

# College Football Playoff Media Conference

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**Warde Manuel**

**Rich Clark**

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL  
**PLAYOFF**

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome everyone to the fourth College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference for the 2024 season. Thanks for your patience here tonight as we're running a few minutes behind. Joining us as usual tonight will be Rich Clark, the executive director of the College Football Playoff along with Warde Manuel, College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you guys what went into the decision to putting Clemson at 12 over teams like Alabama and Ole Miss and what they've continued to do this season with the body of work they currently possess.**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, Clemson slid up with some losses ahead of them by Alabama and Mississippi, and they had a win against Citadel, obviously, but that wasn't the big reason.

Obviously they're at 9-2, with only two losses. The teams right behind them have three losses. We just felt as a committee as we looked at their body of work, with three straight wins after their loss to Louisville, including back-to-back wins against Virginia Tech and Pitt, that they deserved to move up into that 12th position.

**Q. In regards to Texas, there seems to be this belief that if they finish 10-2, lose to Texas A&M and don't go to the SEC Championship game that there is no road to get to the playoff. Can you offer some insight on the Texas resume, and if they don't go to the SEC title game, is there still a road to the playoff?**

WARDE MANUEL: Thanks for your question. We don't, I don't, get into projections. We don't talk about projections when we get in the room, about the what-ifs, if people lose games then where will it put them. Obviously you can see from the number of losses we had this week, it just depends on what happens. There was a lot to sort out this

week with seven of the top 25 losing, two big upsets in the top 10.

So we don't project what will happen. We just look at what happens overall amongst the teams this weekend to make our decision over the next two weekends really.

**Q. How did you separate Indiana and SMU, specifically what datapoints or things put SMU above -- allowed them to kind of -- what put them at that 10th spot below SMU specifically at one loss?**

WARDE MANUEL: Yeah, like I said on the ESPN interview, Indiana played well at times against Ohio State, and obviously Ohio State pulled away in the second half. We felt also SMU has been playing really dominant football as of late, with the way they played against Virginia at Virginia, they've had some great wins, only one loss. Kevin Jennings is one of the dynamic quarterbacks in the country at the present time.

So we just felt that SMU and their play on the field, they moved ahead of Indiana this week, and we'll continue to monitor it as we move forward.

**Q. Was that quality win sort of a key point? Do you feel like Indiana is stacked up against a team like SMU?**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, at this time I would just say the strength of schedule for Indiana improved greatly when they played Ohio State, but SMU just has been consistent in the last few weeks in terms of their performance and the committee as we looked at it ranked SMU ahead of Indiana.

**Q. Army is no longer in the top 25 with their first loss this past weekend to Notre Dame. What were the committee's thoughts on moving Army out of the top 25 after that game?**

WARDE MANUEL: Look, Army has played well against their competition, but the reality is they had a really -- one of the lowest or highest, however you want to look at it, strengths of schedule, and they really got in that game against Notre Dame. We felt they were really dominated



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against that opponent.

We moved them out of the top 25 based on what others had done also behind them, and so we'll continue to monitor Army, and we still think that they're a really good team. We just felt that given where they were this week that they moved out of the top 25.

**Q. Boise State, close win for them. Did their performance affect the committee's evaluation of them at all?**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, they won, and we value winning. We value how the teams play, and in the end, the scoreboard matters. What they have done, the only loss they have, as you know, is a very close three-point loss at Oregon at the beginning of the year, and they've run the tables since then.

For us, Jeanty has been amazing, over 2,000 yards rushing. He appears to have some injuries that he's dealing with, but he's toughed it out, and they've won the games. We think highly of Boise State and will continue to watch them.

We have some people on the committee that played at Wyoming when they were coaches, and they really say it's a tough environment to play in. Obviously Wyoming gave Boise State a great game, but Boise State won.

