

College Football Playoff

Media Conference

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Boo Corrigan

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

BRETT DANIELS: I'd like to welcome everyone to the first College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference of the 2022 season. Joining us tonight is Bill Hancock, the executive director of the College Football Playoff, along with Boo Corrigan, College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair.

At this time I'll turn it over to Boo for his opening comments.

BOO CORRIGAN: Good evening, and thank you all for joining us for the first of our calls this season to discuss the College Football Playoff rankings. It is great to be back together. As the chairman, I am honored to serve in this role, and it's an honor to spend the last two days with 12 college football experts. It's been great.

I want to note that the committee does have four new members this year. We also have nine returning members who have gone through this before. The new members did join us for the mock Selection Committee exercise, and all members were active participants in the debate over the last two days.

I wish you all could have been in the room. The debate over the top 25 rankings were extensive and very animated, particularly at the top. A case was made for Ohio State to be No. 1, for Georgia and for Tennessee, and there were good arguments for each one of the schools.

At the end of the debate, the committee voted Tennessee No. 1 because of their impressive road win at LSU and their victory over Alabama, and Alabama is a team that the committee respects highly. Ohio State has a powerful offense and a very solid defense, impressive win last week over Penn State. Georgia has been dominant this season, which has been plain to see, in particular the win over Oregon at the start of the season.

But Tennessee's two wins against those two strong opponents really made a difference.

As a reminder, the committee begins with no presumptions. Last year's record doesn't matter. The conference that teams play in does not matter. We don't look at the polls.

Our protocol is we consider a team's record, their strength of schedule, their head-to-head match-ups and their results of common opponents.

The committee members make their rankings based on subjective expert college football judgment. They watch games. They have a wealth of data and statistics available, and the committee debates it all. Thank you for listening, and I'm happy to take your questions.

Q. Just wanted to ask about Clemson being ranked No. 4; that will surprise a lot of folks. ESPN has already voiced their surprise about that. But I believe the Tigers, their No. 4 strength of record with three ranked wins versus only one ranked win for Michigan and Ohio State, I'm sure that had something to do with it.

But I wanted to ask you, I know the committee is supposed to consider and take into account injuries; how much do you discuss and will you continue to consider going forward the fact that Clemson beat NC State before Devin Leary got hurt? Also the same with Syracuse; Shrader as you know was injured in the Notre Dame game the following week. But as the NC State AD I'm sure you're aware that the Wolfpack were a legitimate top-10 team at the time Clemson beat them, regardless of how they finished the season down the stretch. How much will you consider that as a part of the Tigers' resume?

BOO CORRIGAN: Yeah, thank you for the question. Injuries that do occur are part of the discussion. We don't project anything forward, but we deal with exactly the people that were on the field during the game. Again, to that point, if you look at a team that is at full strength and then loses someone later, you need to judge them on the men that were on the field at the time during the game and when the game was played.

Q. My question is something you said during the



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television interview when you were talking about the committee liking balanced teams. Some of the teams in the top are very balanced, and others -- maybe Tennessee is a good example of that, is not as balanced as some of the others. Why does balance matter to the committee as something you're looking for?

BOO CORRIGAN: I think what we're looking at is the game itself and the dominance that can occur in the game, whether it's one side of the ball or the other, but overall as we're looking at it, really what we're looking at is statistically where they are, the football judgment of the committee, to look at each team as they're playing, how do they handle unique situations. From a Tennessee standpoint, you look at the LSU game and you look at the Kentucky game and the defensive effort by them in that game. I think that really stood out to the committee as we were looking at that.

Again, TCU has had a number of games that they've played where they really have had to come from behind. Timely defense I think is what we have talked about in the room, but that as far as that dominant standpoint or that ability to dominate that side -- one side of the ball or the other is really what was lacking.

Q. I had a question about the two Big Ten teams that are at the relative top of your rankings. I know you maybe didn't compare Ohio State and Michigan too much head-to-head I guess if they were 2-5, but both with similar resumes, the one with a ranked win over Penn State, both with a lot of comfortable wins this year. Can you describe why there's such a disparity in where those two teams are ranked right now?

BOO CORRIGAN: I would say the disparity is not that great. In what we're doing with the rankings themselves, that may be a little bit of a misnomer. But when we looked at Ohio State, the explosiveness of their offense, averaging 49 points a game, winning games by an average of 32 points, I think that really stood out to the committee.

We like Michigan a lot as a committee, more workmanlike controlling their opponent. But again, I think there's a weaker non-conference schedule that was talked about before, and that was part of the determination.

