those are momentum killers, and those are the fastest way to lose a football game is turn the ball over.

**Q. Wrinkles, offensively the slow mesh we hadn't seen before. Wake Forest did it last year; we're seeing it**

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**now in Stanford. And defensively in the second half looked like there was a wrinkle with one downed lineman and three edge players playing much of that half. Take us through both of those wrinkles, where they generated from, and your thoughts on how successful those were.**

DAVID SHAW: Those were off-season projects for us. Offensively had a chance to meet Coach Caldwell over the off-season. Just met him and asked about some things that they did. They're very close-knit there. They don't give out a lot of information. So he just gave me some advice, watch the film.

So I went back through, watched all their film, watched what they did and said, hey, you know what? I think that could fit our players, fit our quarterbacks. He did some similar things in high school with a little bit slower mesh than most RPOs, so he was very comfortable with it.

Great fit for our running backs and opportunities to get our outside guys one-on-one if the safety -- if the (inaudible) gets in the box.

Like I said, I'm happy with a lot of things that we did show today. Not happy with the turnovers, but that, I thought, did well. Second half in particular on the defensive side we got the stops that we needed. We just couldn't generate the offense in the second half as much as we did in the first half.

But you're just playing catch-up.

Offensively in the second half I thought we did well. Defensively in the first half we weren't terrible. We weren't terrible, but we've got -- you're pitching to Judge. You'd rather pitch to him five pitches instead of 15. 15 pitches, he's going to get one of them.

You give this quarterback and that receiver a whole bunch of pitches and they're going to hit a couple of them out of the park, and that's what happened.

On defense I thought we fought hard. We got some tough matchups, but they got too many bites at the apple. So I'm looking forward to us getting back and working on some ball security and protecting the football. Get some guys healthy. We've got ten weeks to make the season special.

**Q. David, they have 20-something transfers, a new coaching staff. Is there anything that -- I mean, they seem like relatively clean game. They had a lot of penalties, but I don't know, I guess as a coach, does that surprise you that they put all that together and be where they are, or does it just speak to the talent?**

DAVID SHAW: So much I can say and things I won't say. We're in a new era right now. Giving a lot of opportunities to our student-athletes. The way the transfer portal works right now can create large waves of young people changing schools.

I don't know if it's a good thing, I don't know if it's a bad thing, but it's a different era.

I give their coaching staff a lot of credit. With all those guys coming in and out putting together a good football team. The penalties are the penalties, but they went out there and they made plays. Guys that transferred in went out there and made plays, and that's what they were brought in to do.

As for us, I would have loved to play this game without turnovers and see how it went, but you can't play it over again. We've got to learn our lessons. We've got to grow from it and continue to grow. Look forward to the next ten games.

**Q. I know you said you put the defense in a bad position and they didn't play that poorly, all things told, but the fact is they did give up the five touchdowns in the first five possessions and didn't really face a third down during that time, I guess.**

DAVID SHAW: Are you asking a question or just contradicting me?

**Q. I appreciate that you don't want to criticize the defense, but I guess could you pinpoint kind of what was happening in the first half there? Then how much can you -- did you just throw it away and say, well, we're not going to face Caleb Williams again?**

DAVID SHAW: Obviously, they've got a great quarterback and a great receiver. That kid got one-on-one a couple times, and can't double him the whole game because they've got a lot of things they can do.

Some games we rolled safety over the top; sometimes we didn't; sometimes we cheated a guy over there; sometimes we had to play man to man.

So, yeah, they scored five touchdowns in five possessions, but we gave them two of those touchdowns. It would be nice to give it to them on a kickoff after we scored, but we gave it to them.

I'm not saying the defense played perfectly. It's a different game if it's 7-7 than 7-0. It's a different game if it's 14-14 instead of 14-0. Yeah, I'm not saying we played perfectly

on the defensive side. We just put them too many difficult -- they got too many opportunities. They got too many drives with the lead.

I think we have a better chance of winning the football game if it's 7-7 and 14-14 and now you got a chance to play it straight.

**Q. Obviously a few plays impacted how this one played out, but I feel like you probably still have a pretty good sense of where the team is, and I'm wondering where that kind of compares to where you hoped to be at this point coming into the year?**

DAVID SHAW: The easy answer, I hoped to be at 2-0.

