

# College Football Playoff Media Conference

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Irving, Texas, USA

**Hunter Yurachek**

CFP Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome everyone to the penultimate 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 Hunter Yurachek, the College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair.

**Q. Hunter, I'm curious, as you look at Alabama, as they go into the SEC title game, what do you need to see from the Crimson Tide regardless of outcome in the SEC Championship to ensure that they make the final bracket here?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: You know, it's hard to look ahead to say what we need to see from them. The easiest thing to see from them would be a win, obviously. But we will judge all of the conference championship games when they are completed, the results of them, and then rank the teams 1 through 25 accordingly.

It's hard for me to say specifically what the committee would be looking for from Alabama. They're in a really solid position this week at No. 9, got an opportunity in their conference championship to give us another datapoint.

**Q. Hunter, just curious what A&M's overall resume looks like now or looks like to the committee now in those discussions to drop them four spots after the loss to Texas.**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Yeah, Texas A&M with that loss, they fell into that group of five really strong one-loss teams: Georgia, Texas Tech, Oregon, Ole Miss and Texas A&M. Georgia got the nod just based on their strength of schedule and the wins they've had over ranked teams.

Texas Tech, again, a really strong team. They've won 11 games by 20 or more points. They lead the country in margin of victory with 35.

Oregon has continued to improve. Their strength of schedule has gotten so much better. They're in the top five

in most of the metrics, both offensively and defensively.

Then of course Ole Miss, a team that's in the conference with Texas A&M, both very closely matched. I think Ole Miss is a little bit better offensively as looked on by the committee, as Texas A&M is, but Texas A&M is a really good team, as are all of those teams that are 11-1, or they wouldn't be ranked at 7.

**Q. I know the tiebreaker for A&M that got them into fourth place was because of the opponent's win-loss record in the SEC. What was the conversation around A&M's strength of schedule in the group compared maybe to some of those other teams?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: We look at everyone's strength of schedule. Texas A&M has obviously got one of the best wins, a road win at Notre Dame early in the season, in the entire season, but the luck of the draw sometimes in your conference schedule, they haven't played many of the teams like a Georgia and Alabama have played within the SEC.

**Q. Hunter, I wanted to follow up for broader clarification since he was asking specifically about Notre Dame-Miami. Can a team presently outside the 12-team field that does not play in a conference championship game move into the field? Is that possible?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Yes. Idle teams can move based on the results of the championship games. There may be something that happens in a championship game that impacts an idle team, whether that's their strength of schedule or some other datapoint that we use, or there could be a team that suffers a significant loss in a title game.

We don't try to predict what's going to happen, but yes, idle teams can move within the rankings as we rerank them one last time this weekend.

**Q. To follow up, related but in a broader sense because Ward said last year that the committee would not use it as a "negative" for teams who lose conference title games. Obviously they could move**

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**down but not -- he said negative. Obviously SMU stayed in the field even with a loss. Is the committee open to dropping conference title game losers, specifically as it relates to Alabama and BYU, or are they locked in even with a loss?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Again, each of the championship games will just give us another game and another datapoint to evaluate the teams that participate in those championship games and the idle teams around them.

We'll rerank the teams one last time this weekend, and the five highest ranked conference championships and the seven highest ranked at-large teams will advance to the College Football Playoff.

**Q. Kind of following up on that, you have a rare situation this weekend where the only two undefeated teams left are the teams playing each other in the Big Ten Championship game. When you look at the separation between those two teams and the others that do have a loss, is there a way where the loser of the Big Ten Championship could fall beneath the top two, or do you envision those being the top two teams regardless of results?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: That's hard to predict without knowing the result of that game and what each of the teams look like in that game. We'll wait until the end of the championship games as they're played Friday and Saturday, and then we'll rerank the teams accordingly.

**Q. For the last couple of weeks you've talked about how the committee really focused on Alabama's loss to Florida State, which is a really important factor in terms of how you rank them among the two-loss teams. What about a win over a 5-7 Auburn team, which I know is one of the metrics, wins over teams above .500 or below .500. What about that was enough to offset that bad loss and move them ahead of Notre Dame and really just change the way that you're viewing that resume?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: That debate between Notre Dame and Alabama has been one of the fiercest debates for the last three weeks, and it really has split our committee room. We've got people that thought highly of Alabama -- we all think highly of both of those teams, but some are very much in Alabama's camp, some are very much in Notre Dame's camp.

It's just Alabama in a rivalry game on the road. Auburn has been an extremely tough place to play for many teams this year, such as Georgia and Vanderbilt, and the committee gave Alabama a little respect for winning that game, getting

out early 17-0. The game got tied again, and Alabama, a gutsy call there late in the game to go for it on 4th and 2 and then getting a turnover again late in the game. The committee just felt like that was enough of a win, of a metric, to push Alabama ahead of Notre Dame.

**Q. Hunter, going into this weekend, are there any teams definitively already in the CFP? I would assume Ohio State and Indiana are. Would you agree with that assumption? And if so, who else has already clinched their spot?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Again, we'll rerank the teams, and I don't want to not answer your question, 1 through 25. I don't like to -- we're not projecting as a committee what will happen this week, but I think you can read between the lines that there's some teams in the top 25 that are in pretty good shape to make the playoff.