Q. How would you describe the size of the gaps in the room between 1, 2 and 3?

BOO CORRIGAN: A lively discussion. We made sure we went through and had advocates for each team to make sure that we were debating all the points of it. But in terms of specifics on what anything about it was, those were the

three teams that separated themselves as time went on in the meeting yesterday, and we spent a great deal of time making sure that we got 1, 2 and 3 right, with the two wins by Tennessee being the determining factor.

Q. I wanted to ask about common opponents. We see that Georgia and Tennessee have both played Florida, Tennessee playing Florida at home and Georgia recently winning more impressively at a neutral site over Florida. How do you factor in the transitive property of them, I guess, having a common opponent?

BOO CORRIGAN: Yeah, it is part of our discussion. As we go through it every week, we make sure that we're guided by those principles overall. But again, as we looked at it, we saw the wins by Tennessee over Alabama and over LSU, even with Georgia's dominant win over Oregon, as being that much more to put them over the top.

Q. Question about that TCU. TCU has two wins against team in your top 18 and Alabama has no wins against teams in your top 20, plus a loss. What's the rationale for having Alabama ahead of TCU, and also you've mentioned a couple times about TCU falling behind in games. How much stock is put into scores at the end of like the first quarter and the second quarter?

BOO CORRIGAN: We're looking at the totality of the game as we go through it. But again, you're looking for that -- Alabama has got the dominant wins over Mississippi State, at Arkansas, the close win at Texas. Bryce Young missed the Texas A&M game, which was close, and again, TCU with the wins against Oklahoma State at home and Kansas State at home, really good wins, really good team. But we felt like the defense struggled to keep points off the board at times, but it doesn't take away from the season they've had thus far.

Q. Was it your sense of the room that what propelled Clemson into the top 4 were those ranked wins over NC State, Syracuse and Wake Forest and four road wins as opposed to I think Michigan has only two road wins?

BOO CORRIGAN: I think the collective of the group is what it really is. It's not about reading the room or anything else, but as we go through it and as we talked about certainly the wins at Wake, at Florida State, over NC State, over Syracuse, really did push them over the top.

But again, there's 240 plus games still to be played this year, and there's a lot of really good football in front of us.

Q. You mentioned Ohio State's explosive offense and I think you said their defense was solid. I'd like to get more detail on what the committee thinks about Ohio State's defense, and how close was the discussion between Ohio State and Tennessee for No. 1?

BOO CORRIGAN: Again, I'll go back to there's a lot of really good football teams. There's a lot of really robust conversation going on. Ohio State has given up 17 points a game and was scoring 44 points in their last seven games. Again, it's a well-balanced team, and as we look at it, it was something that as a group in the collective 13, really felt good about Ohio State, but again, felt those two big wins by Tennessee is what ultimately carried the day.

Q. You kind of touched on it earlier, but I'm wondering what the committee thinks of Michigan's resume and maybe what's keeping them out of the top 4.

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, I think they're right there. In a larger picture, the signature win against Penn State, a well-balanced team. But at the end of it, when you look at that strength of schedule, it is something that we do talk about as one of the principles that guides us. At this point in time, again, after week 9, we felt they were right in the No. 5 position.

Q. Just wondering specifically what was the most vigorous debate about where you settled on Georgia, and hearing you talk a lot about balance, most of the teams that ended up at the top aren't at the top of the nation when it comes to defensive play, while Georgia and a couple others are. Is that what you mean by balance, being good on both sides of the ball? What exactly was that vigorous debate that you referred to?

BOO CORRIGAN: Yeah, I think it is what you said. It is about being good on both sides of the ball. Georgia is an exceedingly solid team that the committee really likes and felt good about who they are. Obviously the dominant win at the beginning of the season against Oregon turned a lot of heads. Their defense hasn't allowed a touchdown in the first quarter, which was part of our discussion as we're going through everything in the room.

But again, there's a lot of really good teams at the top of the rankings right now, and where we are after week 9, and again, it sounds repetitive, but there's more games to be played.

Q. You mentioned earlier that there were advocates for each of those three teams, Ohio State, Tennessee and Georgia. I'm wondering how exactly does that play out? Does that happen this week only because it was so close? Has that happened in the past? What

is that like?

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, again, as we go into the room, different people have different rankings. As we're going through it, our goal is to come to a consensus and come to an agreement on where we are as a group. This isn't a force of personality or anything like that in the room. It really is about making sure that everyone in the room has an opportunity to speak and advocate for what they believe and ultimately to come to a collective decision on where we are as a group.

Q. I'm wondering what the committee's consideration is to close losses on the road to other top-10 teams. The obvious example is Alabama to Tennessee, but what kind of consideration are so-called good losses?