**Q. But as far as how you're actually playing.**

DAVID SHAW: I know what you're asking. I'll just tell you what I told the team. I mean, there are some things that happened tonight that are really exciting and some things that are sitting in my stomach right now.

So where we are in an execution standpoint as a team probably hovering right around a B-minus. Without the turnover, it's probably a B-plus. We have to give ourselves opportunities and not give them to the other team.

I'm harping on it, but ask any coach in America -- high school, college, or the NFL -- what's the easiest way to win the game, it's win the turnover battle.

So we can dive down on a bunch of other things, but we don't turn the ball over four times, this is a completely different ballgame. But against a really good football team with those cats they've got over there, we gave them too many opportunities.

We're not in a terrible position right now. We're in an okay position with a chance to be really good. A chance to be really good. There's a lot of really good things out there.

But the score was what it was. We lost the game to a really good football team. Opportunity to make some corrections, make some changes, and get back after it. Ten weeks straight.

**Q. Two questions for you. First one, you seemed to indicate injury with E.J. Was that why he came out, or was that because of the fumble?**

DAVID SHAW: He got banged up a little bit. We had him out the beginning of the second half, checked him out, passed all the tests, was good enough to go. And then just -- you know, probably could have gone back out there, but

we pulled the plug.

We've got a bye week next week and a long season, so decided to take care of him there.

**Q. Just to specify, was the injury on the first fumble down around the goal line?**

DAVID SHAW: No comment.

**Q. Second question. You talked about the new era of college football. Where does Stanford fit into that new era?**

DAVID SHAW: Where does Stanford fit into what? I didn't hear you.

**Q. The new era of college football.**

DAVID SHAW: I'll tell you at the end of the season. And even to expound upon that, I mean, we have a different approach than our opponents today. We'll never have 20 guys transfer in. We're going to take freshmen. We're going to take great students and great football players. We're going to teach them. We're going to develop them. That's going to be our mode.

We may get a grad transfer or two. We got one. We've had a couple in the last ten years. We'll see how that goes. But we believe in the collegiate model that we recruit freshmen, come in, get a great education and learn how to play football, and end up in hopefully years like this where we are a senior heavy football team.

As I said, we'll see at the end of the year because, like I said, we've got a bunch of seniors that we feel really good about, and we might be able to get on a roll here and have some fun.

**Q. Just want to get your thoughts on the pass rush that you guys had tonight. There were some moments where you guys -- David Bailey getting his first half sack, first of his career. Just talk about what needs to happen for you guys to utilize that more throughout the entire game? Because the second half it seemed to pick up for you guys.**

DAVID SHAW: I can't answer that question just yet. We'll see what happened on the film. I know there were a couple opportunities that, even in the first half, where Caleb just escaped. There were two plays on the top of my mind right now. One was David Bailey, I think another one was somebody else -- were beating down on him and he just escaped before -- he felt it coming before we got close to him.

But I think that's something that's going to grow throughout the year. Stephen Herron, David Bailey, Jaxson Moi got in there, got some penetration. Everybody I mentioned to you is either a sophomore or junior or freshman football-wise. That's exciting.

We've got a bunch of guys who have a chance to do something special, and they're going to grow. I anticipate over the next month or so you're going to see some more of that.

So it wasn't necessarily just play calling. It was guys doing their jobs and doing it well and still playing with some juice at the end of the game.

Like I said, there are things on the film that are going to be really exciting, and that was one. See those young guys go out there and create a pass rush. It was good to see.

**Q. What did you think of the way your offensive line played? I guess especially in the context of maybe what it was last year.**

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, and that's one of the things that hurts. That's one of the things that really hurts because I thought they played really well.

But at the end of the game, they got a few sacks, so it looks like they dominated on the defensive side. Made over 300 yards of total offense in the first half. We're moving the ball up and down the field and blocking them well for the run, blocking them well for the pass.

That's even without Branson Bragg, one of our top offensive linemen. Levi Rogers went in there and played really well. So a lot of positive things. We played well up front. I think we took a big step against some really good competition and didn't blink, especially early in the game, the first half.

As the score got out of whack, it became a pass rush game, and that's a tough game to win. But I thought through the first quarter and a half, our guys up front played really well. I'm proud of those guys and sad that we put them in a difficult position too to become just a pass rush game at the end of the game because we're down by so many points.

But a lot of positives in all three phases right now. They're just drowned out by the negatives. Thank you all.

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