**Q. Regarding Tulane, I was curious why they were behind Arizona State and if Memphis was close to being ranked.**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, Arizona State has had two great wins against two ranked opponents in Kansas State and BYU. As you know, Tulane at this time has played Kansas State as their only ranked opponent and they lost to Kansas State at the beginning of the year, but they played very well since those two losses to Kansas State and Oklahoma.

We just felt Arizona State is playing at a level that moves them up ahead of Tulane, but as you can see, they're one away from each other, so we think highly of both of them.

**Q. I just wanted to ask you, if Clemson can beat South Carolina this week, how does that help their case to be a playoff team, even if they don't make the championship?**

WARDE MANUEL: I'll continue to say we don't look forward and we don't project, but winning always helps. I will say that.

When teams win, we value what they do. I don't know what that would mean towards where they will be in projecting, but there is value in winning games.

**Q. Curious how you would compare the resumes of Alabama and Ole Miss at 13 and 14.**

WARDE MANUEL: Yeah, they're really -- I would say in the committee's eyes, they're really similar teams, and they've had similar ways that they've gone through the season.

Both have had losses that you didn't expect them to have. Alabama had a loss at Oklahoma, and Oklahoma's performance was dominant against Alabama, and then you have the loss by Mississippi to Florida at Florida. It was one of those losses that you just don't expect them to have. It was a close game, but where we evaluated it, we came out with Alabama ahead of Mississippi and South Carolina since Alabama and Mississippi both won head to head against South Carolina.

**Q. I guess what makes Alabama -- why did the committee have Alabama as the top three-loss teams and on the edge here?**

WARDE MANUEL: Because of their win over Georgia. They won against Missouri. They've beat South Carolina and they won at LSU in dominant fashion. When you put those four wins against Mississippi and what they did, they had the win against Georgia and the win at South Carolina, but they had a tough loss to Florida; lost to LSU in overtime.

So when we compared resumes that's how we saw it in terms of the difference between Alabama and Mississippi.

**Q. Is there any scenario where the Big 12 champs could lose ground and overtake Boise State, or is this Boise State's spot to lose?**

WARDE MANUEL: Again, I can't project what will happen and how the committee will look at it. I think we will assess -- well, I know we will assess the outcome of these games this week and championship games and rank teams accordingly based on how they perform and whether they'll -- how it will move.

As you could see from this week, you had some teams drop five, six, seven, nine spots. You had teams that went up three or four or five slots. It just depends on the outcome of the games as we evaluate it.

**Q. How does the committee value game control and dominating teams compared to the ability to fight back**

**and come back in games like in Miami's case? Does the committee view that as a negative because they were behind or they were in close games against unranked teams or is it a positive that they have that kind of tenacity?**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, I think we value both when you win. Miami had the dominant win over Florida. Then they had a close win in a very good game against Louisville. They found a way to win close games until they played Georgia Tech at Georgia Tech.

But you look at what they did this past weekend with their win over Wake Forest, it reminded the committee of how they played against Florida.

We value winning, but yeah, we do see when teams are playing close games and how they finish and whether they win them or lose them. We do watch that. But we value ultimately when teams do find a way to win.

But Miami has done both. They've dominated teams and they've had some very close games. Even the loss to Georgia Tech was a close game.

**Q. I was wondering about the evaluation of Indiana at No. 10 and Clemson at No. 12. How close is the evaluation between those two teams in particular?**

WARDE MANUEL: They are pretty close. They're two away. Obviously you can see that we think that they are close in proximity to each other.

Indiana's only loss was to the No. 2 Ohio State team at Ohio State, but they have wins over Michigan and Nebraska and Washington. Indiana is a very good team. Clemson has bounced back from their Louisville loss and their loss to Georgia at the beginning of the year with back to back road wins at Virginia Tech and Pitt. They've come on, and again, as expected, as they sat some of their starters against Citadel and still dominated them as we expected.

We think highly of both teams, and like I said, as you could see, they're very close in the rankings together.