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, I don't know that we talked specifically about good losses. Obviously we're focused primarily on wins as we go through this. But to be able to play the game as late as they did into the game and a last-second field goal against -- from a Tennessee standpoint, against Alabama, to win it that way, again, it's not a win in that sense, but again, it is a very competitive game, a well-played, a high-level game that's played.

As we're looking at everything that we do, wins obviously trump what we're doing, but as we look at a loss, we're going to look at everything about it.

Q. I was going back to Clemson and Michigan, 4 and 5, and you were saying earlier that there was animated discussion in the room about the top four spots. Was there animated discussion about Clemson and Michigan, and finally at the end of the day, I know you've touched on it before, but what was maybe the one or two things that kind of allowed Clemson to slide into that 4 spot?

BOO CORRIGAN: I think as you look at being 5-0 against teams that are over .500, Michigan is 2-0 against opponents that are over .500, that clearly is going to factor in a win at Wake Forest, a win at Florida State. As we're going through it, Michigan's signature win being the Penn State game.

But again, all we can do is base it on where we are at this point in time.

Q. I'm just curious how you evaluated a team like Illinois that's having something of a surprise season.

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, I don't know that it's a surprise season. It's a season. It's based on the 2022 year.

Top-scoring defense in the country, really competitive, three wins against teams above .500.

That being said, we didn't know if there was necessarily a signature win associated with them, but a really good football team, a really tough football team.

Q. You did mention in very fair descriptions of Ohio State being explosive and Michigan being workmanlike. That almost sounds like a negative. Is that something that's held against Michigan, the type of offense it is and the way that they control opponents, as you said?

BOO CORRIGAN: No, I don't think it's a negative at all, to use that phrase, because they've done a great job controlling their games and mixing the run with the pass, really solid defense, good special teams. Again, as we're looking at this with the margins in between, these are really good football teams, and it's our job to come up with the ranking on where it is, and this week coming out of week 9, we saw them as the No. 5 team.

Q. Just curious about LSU, where you have them ranked at No. 10, what went into putting them as high as they are as a two-loss team?

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, I think in large part, the win over Mississippi, the win over Mississippi State. They did lose to Tennessee as well as to Florida State in the season, but they seem to be getting better and better once Coach Kelly and the quarterback have kind of meshed a little bit, if you will, and we saw them coming off of that Mississippi win as being a team that was worthy of being in the top 10.

Q. I had a question about Oregon. You guys have them slotted at No. 8. When you're looking at the Ducks, how do you balance how lopsided the first game was against Georgia with what they have done in the seven weeks since that loss?

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, good question. I think the win over UCLA has gone a long way. They've scored at least 41 points since that game and have really -- Bo Nix has had a great season, along with so many other quarterbacks as the season has gone on. As we looked at it, obviously that initial game, what they've been able to do since that time I think has really turned the committee's head.

Q. When you talk about Michigan's strength of schedule or, Oregon's week 1 loss, are these things that can be overcome by these teams as the season goes on, like as Michigan plays Ohio State later in the year or as Oregon continues to improve, are there

things that can offset fully in their resumes?

BOO CORRIGAN: Well, I think the most important thing is as we look at this we go into every week with a clean sheet, and this is where we are after week 9, and we'll come back next Monday and be able to go through the process again and scrub and rescrub and debate and go through everything again.

But our job is not to project forward on any of the teams with regards to players that may be out or those types of things. It's just to deal with the information we have to date on where we are.

Again, a lot of really good teams and a lot of active conversation and debate.

Q. I'm interested in the comparison in looking at USC and UCLA. Obviously UCLA handled Utah at home and then USC lost at Utah in a really close game on the road. It's kind of a big common opponent there and it's ranked No. 14, and USC is ranked at 9 and UCLA at 12. I'm curious how you guys viewed the Trojans and Bruins.

BOO CORRIGAN: Both really good teams, dynamic offensively. As we looked at it, the ability to put up points -- I think the loss -- UCLA, how they lost to Oregon really was a topic of conversation. They had a good win coming back over Stanford this past weekend; Southern Cal wins at Arizona.

Again, two of the top offenses in the country as far as scoring points, both over 40 points a game.

To the previous question on close losses, on that side of it what we're really doing is using our football judgment as a collective group and coming up with what we believe is the right decision.

BRETT DANIELS: That concludes our first Selection Committee call of the 2022 season. Again, as a reminder, the transcript of this will be on collegepressbox.com shortly. Thanks for joining us tonight. Look forward to talking again next week.

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