**Q. Vanderbilt finishing 10-2 in the SEC, what is it that makes Vanderbilt be ranked so far below other 10-2 SEC teams and even below a 9-3 SEC team with Texas?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: The committee has a great deal of respect for Vanderbilt and what they have achieved, an amazing season, a 10-win season. When you look at their schedule, now that Tennessee is no longer ranked, they just don't have a signature win. They've got wins against LSU, Missouri and Tennessee. Missouri and Tennessee were previously ranked in our poll. They are no longer ranked in our poll.

Then the two ranked teams that Vanderbilt has played, Alabama and Texas, I think both of those games in their own way were a little bit different. The Alabama game is probably a little bit closer than the score indicates, and the Texas game was probably closer than the score actually indicates because if you remember, Texas was up in that game 34-10.

I think it's just lacking that signature win or two that teams like a Texas and a Miami, Utah, teams above them have.

**Q. I assume at No. 13, Texas has no path to get in the CFP; is that accurate?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: I can't predict what one's path would be to get to the CFP. Either it would have to be one of the five highest ranked conference champions. Texas does not play for the Southeastern Conference Championship this weekend; that's not their path. Then you'd have to be one of the seven highest ranked at-large teams.



That would be Texas's path as we rerank this one last time this weekend.

**Q. Then along those lines, is the thing hurting Texas the most the loss to Florida, or is there some other factor?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: You're spot on. The committee has a great deal of respect for Texas and they've played an incredible schedule. They've got four teams they played in our top 10. They beat OU on a neutral field. They just beat Texas A&M at home this past weekend. They lost to No. 1, Ohio State, and lost to No. 3, Georgia.

But one key stat this week in the teams ranked in our top 15, there's 17 total losses for those teams. 16 of those losses came against teams that are currently ranked or have been ranked in our top 25 this year. The only loss to an unranked team was Texas's loss to Florida at Florida, and really Florida dominated that game, held Texas to 50 yards rushing, two interceptions. So it's not that Texas played Ohio State; it is Texas' loss to Florida that's holding them back now.

**Q. Did the committee talk at all about Mississippi, the Mississippi coaching situation in the rankings this week, and if so, why, or if not, why not?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: We absolutely did talk about that. One of the principles in our selection protocols is the availability of coach and players. We not only talked about the situation at Ole Miss, but we also talked about the offensive coordinator position at Oregon, the head coaching positions at James Madison, North Texas and Tulane. I think those coaches are going to be coaching their respective teams. There's obviously a distraction, but the committee, in the end, after discussion, it felt like we don't have any games where Ole Miss does not have their head coach or Oregon potentially has a distracted offensive coordinator, et cetera. That really didn't weigh into our consideration this week in how we ranked our teams.

**Q. Hunter, one more follow-up there on Vanderbilt. They go to the Tennessee on the road, a rivalry game. I heard you give credit to Alabama for what it did in a rivalry game on the road. Win by 21, and Tennessee drops I guess at least seven spots because they're out of the rankings, Vanderbilt doesn't move. Why does that game penalize Tennessee but not result in credit for Vanderbilt?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: I think it's what happened around Vanderbilt this week with Texas also getting a win against Texas A&M who's ranked third, Miami getting a win at a

ranked Pittsburgh team, BYU winning against Central Florida. It's not that we didn't want to reward Vanderbilt for this win, but there's some things that happened in and around the teams that they are ranked with that really kept them in that 14th spot.

**Q. I know from previous weeks that one of the biggest concerns for James Madison was its strength of schedule. I'm curious over the last couple of weeks as some of its Sun Belt opponents and even Washington State out of conference have reached bowl eligibility and improved their records, how much of a discussion was that in getting JMU ranked for the first time?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: JMU has been a very consistent team throughout, a team we have talked about for the past couple of weeks, and they've been creeping and creeping. Finally with their 11 wins, their strength of schedule really hasn't improved that much, but they're getting a lot of credit because they have gone through their schedule just with one loss earlier this year against a Louisville team that was ranked in our poll earlier, and they do have wins against an Old Dominion team that's 9-3 and a Washington State team that took one of the ranked teams, Ole Miss, played them to a three-point game earlier this year, as well.

**Q. Just about the Ole Miss coaching situation, how difficult is it to evaluate the worth of a coach, and what specifically can you analyze to determine what losing someone like Lane Kiffin means for a team?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: It's impossible for us at this time as a committee to evaluate what the impact is on losing your head coach, specifically at Ole Miss, because we don't have a game that we can compare Ole Miss with Lane Kiffin versus without him. Without that datapoint, really did not become part of our thought process in how we evaluated Ole Miss this week.

**Q. Hunter, could you provide some insight into the conversation with Georgia and Texas Tech as the committee discussed those teams and those thoughts?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Yeah, that was a place where we had some significant debate, as well. Two really strong 11-win teams. You look at Georgia, they've got wins over Texas, Tennessee who was previously ranked, Ole Miss, and this past weekend against a ranked Georgia Tech, their one loss coming at home against Alabama.

