

Stanford University Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 18, 2023
Stanford, California, USA

Fernando Mendoza Postgame Media Conference



California Golden Bears 27, Stanford 15

Q. How does it feel to put your hands on The Axe again?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Felt amazing. I mean, I can't even grasp my words right now because I saw how much it meant to everybody. When you're on that field playing, it just meant more. And for our guys, we wanted it more and so we won and we came out with The Axe.

Now, the only objective, doesn't matter if it was messy or clean but we did it, and I'm extremely proud of our guys.

Q. Your first three TD game in the season and big game for Sean. Can you talk about your connection with him?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah, so Sean and I have always been great friends. I regard him as one of my best friend. Last year we were on scout team together and through spring ball and fall camp and we were both on the three squad.

We built amazing chemistry together. So when he's out there, I trust that I know what he's going to do, along with all our receivers. Jaydn Ott had an amazing touchdown on a slant and Todge (ph) did his thing and so did Jack Andrews.

Trond is a special player -- inaudible -- and they were putting him in one-on-one coverage the entire game. I thought that was a mistake, no offense to Stanford but I thought that was a little bit of a mistake and we took advantage of that.

Q. Can you talk about what it means as a freshman quarterback to have Jaydn Ott back there and knowing what he can do?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: So Jaydn and I came in together. He was an early enrollee but having that freshman connection and hanging around the same people

and just being great friends, Jaydn is a great guy. I know he gets a lot of media attention but he's a standup guy and standup character off the field and on the field.

So it's a pleasure handing the ball off. When you have such a threat like Jaydn in the backfield it gives us one-on-one opportunities to Trond and to Jaydn and to Todge (ph). It's just amazing to have him in the backfield. He's a huge asset to our team.

Q. In the third quarter, I did not expect to you come back. What transpired for you from the time you got hit to going on the sideline to getting back in the game?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: First of all, what's up. I will say, that play was a poor read by myself. I was too late on the rail route by Jeremiah so I decided to scramble, and I'm not going to lie, it was a hell of a hit. I just kind of -- I mean, almost -- I was upset I let's go off the ball but thankfully and thank God it was targeting. Then I went in the tent and did some special tests (inaudible) -- and so I went back out there and pulled for my teammates, and I always pull for my teammates.

Q. You talked earlier this week about how you knew about the Big Game a little bit when you were in Miami. But last year, kind of I think you used the word "astounded" by how much it meant to people. Now that you've played in it for the first time, how much more do you absorb the history?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I've got a new adjective for you. Enlightened. I didn't realize how many people want to pick you up after the game. I didn't realize how great it was to see everyone storm on the field and pick you up. That's truly one of the best moments of my life, and I'm just so lucky to share it with my brothers.

And I just can't thank my family, my brothers and O-line and I want to give thanks to God because without Him I wouldn't be here in this position. Just love everybody. Love all of the guys.

Q. I think I saw you being held up on your teammates'

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

shoulders with the fans, what was it like from that perspective, seeing pure joy from the student body out there?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: It was amazing. I believe that football and college athletics, as a general, it's a great embodiment of school spirit and I believe that. We'll fight for the school every day of the week, any time, any day and wasn't afraid to show football dominance over Stanford today. That meant a lot to the student body and administration and everyone involved in Berkeley and Cal, so it meant the world to me.

Q. Couple touchdowns, talk about the tight end Trond Grizzell.

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah, Trond, he is a great receiver. He's a vertical threat. So we had a couple shot plays drawn up for him. He took one of -- we called it the spear. He went across the field and kind of bodied it and took it in and scored. That was amazing. All of my other receivers, Jaydn, Todge and Jack, they all had great plays throughout the game. I was really happy I was able to connect to them all.

Q. Stanford gave you a lot of looks up front and in the box. How did that open up the field for you and how did that make running easier?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: It opened up the field for us because we were going tempo and so we knew what they were going to do on our first tempo play and second tempo play. However, especially in third downs, they were showing a lot of pressure.

But I just can't give thanks enough to my O-line. They gave me enough time especially in that crucial fourth down (indiscernible) I believe it was a pretty catch across the middle of the field.

So they gave me a lot of looks, but as a growing young quarterback, I was happy to cross (ph) it through the game, and as the game went on I was able to process that, regurgitate it to Coach Wilcox and Coach Bass and we were able to get it dialed up and then execute it.

Q. What's the team planning on doing to get back to Berkeley?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: What's up? The team is planning on celebrating. This is a great win. However, everybody on the team knows the job is not finished. The job is not done. If we were to beat UCLA, I would be on this podium and I would be crying.

However in the back of my head, I know the job's not finished, we want to go bowling. We want to make the Bowl game. But like I said, this game means more. So everyone is just exhilarated, celebrating in the locker room, having a great time. I'm sure everybody is going to go out and celebrate tonight because we all know that Sunday and Monday is going to come around and we have to be focused and dialed in on UCLA.

Like I said, the coaches talked about it last week, let's burn the boats. It was a ride-or-die game, and if we lost, we wouldn't be bowling. This one was burn the woods. Come over here and burn the woods. The next one is burn the city, so we are going to go to L.A. and burn the city.

Q. Can you talk about what it means to get to a Bowl game, given what you guys have gone through this year?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah, from going 3-6 to now 5-6, I think that it would mean a lot for a lot of people and it would mean a lot for the program. I know the coaches, they coach us amazingly and they deserve it and the players deserve it. We work our tails off. I can't wait to go to the Rose Bowl next week. I hear the Rose Bowl is a great venue and excited to Bowl with my teammates.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...