

CFP First Round: Texas vs Clemson

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Austin, Texas, USA

DKR-Texas Memorial Stadium

Clemson Tigers

Payton Page

Wes Goodwin

Barrett Carter

R.J. Mickens

Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 38, Clemson - 24

THE MODERATOR: Joining us now is one of Clemson's five permanently elected captains for the 2024 season, as voted prior to the College Football Playoff first round, defensive tackle Payton Page.

Q. Payton, what was Texas able to do in the run game that was giving you guys so many problems?

PAYTON PAGE: They were able to attack the edges, and they did a really good job. Props to them.

Q. Just wanted to ask you, you guys, despite having your struggles tonight, you did stop them three times on fourth down to give the offense a chance. Can you talk about those momentum plays and how it helped you get back in the game?

PAYTON PAGE: When we made that fourth down stop, they changed the whole momentum of the game for us. When we got back out there in the second half, we just attacked it and did what we can do to finish.

Q. Payton, take us inside the locker room. Dabo said a lot of guys kind of spoke up and talked about this year, the importance of this group. What was that like, and who maybe delivered those comments?

PAYTON PAGE: Cade said some real stuff in the locker room. He touched everybody's heart. He touched all the seniors for sure. He gave a shout out to all the seniors and what it meant to him, how much it meant to the team, and it meant a lot to us.



PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

THE MODERATOR: We're being joined also by Defensive Coordinator Wes Goodwin and linebacker Barrett Carter.

Q. For Barrett and Payton, you guys' season just ended and your college careers as well. Has that set in for you guys, or are you still processing what happened tonight?

PAYTON PAGE: Still processing for sure.

BARRETT CARTER: I would say the same. Has not really digested yet everything that just happened. Everything I can think of right now is just how grateful I am just for this team, these coaches, university, and just this whole staff and just everybody like within this -- like that's all I can really think of right now.

Q. Coach Goodwin, with the success Texas had attacking the edge, did you try to make halftime adjustments to try and stop that? It looked like maybe you guys were able to kind of find some fits there in the third quarter?

WES GOODWIN: Definitely. We adjusted some things, caused some different run pressures, and slowed it down there in the third quarter up until the long run in the fourth quarter.

Q. Wes, just big picture-wise, what's your assessment of the way your defense played this year?

WES GOODWIN: Those guys fought their asses off all year, really showed a lot of character, fight, grit. Wasn't perfect at times, but they kept battling all the way up until the end.

Credit to these guys, their leadership, the character that they displayed and kept guys pulling in the right direction. Got a lot of young guys coming back as well who see that it's all about little things, details, that sort of thing that always hinder you in the end. Great learning experience for the guys coming back.

Super proud of the leadership -- Barrett, Payton, R.J. -- those guys displayed thought the year and just the

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leadership and grit, toughness and the fight all the way till the end.

Q. Barrett and Payton, what has being at Clemson meant to both of you?

BARRETT CARTER: It's meant the world to me. I just remember four years ago I committed to Clemson May 19th, 2020, my mom's birthday, and just like from then on to like now, just truly say no regret. I had no regrets, and I'll make that same decision 100 times out of 100.

I just think back to after my freshman year when Coach V left and they announced that Wes was the guy, I just, I had no doubt in my mind that he would help us excel. The last four years has been the absolute world to me, just getting to go to work with the guys I get to go to work with and strain with them and have good days and horrible days and all of the above, it's truly meant the world to me.

It's something that I'm forever indebted, however you say that word, but just to say the least, it's meant the world to me.

Q. Wes, wanted to ask you, you just talked about the experience of them, especially the young guys, for you as a coach and also the coaching staff, what kind of experience it's been for you and how you guys get together and re-evaluate, and maybe any changes or anything like that going forward?

WES GOODWIN: Definitely. In January, we'll do our end of the year self-scout review and look at all the issues and problems and how teams attacked us throughout the year, and you can just see kind of the trends and stuff, and so forth and so on. That's kind of the next step. Obviously no recruiting up until the middle of January before we can get out. So just assess all of that with the staff, cut-ups by coverages, fronts, personnel groupings, so forth and so on, and just give a thorough evaluation.

Then lay out the plan for February and just how we get better and attack that plan.

Q. And how did your experience personally, just what you think about the season and going forth?

WES GOODWIN: Yeah, every year is a life of its own. Each team is different. Just an unbelievable experience with these guys each and every day, and just showing up. It was a lot of fun, a lot of tough days, but just an unbelievable experience and learned a ton. And super proud of these guys.

THE MODERATOR: We're also being joined by safety

R.J. Mickens.

Q. Payton, we had hoped to hear from you about what it's been like to be at Clemson and this experience for you.

PAYTON PAGE: The past four years has been a blessing. From the coaches to the teammates, the relationships I've built will never be the same again. I will love these teammates, the coaches, for life, and I feel like it's just going up from here and for this program.

Q. R.J., you had an intimate moment there with Coach Swinney and Cade coming off the field. Can you share what he said to you all?

R.J. MICKENS: It was personal. He was talking to us about the season and everything we accomplished. I'll just leave it at that.

Q. What will you take away from your time at Clemson?

R.J. MICKENS: All the relationships I've built, I'm thankful for everyone in that building and the guys that came before that aren't on the team anymore. Coach Wes, I'm just thankful for him. He's helped me so much this past two years and just growing my skill set, mentally, everything.

He's just done so much for me, and Coach Conn as well, just been great mentors and role models and just great men in my life. And of course Coach Swinney. Just thankful for all those guys and my teammates especially. I'm just going to take that away from here.

Q. Wes, I know you'll need to look at the film, but the first half specifically, where do you feel some of the issues were?

WES GOODWIN: The first drive, I thought we came out with great energy, just a couple little alignment issues there that we got cleaned up. The next drive, missed a tackle for a loss, but just a couple little things here and there that lead to big things. It's always the pebble in your shoe, not the mountain ahead.

Just got those things tightened down, came out the second half, and responded.

BARRETT CARTER: Could I say something?

THE MODERATOR: Final comments here from Barrett.

BARRETT CARTER: This is probably the last time I'll get to talk to you all. I want to say a big thank you to all for

giving us this platform. The media has a negative connotation, gets scrutinized, like whatever. You all truly give us a platform like no other.

Despite the loss, despite all the hard times throughout the last four years here, I just want to thank you all. I hope our fans are seeing this too. I want to thank Clemson. Just a lot of trials and tribulations the past four years, a lot of ups and downs, a lot of hard times where it would have been easy to write us off and give up on us, but you all never did.

I know that times are hard. I know that you all wanted more from us and all the things, but the love is always unconditional. I just hope that you all just keep supporting us and just I hope you all know just from me, now that I'm leaving here, I truly appreciate all of you all -- Clemson University, the fans, the people, everybody, the students. You all have truly shaped me into the man I am today. I'm forever, forever grateful for my time.

My experience was just like second to none and just immensely blessed that I called Clemson my home for the last four years. I just want to thank you all for that.

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