

CFP First Round: Texas vs Clemson

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Austin, Texas, USA

DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium

Texas Longhorns

Pete Kwiatkowski

Andrew Mukuba

Postgame Press Conference

Texas, 38, Clemson 24

Q. Pete, you've had two games very much influenced by 4th down stop. How big was that stop and what did you see on the play?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, it was obviously a huge, huge moment in the game. For us to get that stop, to hold it to a two-score game was huge, and for the offense to be able to get the ball, take some time off the clock, and when we did go back on the field being up by two scores, it totally changes how you call a game knowing that they had to push the ball down the field to score quick.

And then I was trying to onside kick it, and they were able to do that.

Q. Coach, what kind of pressure does Cade put on a defense, besides his mobility?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, he's a really outstanding player because he can hurt you with his arm and he can hurt you with his legs, and he's a tough competitor. There's no quit in the guy.

His ability to extend plays, his ability to run the ball, that was a big challenge to us because they ran him in quarterback draws and designed quarterback runs, and they're really good at throwing the football.

For us we had some different things that we were trying to chop up the front to make it hard for him to run those quarterback draws and still be sound in the back end with our coverage calls.

Q. One of the things in preparing for this game defensively, did you find any conference opponents comparable to the offense that you faced today?



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PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, you know, some of them like Arkansas, they have a good quarterback that was throwing the ball really well and was very good running the ball. A&M, what they did with their quarterbacks running the ball. Yeah, there was a lot of -- I can't think of them all off the top of my head, but those two come to mind that have the ability -- the dual threat type quarterbacks that put a lot of stress on the pass rush, trying to get to him and not give up quarterback runs, and then their ability to extend plays with their legs and be accurate with the football. You saw that tonight. He did a pretty good job.

Q. It felt as if Cade's ability to extend plays with his legs and get the ball out of his hands downfield was a bit different than you guys have seen this year. Is that what you saw?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah. I mean, his ability to get out of the pocket, his ability to run designed quarterback runs, and then we call them RPOs, but he has the run pass option. He drops back, we're playing with a light box, he's going to run the draw. If we're playing with two backers in the box, he's going to throw the football. So it was a cat-and-mouse game all night long. Just trying to change up those pictures.

ANDREW MUKUBA: For me, I'd say with him, our main thing was trying to force him to play the position. We tried to give him a lot of looks in the back end, a lot of disguises. I feel like he did a good job in the game escaping the pocket and making downfield throws. They kind of had the Q draw, the QB run designs going a little bit.

But I felt like overall we did a good job containing him and playing tight coverage in the back end.

Q. Drew, you get the win against your former team. How sweet was that? Moving forward, what's the evaluation process for the defensive backs to tighten things up?

ANDREW MUKUBA: It obviously felt good to get the win against my former team. I'm glad I'm on this side of the win.



As far as the guys in the back end. There wasn't really nothing that we were surprised or shocked or anything like that. I believe in the guys in the back end. I know I wouldn't even say we had a bad game, there was just a couple things we've got to clean up as far as technique and things like that, and I believe we're going to be straight. There ain't nothing to worry about.

Q. Knowing there's three more games, how do you evaluate this defense? How much better they can still be?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Well, starting way back in January, the guys showed up on a mission to get better and improve on what we did last year, and getting to the first game, getting through the first few games, the guys' preparation has been outstanding week in and week out. They show up win or lose with that mindset. We've got to get better, and they have.

The confidence that we developed early in the season has just grown.

Today we put those corners in a lot of one-on-one situations, and they made good plays on some 50/50 balls. I know the guys were frustrated that they could have played it better, and we'll go back to work and we'll improve.

Q. For Andrew, a couple big defensive stands you guys have had, one today and one against A&M. Can you take us into these big moments for this defense, how you guys are able to step up when it mattered most?

ANDREW MUKUBA: I would say for me as a unit on defense, I'd say it's pride. I feel like we take pride in not letting guys score or get in our paint. I know we do a good job of doing that. In those situations, the only thing we preach is to not let those guys in our paint. If we don't let nobody in our paint, I like our chances to win all the games that we play. That's just something that we take pride in as a defense.

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: I'll add on that, everybody, no matter what situation we get put in, they have the mindset that they're going to attack it, and that's a resiliency, being able to handle adversity. It's just a tough bunch of guys, mentally tough guys that it doesn't matter what kind of situation we put in.

We're going out there, and the goal is to get the ball back for the offense, and they've done that all year long.

Q. Pete, what does this say about your defense? It

always seems to be a different guy to step up each game. What does it say about the depth that you have at your disposal?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, we've got a lot of good players that care about each other and play for each other. It doesn't matter who's making the plays. Everybody plays a selfless brand of football, and whoever is the guy that steps up and makes the plays, they feed off of it, and that's what team defense is all about.

Q. Drew, how much pride do you guys take in the level of physicality that you guys play with, and how much is that a focal point for you guys on a week in, week out basis?

ANDREW MUKUBA: We take a lot of pride in that. We try to go out there every week, come out there and play with violence because that's how you play this game the right way, with violence. That's something we try to get across from the D-line, the linebackers to the corners to the safeties. Just go out there and play aggressive and play violent.

Q. Pete, Jahdae and Taaffe described as genius throughout the last couple months. I know tonight you had some timely blitzes with Guilbeau. Take me through that decision making, when those blitzes come, what goes through your mind? And can you talk about how bad you want to catch that pick on Cade, and take us through that play.

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Well, yeah, I'm humbled by that, but without these guys executing at a high level, I look like a schmuck. They get all the credit because they're the ones that are out preparing. We're putting them in position, and they've got to go out and execute and they've done it on a consistent basis this year.

ANDREW MUKUBA: I mean, I don't know, for some reason I feel like this game that's one that I'm kind of disappointed on because I wanted that one really bad. But I'm going to get other ops. I'm going to get me another one.

Q. Coach, there's a word I want to use, and that's relentless. What did you do at the beginning of the season to really prepare them to just be relentless?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: They've been hearing the same message since we got here four years ago. It's just getting the guys obviously believing, playing hard, playing for each other.

We talk about culture around here, and the culture of this



team is that: playing for each other. Part of that is playing hard, playing physical, and leaving everything out there on the field.

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