

# CFP First Round: Ohio State vs Tennessee

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Ohio Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## OC Chip Kelly

### Postgame Press Conference



# PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

Ohio State - 42, Tennessee - 17

**Q. Tennessee's front was known for kind of getting pressure on quarterbacks and sacks. You guys didn't give up any tonight and it seemed like Will had a lot of time to throw. What do you think the line, you guys did to ensure a clean pocket for a lot of the game?**

CHIP KELLY: I think our line played outstanding tonight. That defense going in, I think they were fifth in the country in total defense and fifth in scoring defense. We know how difficult they can be. You watch their games and they got after everybody they played.

But I think really credit to our offensive line keeping Will clean. Will knew if he could be clean and go through his reads and get a chance to go through his progressions we'd have a shot at beating these guys. I think our offensive line did an outstanding job on protection for Will.

**Q. When you make some changes along the offensive line are there things maybe you could do to help those guys out? Are there ways you can call plays things you can do to help them out things you wouldn't otherwise do if (indiscernible)?**

CHIP KELLY: We're always trying to play to their strengths. Depending on who is in the game -- and Justin did a great job telling us what the rotation is, who is in at left guard, who is in at right guard. Everybody has strengths sometimes you're trying to hide a weakness or two.

But I think we tried to play to their strengths. I think all three guys have strengths. You just, you don't get a ton. We get some feedback looking at the tablets and seeing some things, but I think all three guys did a nice job.

We'll break the film down early tomorrow and get a grade on them and get a look at them. But I think having depth at

this point in time during the season is critical in the fact that we got three guys in there that I think played at a pretty high level today, was important for us.

**Q. To what extent do you buy into the fact you can throw to set up the run? And was that kind of the emphasis in this game, because it was a lot of passes early and later kind of took the control and ran out the clock with the running game?**

CHIP KELLY: Just depends on who you're playing. I think there's always a philosophical approach when you're playing somebody based on what their strengths are and weaknesses are and what you're trying to exploit.

I don't think it's as easy as, say, throw to set up the run. I've done it before and gone three-and-out, three-and-out, three-and-out. And we've never gone anywhere with it. It's not just do this it works. It's about players executing and I thought our players executed at a high level tonight.

**Q. For the last three weeks, what impressed you about Will, not just the way his play improved but how he handled the three weeks after the Michigan loss?**

CHIP KELLY: I think the one thing with Will is he's consistent. He's the same person every day. He's not too high. He's not too low. He's a lifelong learner. He's got a thirst for learning. He's in every day. He's watching film. He's studying.

He's always trying to get better, and can he just get a little bit better on a daily basis? But one thing about Will there's a consistency to his approach and there's a consistency to how he is every single day in practice.

He's not one of those guys that's low on one day and high on another day. He's not like that. He's kind of really steady in his approach to how he prepares for games. And I think that's what you see when he plays in a game like he did tonight.

**Q. A few days after the Michigan game Ryan said we have plenty of good-enough players to go on a run and win the national championship. What did this performance tonight say about what you guys are**



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## capable of when you play your game?

CHIP KELLY: It says we're one of eight teams left. Everybody is fighting for the same prize. And obviously each game gets a little bit more amplified.

But to win it all, you've got to win the first one. That's really the whole team's focus. I thought Ryan did a great job keeping everybody focused. It really wasn't talk about what are we going to do on January 20th because January 20th didn't mean anything if we didn't take care of December 21st.

I think our guys were laser focused on playing this game. When you turn the tape on and see how talented Tennessee is, that got your attention right away. There was no looking past them to whoever is the next game.

Obviously we know we've got to go play Oregon, and that was in the back. It was all about Tennessee because you've got to win the first one to get going.

We'll regroup tomorrow. We'll look at the film and then we'll start as quick as we can getting ready for the next one.

**Q. Nobody knows Ryan and is closer to Ryan than you are in the coaching profession. Last three weeks I would imagine have been as tough a time for him as ever in his coaching career. How did he handle it? What did you see from him during this period, maybe that I don't know if you've seen before or impressed you or whatever?**

CHIP KELLY: I just saw the guy I've known for since he was 5. I told him a long time ago he's built for this. And he understands it. He understands the gravity of what his position is. He understands how everybody feels about Buckeye football and rightly so.

He feels the same exact way. I don't think anybody took the loss to The Team Up North harder than he took the loss. That's the type of person he is.

But he also has to lead from front. It wasn't, feel sorry for me, and, hey, is everybody going to pick me up and make me feel better.

It's no, we've got to address this the right way, look at what we did on film. We have to figure out how can we correct that. How do we put our positions -- I think your job as a coach is to put your players in positions to make plays. We didn't do it the last game. And we did a better job tonight.

And our players went and won this game. There's not one

coach that played today. The credit goes to those guys. They were awesome and they were clicking on all cylinders. And when you start to call plays and Will can finish the play before you get it out, you know how dialed in you are. And I think that's what these two weeks were.

We said we're going to go -- before I could get the second play off it was a 10-play word call. He had it. He knew what we were doing.

And I think the buy-in, especially from the leaders here, our senior leaders, is tremendous. And I think that's what's going to propel us as we continue to move forward with the ultimate goal of trying to get to January 20th.

## Q. (Off microphone)

CHIP KELLY: In both. We have a communication system that is kind of unique, but we're always talking through the headset and hand signal and got it. And I will start to make a "no check to" -- and he knows. He got it.

So it just tells where he is and how dialed in Will has been throughout the entire season. And I don't know what he finished today, but I think it was above 80 again. We talk about that. But there's a reason for that. It's how hard he works at it.

I think he understands the fundamentals of the position, but really the game within the game and taking what the defense gives him and making those decisions of when to take a checkdown and not to force a play.

But if your opportunity comes and you do have a shot to put the ball only in a spot where J.J. can catch it, or if J.J. can't catch it they'll have to interfere with him. Great decision-making today.

But I think the credit goes to the players, man, those guys have been awesome since what happened in the last game. And I think those guys said, hey, we've got a chance here because we're in it. That was the only thing they were hoping for is, are we still in this tournament. If we're in the tournament, then let's go win it.

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