**Q. Specifically with those three teams kind of stuck together there at 6, 7 and 8, Miami, Georgia and Tennessee, a couple of questions on that. Just wondering, obviously Georgia knows now it's going to play in a conference championship game. I think I heard you say this on the telecast, but I guess I wanted to hear it from you myself. In terms of the jeopardy of possibly losing a game that Tennessee does not face in a conference championship game that Georgia**

**would. Then if I can follow on that, Georgia at Georgia Tech this week, a team that gave Miami its only loss. Would beating Georgia Tech, do you guys extrapolate and look at it like that, as well, comparatively, that that would be a win over a team that beat Miami?**

WARDE MANUEL: Yeah, again, both the questions -- I get what you're asking, but both of them are sort of projecting. We value teams that make the championship. It is of value to us. But we've been asked by the commissioners to rank the teams all the way through the championship weekend.

For us, Georgia winning this week, we'll evaluate that as it relates to if they win, how the game is played, how they win, just like we do every week compared to what others do around them, and then with the championship game and valuing both, we will see the outcome of the game, the way teams are playing.

It's another data point to look at it for us to assess teams as it relates to how we do the final top 25 ranking because that's our focus.

The focus is not on ranking teams to get to the playoff, it's ranking the top 25 and then we'll let the seeding principles that have been developed by the commissioners to take place after that.

**Q. Was it 22 teams you said have been ranked in the top 12 in the previous final College Football Playoff rankings?**

WARDE MANUEL: Yes, sir. In the last ranking over the last 10 years, there have been 22 teams that have had three losses in the top 12. Ironically, none last year.

**Q. When you get to that last rankings, is there any difference in the methodology that you guys determine, or are we doing this every week as you guys will be doing it on that Sunday?**

WARDE MANUEL: There's no difference in the methodology. We go through the same process week by week to rank the top 25. We assess and we debate and we discuss, and everybody looks at the films in preparation for the discussion.

So there's really no difference in terms of how we go about ranking the teams in the last week. It's the same 1 through 25 process that we have done since the first week.

**Q. Looking at it, when you go through some of that methodology, do you play the hypothetical game of matching up a team -- you're debating on two teams and you see two teams and you're saying, what if**

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**these guys met on the field? Does that discussion happen in that room, if you thought in your head that these two teams would meet? Just to give you an example, if you say Alabama and Penn State or Alabama and Indiana, does that cross into your conversation?**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, the answer to your question is no. If it starts to creep into the conversation, I make sure I cut it off. We don't project. We don't know.

There has been, like I said before, in the last two weeks, 14 teams in the top 25 have lost. So it's hard to predict if this team plays that team who will win. If this team plays that team, who's going to be favored by Vegas and the sportsbook.

We can't get into that because all we can deal with is what happens on the field of play. That's the best way, the most fair way for us to assess the team is by what happens on the field of play. We cannot get into projections.

**Q. For Rich Clark, when we look at what has happened over the last really two weekends and you have all of these teams that are fighting for 12 spots and so many teams are still alive, is that kind of what makes this 12-team playoff so special and kind of what was in mind when it was envisioned?**

RICH CLARK: I absolutely think this is what makes it special. Some people even said that maybe having a playoff would detract from the regular season, a 12-team playoff would detract from the regular season, but I think it's done exactly the opposite. It has made the regular season exciting even up until the last week because there's still a lot of unknowns out there, and there's still some destinies to be formed.

I think the playoff is doing that for college football, and it is doing exactly what we hoped it would be, and I know the commissioners had this in mind when they developed this format. We're very excited about it, and next week is going to be as good as last week, I'm sure.

**Q. What has that room been like when you guys have met the past couple of weeks? Are there contentious moments? Has everybody been on the same page? What's it been like?**

RICH CLARK: You know, it's like when you watch the ESPN show and you see Rece and Joy and Booger and Greg arguing different points. That's what the room is like. We have 13 people who all don't see everything the same way. It's not one of these rooms where people are afraid to speak their minds if they think differently about how teams

are playing.