Then you've got Texas Tech who's got wins over top-25 teams Utah, BYU and Houston. They've got a loss to an unranked Arizona State team, albeit with their backup quarterback.



But both of these are really, really strong teams, and Georgia got the nod just based on their strength of schedule and the wins that they have versus Texas Tech.

**Q. I have two questions as they kind of relate to Miami and Notre Dame. First, now that the seasons are complete and the records are the same, Miami has played consistently well, why the committee decided to rank Notre Dame two spots ahead of Miami. And does the committee take the head-to-head more into consideration if those two teams are back-to-back in the rankings or if there's a team in between them like there is now?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: The head-to-head is one datapoint that the committee will use. It's obviously easier to use that datapoint when the teams are back-to-back as opposed to when they're separated by a team or two or three, as has been the case.

Notre Dame is the winners of 10 straight. During that 10-game winning streak, they've outscored their opponents roughly 440 to 143. They've been very consistent offensively in how they run the ball, in how they pass the ball, very explosive offense. I think they're third in explosive plays.

Then you've got a BYU team between them that's 11-1. Their schedule strength and record strength metrics are really, really high. They've got a win over 15th ranked Utah and a win over 18th ranked Arizona, and their metrics rank really, really high, as well.

Then you've got Miami, who when we had our first poll, they came into our poll losers of two of three games, and so they were inserted at 18. They've really climbed faster than any other team during the past four or five weeks, up six spots. They've won four consecutive games. Carson Beck has been phenomenal, completing 80 percent of his passes at roughly 1,100 yards and 11 TDs during that time.

But the committee still felt like right now, Notre Dame deserves to be ranked ahead of BYU and Miami, and BYU deserves to be ranked ahead of Miami.

**Q. Hunter, earlier on the call you said it's "impossible" for us to evaluate what the impact is with the Kiffin situation and obviously could come into play with other coaches. But in the principles of the College Football Playoff protocol, it is very explicit that unavailability of key players and coaches could likely affect its postseason performance is one of the things you guys have to consider. If it's impossible to evaluate, why is it in the principles?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Well, let me go back, and I wasn't a member of the committee a couple years ago, but it's been referenced in the room where the Florida State instance where they lost their quarterback for a couple of games, and the committee had an opportunity to evaluate where Florida State did not have their starting quarterback that they had for the majority of the season.

We don't have any way to evaluate what Ole Miss looks like, plays like without their head coach. It looks like they stabilized that program by appointing their defensive coordinator as their head coach. Their offensive coordinator we were told was going to come back and call the plays. So we can only evaluate what we know, and what we know now is that Ole Miss is an 11-1 football team.

**Q. I'd like to go back to Alabama and get your perspective on how highly they can move up with a win and if they can move out of the playoffs with a loss, what the stakes are really for Alabama if they can move into a top-4 bye situation or out with a loss to Georgia?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: I can't answer that question until I watch the game on Saturday and see how Alabama plays versus Georgia. It's impossible for me to -- and the committee to predict what could happen with a win or a loss.

They've got another great opportunity, another metric that other teams do not have.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Miami-Notre Dame again. When you look at the top 10, it appears that head-to-head is being honored with Oklahoma and Alabama, Georgia and Ole Miss. Even if you go outside the top 10, Texas over Vanderbilt. I'm curious, what's the difference between the Miami and Notre Dame situation? Why isn't the head-to-head being honored there, I guess? Essentially what's the big difference between those teams in the committee's mind?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: Yeah, the head-to-head, again, is just one of the tools that we use to evaluate the teams. If we were just comparing Miami and Notre Dame side by side, it's a little bit easier to use that comparison. But we're not comparing Notre Dame and Miami side by side. We're comparing really this whole -- we've been comparing Alabama, Notre Dame, BYU and Miami collectively and evaluating those teams and how they look.

When you put all of those teams together, the committee





has felt for the past several weeks that Notre Dame, now again the winners of 10 straight, and really dominating on both sides of the ball in those 10 wins, and then BYU an 11-1 team with really strong strength of schedule and strength metrics, wins over a couple of top-25 teams, deserved to be ranked higher than Miami. So that's why we have that order of Miami 10 and BYU 11.

Miami, again, they entered our first poll losers of two of three games and they entered in at 18. The committee has given a great deal of respect to Miami, bringing them from 18 to 12 this week after winning four consecutive games and looking really good in doing so, and they looked really good this past weekend against Pittsburgh, but it was not and has not been enough for them to get ahead of BYU and/or Notre Dame.

**Q. When you look at the totality of the resumes of the whole season, does the committee feel that Notre Dame's resume is significantly better than Miami's?**

HUNTER YURACHEK: They're separated by just a few spots in the ranking. I don't think you could say that the resumes really of any of these teams in the top 13 or 14 are significantly better than one another.

We've got really good teams. It has been significant, and I mean significant, debate. We went well over our normal time today in trying to make sure that we got especially 9, 10, 11 and 12 right.

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

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