

# CFP First Round: Penn State vs SMU

Saturday, December 21, 2024  
University Park, Pennsylvania, USA  
Beaver Stadium

## SMU Mustangs

## Kevin Jennings

## Elijah Roberts

## Roderick Daniels Jr.

### Postgame Press Conference

Penn State 38, SMU 10

MODERATOR: All right, everyone. Once again, please raise your hand if you have any questions. We're going to begin with Elijah Roberts, Kevin Jennings, and Roderick Daniels Jr. So please, once again, raise your hand if you have a question and we'll be providing you with a microphone. We'll start on the left-hand side.

**Q. Hey, Kevin. Jeff with Fox Dallas. How can you bounce back from and use this performance as a positive as you look forward to next year and I saw when you walked off the field you had a big embrace with Coach Lashlee. What did he say to you in that moment?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, he just told me, I mean, we got to move on from this, games like that. It can't happen, so just move on from it and learn from your mistakes and the things you did bad today. So things I can learn on and things like that, just being better with the ball, going on and just, yeah, that's about it, really.

**Q. Kevin, 106,000 people in the building today. How did you prepare for dealing with the crowd, that environment, and how do you feel that you dealt with it and the impact they played?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, we prepared all week at practice, the two weeks we had to practice and prepare for it, so we were really all right with the sound, but, you know, it was a big impact for sure, though, and they showed out and came out there and just, you know, kind of disturbed our offense a little bit.

**Q. This one's -- Bill Embody, On The Pony Express.**



## PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

**This one is for Rod. Not the way you want to have your SMU career end, but can you put into words what this season has meant to you as a guy from Dallas and just going on this written to the playoff?**

RODERICK DANIELS JR.: It was a fun journey being from Dallas and playing in the College Football Playoffs the first year with the 12 team playoffs and I was basically blessed to be able to do it with these guys up here and everything we did this season, I'm going to remember this year for a very long time, one of my favorite years of my life and just move on and hope my boy Kevin keeps doing what he's doing next year.

**Q. Mike Austy with Yardbarker and Sports Now Network. Kevin, in terms of the interceptions, if you could kind of walk us through any of them on what unfolded, what do you think, what were you seeing? Coach actually mentioned on the third one that he felt was on him. How would you characterize those picks and kind of what happened?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, none of them was definitely on him. I mean, I had the ball in my hands. He didn't have the ball in my hands. I mean, I made mistakes three times and just gave the defense the ball making careless mistakes and, yeah, just not being protective with the ball, and, yeah, that's really it.

**Q. Steve, SB Nation. Elijah, how did that defensive start forcing two punts, getting those two fourth down stops kind of really energize your unit and kind of keep you guys in that game for a bit?**

ELIJAH ROBERTS: Yeah, it was good to get a good start like that. We wish we could have taken the ball away a little bit more often early on in the beginning, you know, help put our offense in better positions, but, you know, I felt like defense came out ready to play. We were ready to have the game and at the beginning of the game, you were able to do see that a little bit.

**Q. Kevin, Chris from The Athletic. The first drive, the fourth down, you believe run it, you can throw it. You had a guy there. What did you see on that play and do you feel like missing that play kind of got stuck with**



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**you a little bit and led to further struggles?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, I mean, saw a guy wide open, missed the pass and just got live with it from there. I mean, tried to bounce back from it. That didn't really play a major effect in it but just tried to bounce back from it and, yeah.

**Q. Travis Johnson with The Associated Press. Guys, Coach Lashlee was just in here and said he thinks that you guys have set up a new chapter for SMU football, one that doesn't always necessarily start with the death penalty. Do you believe that that's true and in what ways do you think your success this year set you up for the future? This program, potentially. The guys who will come after you?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, I think it set the bar a lot coming in, you know, teams not planning for us to do nothing throughout the year. I mean, we came in and we showcased what we can do throughout the year and we set the bar for ourself for next year and that's all we did.

