

Stanford University Football Media Conference

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Stanford, California, USA

Notre Dame

Coach Marcus Freeman

Postgame Media Conference



Notre Dame - 56, Stanford - 23

COACH FREEMAN: It was amazing to be able to celebrate that victory with that group of guys. And we put a huge emphasis on finding a way to get that Legends Trophy back. And I don't care if you were here last year or you weren't, I wanted to remind this group how important this rivalry is to both institutions, to everybody that's associated with Notre Dame and how much we wanted to make sure that the Legends Trophy got returned to South Bend.

So our guys went out and earned it. They earned it. And as I told -- I wasn't upset about the effort that we played with to start the game, but we gotta take care of the ball. We have to take care of the ball. And they did a couple things on offense that we had not seen and they made some big plays.

But our guys were able to regroup, come out of the locker room with the intensity we needed and finish this game off the right way.

So really proud of this group. A special, special group. And really proud of the way we finished off this regular season.

Q. A long time it didn't look like you were going to be in the lead at halftime. What was your message at the break?

COACH FREEMAN: It was on offense, just take care of the ball. Hand the ball to the officials is what we say. That means don't turn the ball over.

Defensively we had to make some changes, and it was, here's the corrections, now go execute. Here's the correction, go execute.

Special teams, have got to be special. We can't turn the ball over on special teams.

Don't beat Notre Dame. That's something you'll hear me say often. Every time we do that we'll be successful every time.

Q. (Indiscernible) workhorse. Right before halftime did he want to be in to score the touchdown?

COACH FREEMAN: We had that communication before the series, that it's a 2-minute situation. Gi'Bran's been our 2-minute back. I said, that's good, let's go, keep him in there. And I get a little frustrated when we put the ball on the ground, and got on him, and Coach McCullough a little bit, hey, the standard is to hand the ball to official.

They reviewed it and called it touchdown. But they have a high standard for making sure we have great ball security. And I kind of reminded them of the standard we have.

But Audric is -- what a tough, physical, special football player. Obviously he'll have a decision to make here after the season on what he's going to do. But I'll tell you what, he's a special talent that has given Notre Dame everything he's had the past three seasons. So grateful to have him and have him be a part of this team.

Q. (Inaudible). Since then, how much has this team improved get this brawl going and get the trophy back. How much have you seen them improved since then?

COACH FREEMAN: You try not to be so outcome-driven. If you don't look at the outcome you say this team definitely has improved tremendously. There was a couple games between Tennessee State and now we wish we could have run it back and do it over but we can't.

But we've learned and we've grown from those mistakes and those opportunities. I'm so proud of this team. We're reaching our full potential. That's something you'll hear me say. We haven't totally got there, but, dang, we were pretty close today. And we've got a couple of weeks to get ready for this bowl game, whichever one we go to.

Q. (Inaudible)? What happened on those plays and (indiscernible)?



COACH FREEMAN: I can't remember every single play. But one of them they had a unique formation where they put the running back in the B gap and leaked him out on a deep pass. And something we haven't seen. And they did a good job.

Told the coach before the game, he's done a great job. Looking at what they've done this year at Stanford offensively, what they've done at Sac State, what they've done there, they have done a good job in terms of their offensive scheme.

Very challenging. Coach Golden, the defensive staff did a great job correcting mistakes and making sure our players execute.

Q. You mentioned Jean-Baptiste had his best (indiscernible) end of the season but also surging in November. Is he a player you can use as a model for bringing in a grad transfer that improved all the way throughout his team here and really upped his status going forward (indiscernible)?

COACH FREEMAN: Yeah, I'm so proud of him. And he came here from an opportunity. And he's taken full advantage of them. He's been a great example and has improved throughout the season, is playing his highest level of football right now.

So it's a testament to his hard work and his relationship with his coach and what Coach Washington has done with him. And I'm glad to see he's reaping the fruits of his labor.

Q. I don't know if we'll talk to Audric, I want to ask you, what sense do you have, the motivation he took from not being on the Doak Walker (indiscernible)? Does he seem like he -- he at least tweeted that after what's happened, was motivated by that. How do you channel that motivation in the right way?

COACH FREEMAN: We all are competitors, and we all find different ways to motivate us. And I'm sure that motivated him, and as I tell them, I wanted to motivate you to work, motivate you to do the proper work to get the outcome we want that we all want. I told them all the time we all want.

We all want more, we all want greater, but not everyone is willing to work. And I know he was motivated. I just continued to remind him, be motivated to prepare, be motivated to work and you'll get the desired outcome you want on Saturdays.

Q. Obviously a big game on the ground today. Can

you comment on the offensive line (inaudible)?

COACH FREEMAN: To see Ashton Craig and Billy Schrauth, they played for us last week in their first starts, and they're just getting better and better and better. It's a great testament. You don't know when your number is going to be called. But you gotta be ready.

And their number was called last week and they performed at a high level. And you see them this week continue to stack on that performance that they had last week. And Coach Rudolph has done a good job with that offensive line. That unit, it's tough because such a cohesive unit, and when you add two new guys week 11 to the starting lineup, it's a challenge. But they put the work in and they performed really well.

Q. I don't think we asked you last week about (inaudible) the stats, the (indiscernible). I think he was 24 yards away from the single-game rushing record at Notre Dame. I don't know if you were aware of that on the sideline, if you would have given any thought to that. He was there at the end of the third quarter. Any thoughts on playing him (indiscernible)?

COACH FREEMAN: I didn't know that. If he came up and said, Coach, can you leave me in because I'm 24 yards away, that would be a decision I'd have to make. But there's two things I want to do, what's best for Notre Dame and what's best for Audric, too.

But I did not know that. I knew he was getting close to the single season TD record. He set that. I don't know how many he rushed for, 200-plus.

Q. 238.

COACH FREEMAN: 238, that's a lot of yards. I don't know what record he was chasing but that's a heck of a performance.

Q. (Inaudible) single game (indiscernible)?

COACH FREEMAN: What he did today? Pretty good, man. Good player.

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