

# Stanford University Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 23, 2023

Stanford, California, USA

**Coach Jedd Fisch**

**Noah Fafita**

**Jacob Manu**

Postgame Media Conference



Arizona 21, Stanford 20

JEDD FISCH: Challenged our offense all the way through. They had really good coverage scheme. Their corners played really well. It was a good, hard-fought battle. Very few possessions in the game. We only had three -- well, four possessions if you count the last one in the second half.

I thought we would have about six possessions in the second half and challenged the guys to have four out of six touchdowns. We wound up having two out of three touchdowns. We needed that in the second half, and then the fourth possession obviously we just ran out the clock.

You know, our defense did such a tremendous job against them in terms of holding them to field goals and forcing them to kick field goals and forcing them to convert third and longs if they were able to do that. I felt like there were a lot of tackles for loss. A lot of negative yardage there.

Hats off to our defense and our defensive plan there.

And then Noah Fafita came in in the fourth quarter. That's a tough situation. Came in, we're down 17-14. We got the ball. I don't know exactly the extent of Jayden's injuries so we don't have to ask that question. I don't know his or Mike Wiley's, the extent of the injuries. I do know both of them were out of the game right after the play occurred.

And then in terms of Noah, Noah went four for four. He made some great plays for us. Made a great play with his feet. I think the way Noah played, the way Jacob Manu played, once again, and the entirety of the team, that's not easy. Not easy to go on the road. It's not easy to win on the road in a Pac-12 game.

I told the team in the locker room, we won five out of the last seven games we played and we ended last season

2-1. Started this season 3-1. Now we get to go home and we need a great environment back in Tucson.

**Q. Talk about how Noah came in and handled adversity.**

JEDD FISCH: I think the control that he showed was the most important and impressive thing. It's very hard. We talked last night. I think we were talking about Tom Brady and listening to a podcast together, Noah, Jayden and myself. He was talking about kind of how long it took him to become the starter. Three years in college. He didn't become a starter until his fourth year.

And the opportunities that presented themselves throughout the way and his commitment to becoming a great quarterback in the system, and then the same thing happened to him in New England.

You never know. We talk about it all the time. You never know if there will be an injury and something that occurs and you have to be ready. I thought Noah handled himself beautifully in that situation, and no flinch.

**Q. To go off that, Noah, what's going through your mind at the point Jayden goes out?**

NOAH FAFITA: First thing was obviously concern. The relationship I've built with Jayden since I've been here has been nothing short of the spectacular, so soon as he went down and the grimaces he made, first thing was concern. Then kind of got to the point where it was all business.

A lot of coaches, a lot of my teammates come to me, offensive guys kind of to make sure I was good, I was comfortable. I just appreciate all the faith they had in me, my teammates and coaches.

**Q. Jonah had such a great day today. Close to home. Can you talk about his performance and how important that was for the team?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah. Jonah hit 100 yards combined, 12 carries for 75 yards, four catches for 29 yards, so over 100. I asked him before the game how far was home, two-hour



drive to Stockton.

You know, he said it meant a lot to him, this game. Jonah, all he does is work. He's been unbelievable since he's been here. He doesn't get nearly maybe enough accolades sometimes because of how much he's kind of been the second guy behind Mike in so many different ways.

You look what the he's done, I mean, in the classroom, in the meeting room, in the football field. I mean, he's over 3.5 GPA coming from a situation where it's been a lot of new stuff for him.

And then you look a little how he played when he walked out on the field today. You're looking at a guy that had over 80 yards rushing and over 25 yards passing and was able to do a great job in blitz pick up. Really proud of Jonah.

**Q. Defense, you mentioned it earlier, but had 11 tackle for loss for a total of, I believe, 42 yards. What does Arizona have to do to continue to have that sort of defensive dominance going forward?**

JEDD FISCH: I think we're up to like 28 or 30 tackles for loss on the season, which is -- we're on pace for a really quite a mark. I think it has to do with the way these guys prepare and play. You listen to Jacob and our coaches, and all they do is talk about swarm the ball. If you swarm the ball, you're always running to the ball, that's how you're able to get tackles for losses.