**Q. Jacob Richman, Lone Star Live. Elijah, what do you hope people will remember about this team and about this defense when they look back at it?**

ELIJAH ROBERTS: I want people to just remember how much fun we had on the field together, like, I honestly know that watching us, offense, defense, that we look like we're having so much fun. From the beginning of the season all the way up until the last second we just played. I just want people to understand how hard we played, how much we really, like, love this game and put our time into this. We have a team that's very dedicated, all the way from the coaching staff to the even the media people here. It's just -- we have such a great staff and like you said before, our program is going to be in a good place in the next few years for sure.

**Q. All season we've asked you guys about what different games said in terms of a statement for the growth of this program and obviously you guys are sitting here after a game you didn't get the result you wanted, but when you think about this season, maybe for Elijah and Roderick, what does this season say about the group that Kevin is bringing back next year and what SMU can be?**

RODERICK DANIELS JR.: I would say he brought us here already, so he already know what it's like when he do come back next year and he'll be able to lead those guys. He's a great leader and I know they're going to be in good hands when they're with Kevin next year so he knows what he's doing and they're going to be all right.

ELIJAH ROBERTS: Yeah, like Junior said, it's hard not to love SMU now. Just on the outside looking in, I know today didn't go as planned but if you're a recruit, if you're a transfer or something like that and you really want to have a special place to come play, like why not here? We're just on the rise right now. Kevin will be back. We got a lot of guys coming back on the team, so SMU will be good for sure.

**Q. And Elijah, the ride for you to come in as kind of a tweener two years ago and to then emerge as one of the better defensive players in college football, what's your ride been like and just what are your emotions right now?**

ELIJAH ROBERTS: Yeah, I told all the coaches after the game, man, thank you guys for trusting in me and bringing me here. I was in the portal. I didn't really have a lot of options. I did, like, here and there but it was just to be a backup. Like teams would tell me, hey, we'll bring you in but you're going to be a backup. Just having that, like, opportunity here. I thanked every coach, every person who I shook hands with, thank you for the opportunity. Thank you for help, being in this chapter of my life and thank you for changing my life, you know. I really appreciate this program forever, man, and this has honestly been the greatest two years I've had playing football. Ever.

**Q. Joey, Lone Star Live. Kevin, you mentioned learning from this game. What would you say you did learn and then where do you want to grow for next season?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, just learned a lot, just, of course, not being careless with the ball, trusting my teammates to make plays and not for me to do everything on the field and just trusting my teammates and I'm going to carry on for sure and we're going to bounce back from this and just learn from the mistakes we had today.

**Q. Kevin, Mike with the Yardbarker and Sports Now again. What does it mean for you in this climate of college football in the portal and everything and teams changing every year for after a game like that, Coach already today said you're starter next year. You're going in starter next year. What does that mean for you? Because a lot of coaches around the country despite your body of work this year, would not have said that, would have made you maybe compete again or would try to go in the portal and get somebody else to get to another level, but they're sticking with you right now?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, it definitely means a lot just having the coaching staff having that much trust in me to say that, like you said, it's rare to come across that, transfer portals, high school kids coming in, things like that, it's rare for that to happen and I want to thank the coaching staff for that and all the trust they have in me.

**Q. Hey, Kevin. Jeff with Fox Dallas. I know we asked you a couple times now about how you bounce back from this, but how do you actually do it? How hard do you take this game in this moment and how do you not let that fester and carry over into next year?**

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, it's definitely going to start in the offseason, you know, just what we put in day by day and just going to work and putting our heads down and putting this game behind us. So offseason, fall camp, spring, all of that stuff is going to matter a lot just to put this behind us and to come out next year swinging.

**Q. Coach Lashlee was quick to say that the weather didn't impact the outcome because obviously both sides had to play in it, but, Kevin, how hard was it just to throw the ball in these kind of conditions? And for the rest of you, did the conditions impact any part of your game even though it impacted Penn State as well, did it impact the way you guys were able to perform?**

ELIJAH ROBERTS: I don't think so. I know as far as us up front, the D-linemen, kind of getting that first pop and that first strike, your hands kind of got to get a little adjusted but honestly, everybody was just so ready to play, I don't think it affected us at all.

KEVIN JENNINGS: Yeah, I don't think the weather did nothing to us at all, just had a terrible game. I had a terrible game. Yeah, that's it.

MODERATOR: All right. Elijah, Kevin, and Roderick, thank you for your time.

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