

# College Football Playoff

## Media Conference

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Irving, Texas, USA

**Michael Penix, Jr.**

**Bralen Trice**

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL  
**PLAYOFF**

BRETT DANIELS: We are joined by Michael Penix, Offensive Player of the Game from the Sugar Bowl, University of Washington, and defensive end Bralen Trice.

**Q. I wanted to ask Bralen, you were on this team when you played Michigan back in 2021 and it was a very different place, and obviously Michigan got the better of that game. How do you think about how far this group has come since then and just the growth that you guys have had under Kalen and under this different staff?**

BRALEN TRICE: Yeah, that was a while back, completely different team, different group of guys, but now we have a whole different team, whole different coaching staff, and we have a way better team, way better thing going out here. You guys see that.

But the level of preparation and the mindset that this team has is a lot different than that in the past. It's a different time, it's a different era, and this is a team of winners, and we're out here to win and go out in this last game and go do what we can to get that W.

**Q. I am wondering how much if any you think your past experience playing against Michigan helps you in this game?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: I want to say I can't really use anything from my past playing them because obviously I played them with a totally different team, so it was a totally different time. That was the year of COVID, as well.

Nothing that happened before will carry over to what we have to prepare for come Monday.

But I'm just super excited for the opportunity, and I know my guys will be ready.

**Q. Michael, I wanted to ask you about Rome Odunze.**

**What do you think it is about his game that makes him such a special receiver and so hard for other people to defend?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: Obviously I think a big thing is his consistency. You see that each and every week on a consistent basis. He doesn't just do it on game day, either. He shows up in practice, always giving the best looks, the best reps that he can to help his team, and that's what I think makes him so special, just his care and love for this team to where like when it comes to practice, when it might be getting hard in practice, he's still going to give 110 percent no matter what.

**Q. Michael, in your early studies of Michigan's defense and what Jesse Minter has done as a coordinator, what are some challenges that unit will present based on what you've seen so far?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: That's a good team over there. They're coached up very well. But we're going to be ready for the challenge. They mix up the picture quite a bit. They try to get the quarterback off his mark. But we'll be ready for it. We know that.

Obviously it's the biggest game right now mainly because it's our next one but obviously because it's the championship, as well, for the National Championship.

But I'm super excited for the opportunity, but we're just going to continue to prepare the same way that we do each and every week.

We know that we have what it takes to be able to come out with a W. We've just got to go out there, execute and do it.

**Q. Could you describe the process in getting to Washington, how much of it was a slam dunk with the relationship you had with your coach? I do recall you on a Zoom saying you scouted the offensive line, you watched the offensive line. What did you see then when the program wasn't very good at that point, and obviously they're the best offensive line in the country now?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: The big one was just -- like you

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said, my process, it was pretty good when I came on my visit, strictly about business. I already knew what I wanted my last couple years to look like, and that helped me be able to have that year and those years that I was looking for. I'm still grateful for the opportunity, but when I went on my visit I just asked to see the film of the guys. I wanted to see what I had around me. Once I saw what I would have around me here, I knew that I couldn't pass up this opportunity, and I knew that we'd be able to do something.

**Q. Was that true that you looked at film of the offensive line and kind of scouted them, seeing what you were getting into?**

MICHAEL PENIX, JR.: I was looking at film on everybody. It wasn't just the offensive line. I watched the O-line, I watched the skill guys, everybody from the prior years, so I kind of had an idea of what I --

**Q. Real quick with Bralen, could you describe what this team does well to win? How do they win? I'm looking back 20 years and I can't find a national champion who led the nation in passing, or is that even a metric we should be looking at right now?**

BRALEN TRICE: You're asking me what --

**Q. Give me 50 words on how this team has gotten to this point. What kind of team are they, what do they do well? Because all the average fan sees is Michael, passing yards, 40 points a game.**

BRALEN TRICE: Yeah, I mean, behind the scenes people don't see the hard work and the character that this team has, the process, the preparation and the mentality and physicality that this team has. Everybody sees the game play and the stats and the scores and everything.

But when you're behind the scenes you really see how much heart and drive goes into this team, in the weight room, on the practice field, even in the locker room. It's a completely different vibe than teams I've been on in the past, and I think that plays a big role in why we're at where we're at now because without that preparation and that brotherhood and that connection and that drive that these guys have on this team, we wouldn't be where we're at.

I just know I'm blessed to be on a team like this and be surrounded by guys like this and get that opportunity to play with this team.

I'm excited for where we're headed.

**Q. Michael, I asked Kalen something similar, but you guys have had so many defining moments this year,**

**whether it be Grady's walk-off kick, whether it be Elijah's swat in the Sugar Bowl, 4th down stops, a couple touchdown passes you've had. I'm curious if there's one or two this year that really stand out to you and why.**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: You're saying games or just plays?

**Q. Plays.**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: One or two of my plays or just the team's?

**Q. The team's, and that could include yours.**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: Well, as far as the team's, I would definitely say it's Mish. He had an amazing play for us, Arizona State. We were struggling on the offensive side of the ball, I couldn't really move the ball, but him making a play helped our team spring ahead and getting that win was big.

As far as myself, I'm not really sure. I'm not really sure. I never really thought about what's been my favorite play. But I'm just always so in the moment at that time and during the game. It kind of goes by fast. I've never even sat down and thought about it.