I thought we had, I don't know how many total sacks we had, but certainly looked like we were all over the quarterback a lot of the game, and a lot of that comes down to you got your TFLs that way and then in the running game a lot of the perimeter runs look like our safeties and our linebackers chased down and caused some second and 16s, and 17s.

**Q. Jacob, how would you describe the difference in environment from Mississippi State to today?**

JACOB MANU: It was way different. We knew coming into this game that it was going to be like that, so we prepared all week without no music, no nothing during practice. We had to bring our own energy and we knew that.

**Q. For the second road game, defense really stepped up. What do you like about the way you guys are feeling?**

JACOB MANU: I mean, I love the defense. Coach

prepares us well throughout the week. We go hard so that way in the game it can be easy, and I feel like it's showing up.

**Q. Noah, what does it mean to have veteran leaders like Jake Cowling on the offense to really help you coming into a situation like that and perform and bring the team back from behind?**

NOAH FAFITA: That's huge. You could name a bunch of names on our offense that have that veteran leadership. Like I said, I just really appreciate it. We been talking about trust a lot this week and the opportunity that I was provided, and the ability for them to trust me in that moment, I really appreciate it. Especially the veterans from Cowling to Mike Wiley. He was hurt and he was the first one to come up to me and make sure I was good.

It takes a lot of pressure off me, makes my job easy, and I'm really appreciative.

**Q. Did you have any butterflies coming in in the fourth quarter?**

NOAH FAFITA: I think it was more excitement. I was excited. It was a great opportunity and I just give all glory to God.

**Q. Jacob, you have known this guy for a while. What stands out about him as a quarterback?**

JACOB MANU: I just feel like the way he carry himself. Like once I heard he was in, I knew he was going to do stuff and make plays. One thing about him he's always going to be prepared.

**Q. Coach, this is the last Pac-12 matchup between you and Stanford, and obviously going to be a lot of last Pac-12 matchups. What are you going to miss most about being part of this conference?**

JEDD FISCH: I mean, the conference is a phenomenal conference. If you look around there is great football going on. It's very clear. Looks to me that -- I don't know what happened in any of the games today. My mind has kind of been running crazy about that game. I would say they looked as if there was eight teams ranked going into this weekend, and Pac-12 is a great conference of football and we're going to do everything we can to keep it that way for the next eight weeks, and then have an unbelievable Pac-12 championship game, whatever that means, whoever is participating.

We're going to do everything we can to be that team.

**Q. What is the status of Pulido, Bill Norton, Justin...**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I don't have much on the injury front, to be honest. Kind of there is a little too many for my liking today, so, you know, I need to talk to our doctors, trainers, see how Raymond is, Martell Irby at the end of the game, see how Justin was, see how Mike is, see how Jay is.

And then I don't know if there was anybody else, but that was a physical game, which is what you expect when you play Stanford. You don't come to Stanford and not think you're going to have a physical football game. That's been about 20 years straight.

It hasn't changed.

**Q. Then for Norton?**

JEDD FISCH: Bill should be -- we're working through his shoulder. We held him back precautionary reasons this week. Got to practice to play, and right now we were making sure that we could get him healthy for the coming weeks.

**Q. In the end of the fourth quarter there after the Stanford field goal to bring it up to 21-20, have you ever seen a formation like that for an onside kick? Looked like they were going to retry. But that onside formation, have you ever seen that?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, they lined up in it. It's a bunt. It's bunt kick is what they call that where they just try to bunt it right up the middle and try to get you with a middle wedge. It's a pretty violent onside kick, to be honest with you, because you have nine guys within a seven-yard window just running straight ahead.

Very disappointed that we wound up -- they called us for offsides the second time, so first time I took a time out; second time Dalton Johnson recovered it and they said there was a toe on the line, so they wound up making it a rekick again. The third time they wound up kicking it deep, which is what I was expecting them to do the first time, so that's why we took the timeout.

So, yeah, it's a pretty physical onside kick when you lineup in that formation and our guys handled it well.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports