

College Football Playoff Media Conference

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Mack Rhoades

CFP Media Conference

BRETT DANIELS: I'd like to welcome everyone to the second College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference for the 2025 season. Joining us tonight is Rich Clark, the executive director of the College Football Playoff, along with Mack Rhoades, the College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair.

As a reminder to everyone on the line, we will be transcribing tonight's call and will put that transcript on collegepressbox.com shortly after the conclusion of this call.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, what are the committee's thoughts on Oklahoma so far, and I specifically wanted to know, has there been any discussion about quarterback John Mateer and how he was playing before he hurt his hand in the Auburn game versus how he's played recently, and especially in that Texas game?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, thank you. So Oklahoma we've got obviously great respect for them, ranked 11th, really good quality wins against No. 18 Michigan, going to Tennessee, beating Tennessee.

We've had conversation about quarterback John Mateer. Felt like he was playing at a really high level prior to the hand surgery. Obviously the first game back, big game versus Texas, we the committee probably did not think he was at full strength, and it seems as the season has moved on, he's getting closer to that.

Certainly have great respect for him as a quarterback and hope he continues to heal.

Q. I just wanted to ask, for a team like Michigan who it appears they have a couple of teams to go through in order to make it to the playoffs, how much would a win over Ohio State at the end of the year impact those chances?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, so really hard for the committee



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to predict. We don't predict. Certainly if Ohio State were to hold serve and be at that No. 1 spot and Michigan were to be able to beat them, that would be great discussion and conversation within the room in terms of how far they would move up.

Q. I was just interested in how Texas Tech was regarded by the committee this week, given their win against Brigham Young, but also Ole Miss?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, good evening. Certainly well-regarded, moved up two spots. Probably the longest discussion that we had in the room was Texas Tech and Ole Miss. Texas Tech's win just recently this past weekend against BYU, really convincing, both sides of the ball. Texas Tech defensively, really, really good. Offensively, moves the ball up and down the field. Kicked some field goals, so probably left some points off the board.

But really looked at Texas Tech's two top-13 wins, BYU, Utah. Ole Miss had the one win, a really good win at Oklahoma, also a win against LSU. But Texas Tech, highly regarded by the committee.

Q. I was just wondering, Chandler Morris' injury, the Virginia quarterback this past Saturday, how much did that come up in your conversations with the committee discussed Virginia this week?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, injuries to key players come up in our conversation, and certainly the committee was very well aware that Chandler did not play in the second half. Certainly part of our conversation and part of the evaluation.

Q. Just curious if you could talk a little bit more on the discussion between Indiana's win at Penn State and the ranked A&M win at Missouri and kind of what the discussions were between those two games?

MACK RHOADES: So certainly discussion about those two games, but also discussion about body of work when we think about both of those teams.

We looked at Indiana's win at Oregon, Indiana's win at



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Iowa, A&M's win certainly in South Bend, their most recent win against Missouri. Indiana, obviously their win against Penn State.

Conversation about Missouri, Missouri a really good team but probably not the team that they've been. They're starting their third quarterback, a true freshman. That's a really tough spot for that young man.

When you look at both of these teams, they're really close. They're really close defensively. Give Indiana the edge. And they're really close offensively. Certainly gave Indiana the slight edge there. Indiana finding a way to win Fernando Mendoza, the second rated quarterback in passing efficiency. Those were all conversations.

But again, that was the second longest discussion in the room. Two really, really good teams, really, really close.

Q. Could you kind of tell us what you thought got South Florida into the top 25 after not being ranked last week?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, so South Florida, even last week when we certainly had conversation about Group of Five, they've always been part of it. Really, the committee felt like of the Group of Five to date, they're the most consistent. The win versus Boise State, the committee felt like the win at Florida, really good win, beating an 8-1 North Texas team, their most recent win versus UTSA, a UTSA team that beat Tulane, I believe, the week before.

Obviously Tulane beating Memphis was a part of this conversation, as well.

Those were all the things that we talked about in regards to South Florida, but South Florida the most consistent of the Group of Five to date.

Q. Question about Vanderbilt: Vanderbilt has gotten better strength of record, strength of schedule metrics, I believe, than Notre Dame and Utah, a pair of other two-loss teams. I'm wondering, why is Vanderbilt ranked behind those two teams in particular, a two-loss Notre Dame and Utah?

MACK RHOADES: Well, I appreciate the question, and certainly we had conversation about Vanderbilt. Playing an Auburn team that made a coaching change, having to take that to overtime, a win in overtime at home. A lot of conversation about Diego Pavia, maybe the most important individual to their team as they go.

The wins versus South Carolina, LSU, Missouri, really, really good wins. But when we looked at certainly Utah,

the convincing win against Arizona State and then against Cincinnati -- who's the other team that you wanted me to compare them to?

Q. Notre Dame.

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, Notre Dame is a team that -- seven straight games. They've won seven straight. I think early in the year they lost the two by a total of four points.

Defensively I think they struggled a little bit. Feels like certainly the Arkansas game was a turning point for them offensively.

The committee really like Notre Dame as a complete team, again, defensively. Their run game is as good as anybody, if not the best in the country when you think about their two backs, Love and Price. Then Carr at the quarterback spot, he's the third ranked quarterback in terms of passing efficiency in the country.

Those are all the things that we talked about and looked at as a committee, and obviously gave them an edge over Vanderbilt.

Q. Were any other Group of Five teams such as Tulane and/or James Madison close to cracking your top 25?

MACK RHOADES: Both of those teams that you mentioned were certainly part of the conversation and discussion when we talked about Group of Five. Those two, yes, were certainly part of it.

Memphis and -- I'm thinking here out loud in terms of anybody else. It was Tulane, it was South Florida, it was Memphis, it was James Madison. San Diego State had the bad loss at Hawai'i. Boise State certainly part of the conversation, as well.

Q. Just to follow up, when you look at a team like James Madison and what it's played in the Sun Belt, how much did that conference and maybe having a bit of a down year play into it?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, I think with James Madison, the part that was really hard to overcome for the committee was their schedule strength. Just quite frankly, that was a big part of that conversation.

Q. I just wanted to know, is there ever a conversation that starts with the question or premise, on a neutral field, I think this team is better? Do you do any of this at all?



MACK RHOADES: There isn't. That's certainly not part of our protocol. We try not to predict.

We talk about in terms of the tape that we watch and games that they played, like man, Georgia looked really good on film against Mississippi State, and they did X, Y and Z. But that's how we talk about teams when we look at them and we think about the eye test.

But we do not get into trying to predict who would win in a particular match-up on a neutral field.

Q. Regarding conference championship game losers, how much can losing a championship game hurt a team in the rankings, and can it be beneficial for a team to miss out on their championship game? Just curious how the committee views that.

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, for the committee, we look at it as a positive if you're playing in the championship game. It's another datapoint. It's certainly recognized when we think about record strength. Obviously you win it, that's a plus. If you lose it, theoretically it's not supposed to hurt you.

Could it hurt you? If it was a game where it wasn't competitive and you completely got blown away, then that would be a conversation, candidly, in the room amongst the committee.

Q. I was just wondering, when you're looking at Texas A&M and Indiana and you look at the schedule because you mentioned how they performed in some of their earlier games, did the fact that A&M played three consecutive road games in a four-week period, so they were away from -- they didn't have a home game for a month, was that a point of discussion at all? Was that a topic of discussion at all?

MACK RHOADES: As I reflect back on just the conversation of the body of work, I do believe that it came up in terms of just the number of consecutive road games when we talked about A&M.

Q. For a certain SEC team, obviously their schedule is very hard, but what would be the cutoff essentially for an SEC team or any team from one of the bigger conferences, let's say they have three losses, but to be a highly ranked at the end of the season, how do you differentiate how highly they should be ranked even though they have three losses but they've played a very tough schedule?

MACK RHOADES: So again, I think we look at certainly the body of work, the entire resume, those three losses,

who they're against. We certainly look at who have they beaten, who they've won against.

We obviously have two three-loss teams in our rankings when we look at Iowa at 6-3 and Tennessee at 6-3, and you think about two of Iowa's losses, to Indiana No. 2, to Oregon at No. 8. Tennessee, as well, their losses.

Again, we're looking at complete body of work, and we factor in all of our tools, metrics, certainly the head-to-head common opponent, our 12 correlative statistics, record strength, schedule strength. All of it comes into play.

Q. How are you viewing Cincinnati, if you could just share insights on Cincinnati?

MACK RHOADES: Cincinnati, we certainly think highly of them. They were idle and moved into the top 25. Their win over Iowa State was a really, really good win at that time. I think Iowa State came into Cincinnati undefeated and at full strength. Iowa State has since struggled with some injuries. A really competitive game versus Nebraska, a neutral-site game, although I'm not sure it was that neutral of a site when you think about the Nebraska crowd.

Candidly, the game at Utah, I think the committee felt like that was going to be a very, very competitive game, and it didn't turn out that way. But Cincinnati is a really good team, and obviously we think highly by ranking them in our top 25.

Q. Regarding ACC and Georgia Tech, what went into the thinking of jumping Miami ahead of Georgia Tech as the highest ranked ACC team this week, and also, what about the Big 12 makes that conference more well-thought-of in the committee's minds than the ACC right now?

MACK RHOADES: Yeah, I think to answer your first question, again, Georgia Tech was idle. Obviously their last game, they certainly didn't play well on either side of the ball when you think about their loss to North Carolina State.

Georgia Tech, again, we look at all of the metrics. Their schedule strength is hard for them when you think about just any non-conference signature wins. Miami certainly with the win versus Notre Dame was a key factor for Miami ahead of Georgia Tech.

Again, just in general with the ACC, I think just their lack of non-conference signature wins, other than Miami over Notre Dame.

Q. When you look at the metrics, across the board it

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seems like Texas A&M has the higher strength of schedule and strength of record. Is there something separating Indiana and Ohio State where the metrics wouldn't come in and put A&M over the top?

MACK RHOADES: Again, when we look at schedule strength and record strength, because you mentioned those two, again, just two of the metrics, those teams are very, very close. I mean, extremely, extremely close. When we look at those two, again, defensively, Indiana, we give them the edge over A&M. We give Indiana certainly the edge -- offensively they're the top scoring offense in the country. Their defense is ranked second.

Again, those are two teams, as I mentioned, the longest discussion, Texas Tech, Ole Miss. The second longest discussion was Indiana and Texas A&M.

You asked about Ohio State and Indiana. Again, the committee, really clear consensus in the room. Ohio State, the No. 1 team in the country. Felt like the most complete team. Really good defensively, particularly up front. Offensively, again, really good. Their offensive line play is outstanding. They have the great playmakers in Jeremiah Smith and Carnell Tate. The quarterback Sayin right now leads the country in passing efficiency and completion percentage.

Those are all reasons why Ohio State, again, clear consensus for the committee for them to remain at No. 1.

I apologize I didn't get them initially.

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to thank everyone for joining us on tonight's call. This will conclude the teleconference.

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