There are moments when there's a lot of debate in the room and people are expressing different perspectives, and that is the great thing about what we do. That gets us to a point where we can really figure that we have done everything we can do and made all the arguments and done the votes in a way that we get what we believe are the best 25 teams in the country.

**Q. Warde, it seems like you guys have been willing to kind of shift teams and rank teams by more than the loss column. Looking at Georgia, this week they've got three wins over top-12 teams now, and then obviously the two losses to Alabama and Ole Miss, versus a Miami that's in front of them with I believe no ranked wins this week and Penn State up there with a 14-point home win over No. 23. How do you guys weigh the wins versus maybe lack of opportunity for good wins or even a team like Texas who has played one ranked team and lost by 15 at home? Where does that all come into this conversation, especially as you guys have shown that you are willing to shake up between one-loss and two-loss teams?**

WARDE MANUEL: You know, it's a great question, and it's one that we debate. One of the things that we talk about is teams can only play the schedule they have in front of them against the teams that have been, from a conference standpoint, assigned. We can maybe be critical of non-conference schedules and those kind of things, but when it gets to the conference, particularly as these conferences have expanded, there are more teams to play throughout the conference.

Teams can only play the schedule that's in front of them. They can only play the opponents that they have.

So we take the stance that we're going to really look at these games, we're going to look at the stats, we're going to look at the strength of schedule, but we're also going to look at how teams are performing against the competition that they have.

From our perspective, if it was just about strength of schedule, we wouldn't be needed. You could just take at the end of the season the top 12 teams with the highest strength of schedule and put them against each other.

What we've been asked to do is to judge and to look at how teams are playing against the competition that they have and to rank them accordingly to how we see it, and that's the way I would explain how we take a look and we look at the differences even though the schedules and the opponents may be different.

**Q. With Indiana losing and them being No. 5 and then Notre Dame getting a blowout win over Army who had been in the top 20; Penn State getting a close win at unranked Minnesota. I think people thought Penn State and Notre Dame would be No. 4 and 5 in some order in these rankings. Was that a hard decision to keep Notre Dame from jumping over Penn State into the top 4, and what led to the committee coming to the conclusion to keep Penn State at No. 4?**

WARDE MANUEL: Well, there was a lot of discussion about those teams and how they had performed. Penn State's only loss is to the No. 2 team in the country. They have a win over No. 23 Illinois. Notre Dame has a win now over No. 20 Texas A&M as of today; Army is not in the rankings.

Notre Dame's loss was to Northern Illinois at the beginning of the year, but they won nine straight games in pretty dominant fashion since then.

So from our standpoint, resumes are pretty close in terms of how we see them. Obviously with them ranked 4 and 5. And we will continue -- they both have games this week that we will watch. Penn State plays Maryland, I believe, and Notre Dame plays USC.

So we'll be watching how they perform, and we will assess when we get together -- start assessing when we get together on Monday to look at what's transpired over the weekend.

**Q. Real quickly, how would you evaluate A&M if they beat Texas but lose to Georgia in the conference championship game? Would the committee consider a four-loss team that reached that championship game, or would that be too big a negative?**

WARDE MANUEL: You know, you're asking me a hypothetical again. I don't know how that would work out in terms of where teams would be and how it would be looked at in terms of Texas A&M and where they'll be ranked after next weekend if they do beat Texas. How the game goes and the championship and all those kind of things are really both hypotheticals.

But we will assess, and if we determine at that time that teams need to move around and jump up depending on who lost in front of them, we've shown that we will make those adjustments as a committee and make that assessment and put them where we believe they should be.

**Q. You mentioned the three-loss teams, the 22 teams**

**that have been in the top 12. Has there been a four-loss team in the top 12 in the 10 years previous?**

WARDE MANUEL: No, sir, there never has.

THE MODERATOR: That's all the time we have for this evening. I'd like to thank everyone for joining us.

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