I love all the plays that my guys make for me, especially the ones that they make it look easy for me.

**Q. Just wanted to get your thoughts on what you remember most from the win over Michigan in 2020 and whether you derive any sort of irony or get a sense of irony that in many ways your performance in that game kind of forced Michigan to change its defense to what it is now.**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: I don't really remember much. I just remember winning really. That was during the COVID year and it's a totally different ballgame.

But I'm always confident in myself and this team and the preparation that our coaches give is going into each game. I feel pretty excited for the opportunity.

**Q. The term for pulling back the arrow is called "drawing." How do you compare that to what you do after you throw a strike to a wide receiver or for a touchdown? What are your thoughts when you're pulling back the bow and arrow?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: I don't know. It just happens. I get in the moment. Sometimes I don't do it; sometimes I do it. A lot of times it's just like an in-the-moment thing.



I don't know, I've been falling in love with it since I've been doing it.

**Q. Bralen, when we were in New Orleans, Texas kept saying that you guys play an NFL-style defense that's highly unique. Do you think that's true, and is this going to prepare you for the NFL, you and your teammates?**

BRALEN TRICE: Yeah, I wouldn't like -- obviously I speak highly of our defense, so I'm not going to compare us to like an NFL-style defense. But it's good to hear that people think of us like that. But I like to just focus on what we are ourselves. I don't like to think too much on that.

Yeah, our defense is aggressive. We fly after the ball on every play. We're always trying to send people to the quarterback, send people where they need to be at. We're not going to sit back and wait for you to come.

But yeah, pretty much.

**Q. How has it been obviously knowing nobody really opted out and with all the success that Coach Kalen has had, could easily probably be looking at the NFL, but everybody has kind of stayed down through this journey. How special has that been for you in reaffirming knowing you chose to come back?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: Yeah, it's been real special. The position we're in right now, I know that we all chose to come back. We saw the vision, and we believed that we could be able to achieve the greatest things out there.

This team has been doing that. We've been on a mission. We've just been truly blessed.

But at the same time, it took a lot of hard work to get here, and it wasn't always perfect, but we always found a way to make it work.

Man, it's just hats off to this team and just our grit and our determination and our will to win each and every week.

**Q. Bralen, obviously you've got an offensive line that wins the Joe Moore Award; Michigan won the Joe Moore Award two years in a row. How does it feel to you as a defender knowing you're going up against the best offensive line in the country, and how much do you feel like that over-prepares you for what Michigan has coming your way?**

BRALEN TRICE: Yeah, I've been saying it even for the past three years that it's awesome to be able to get reps

against guys of the caliber -- dudes that are playing at this level that are able to get a Joe Moore Award. We have some of the best offensive linemen, and getting reps against them every single day even prepares us more and more for what's to come.

Even preseason, you know, going up against them in fall camp, one-on-ones, good versus good, it's awesome to be able to get reps against guys like that, like Troy and Nate and Parker and Rog. I mean, all those guys are high-caliber offensive linemen, and you can't find guys like that just anywhere, especially with the mentality that they have up front, protecting Mike and doing their job.

It's just great to know that we have those level of guys on our offense playing O-line, and it's awesome as a D-lineman to know that my guys on my side are going to be prepared enough to go out and play teams like Michigan, like Texas, like guys that we're playing because we get to go against dudes that are better than that and are able to win awards like that, which is awesome, and I'm proud of them for it.

**Q. For Michael and for Bralen, why do you think you guys have been so successful in close games? What does it take to win these close games?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: I would say the biggest thing is just the bond, the connection that we have within the team, and I feel like this team, we truly have love for each other, and we want to see each other do great.

That's the big thing, just having a lot of guys on a great team that are unselfish and always excited to see their brothers winning and doing great in their positions.

Obviously all the stuff that we've been through, just all our off-season grind and workouts and everything that we've been through to get to this point, that allowed us to get here. It definitely took a lot to get here. It didn't just happen overnight. The process been going on these past two years, so we've been blessed.

BRALEN TRICE: Just to piggy-back off that unselfish part, I mean, this is the most unselfish team I've been a part of my entire career in football.

It's a big part of why we're at where we're at and we can finish off games and situations like that, because you see teams that can't perform in clutch moments like that because they hang their heads down and they start to get mad at each other and they start fighting within their groups and within their units, and that's really what tears teams apart and not let them be successful in moments like that.

But instead bring each other up, lift each other up in situations that obviously we don't want to be in but we're in and make the most out of what we've got and just remind each other this is what we've trained for, this is what we're ready for.

Just that confidence that we have as a group, knowing that we have that trust in each other and that unselfishness is what really brings us to where we're at.

**Q. Michael, how is Dillon doing after reaggravating that injury? And how important is he to what you guys like to do on offense?**

MICHAEL PENIX JR.: Yeah, Dillon is a guy that he works extremely hard. To get to where he has become all season for us. But man, he always has high spirits. He's a guy that's always spreading love, always wants to see the team be great. He's in good spirits.

Obviously we're not sure of anything as far as him playing or him not playing yet, but whenever that time comes when we find out, we know that we're going to support him and be behind him no matter what.

We're just lucky to have a guy like him on this team because of his determination, his grit, his will to win, and always wanting to see this team do great.

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