

CFP First Round: Ohio State vs Tennessee

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Ohio Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Jeremiah Telander

Cooper Mays

Omari Thomas

Postgame Press Conference



PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

knowing you didn't play your best game but they turned out in mass?

OMARI THOMAS: I would say really just that's important for us to see and have fans that support us no matter what. We feel like our fans play a big part in everything that we did this year. They continued to just support us in everything, regardless, bad, good, ugly.

We had fans who continued to support us and come down here. It meant a lot for us. We play for each other. We play for the fans. We play for the culture. Like being a part of Tennessee culture, it just means a lot to us.

So just being able to have fans who support us and just think the world of us, it means a lot.

Q. Cooper, a different guy going to be snapping the ball to Nico. Probably a different running back behind you; different receivers. If the right people are around Nico, what's his ceiling?

COOPER MAYS: I mean, I guess you could say the sky's the limit. I've been adamant. I don't really know anything about quarterback -- truthfully, I don't know what's good or what's bad or anything. But I know that kid is a special kid, uber talented, one of the most talented football players I've ever been around, and his maturity at a young age is really impressive, too.

When you mix all that stuff together, it always breeds a positive result. I know he's going to be great whatever pieces or whatever you're speaking about. I know he's going to be a great player regardless.

Q. For all you guys, how would you describe the locker room after this one, and any of the players have a message or address the team?

JEREMIAH TELANDER: Obviously everybody is super disappointed. For me it's just really sad to see the seniors have to go. You don't prepare for a loss, and you think you're going to win every game, so you kind of mentally didn't prepare to have to tell some of these seniors goodbye or watch them take their pads off for the last time.

Ohio State 42, Tennessee 17

Q. Cooper, obviously you've had a long relationship with this program and this place. For you, I think Coach Halzle was saying it's going to be hard to walk into the facility and not see you moving forward. What does the end of your time here mean for you personally?

COOPER MAYS: Man, I don't really know how to really put it into words, how to articulate what this journey and what all these people that I've encountered in my time at Tennessee. I don't really know if I've got words to explain it.

I truly do love this place, and I love going into work with these guys every day, every week. Truly love competing and getting better every week with these guys, and super upset that it's over.

But super proud of everybody involved with getting this place back to more where it's supposed to be.

Q. (Indiscernible).

COOPER MAYS: Just that it was actually over. I don't know. Until the clock truly hit zero, I don't really think about anything but the next play. Kind of all that stuff just hitting me, that it was actually over, my time here at Tennessee. Really emotional, honestly.

Q. One of the hardest things to do at places like Tennessee or big time blue blood programs is being on the right side of the fans' passion. Clearly you guys were able to do that when you look up and see 30,000 fans in the stadium. How hard is it to walk away



For me that's the hardest thing is seeing the guys I look up to and the leaders on the team go out that way.

Q. Cooper and Omari, for the program to continue to grow from this point with what you all have built to this point, what lessons do you feel like the program needs to take from tonight to allow them to continue to grow?

OMARI THOMAS: I would say just continuing to be coachable. I feel like that's something that really -- we were coachable, but we just have to continue to be coachable. That's something for the program to continue to succeed, you have to continue to be coachable. You need guys who are going to be in the program who love the program, who love the culture about it.

Q. The first few possessions of the game for it to snowball like that and be 21-0, what was your reaction to all that as it was unfolding, and do you feel you got rattled by that or anything that happened in the first few minutes?

JEREMIAH TELANDER: Yeah, I mean, we just didn't win our one-on-ones at the start of the game, and our defense has always been a great job of bouncing back and bringing the fight back to them, but we just didn't win our one-on-ones, and it didn't go our way tonight.

Q. (Indiscernible).

COOPER MAYS: I truly don't know if it's like a message or anything that you say. I think the way that guys like us have come to work and showed up and showed face every day, the mentality and the energy that we brought, I think that speaks volumes and says more than anything two-sentence thing could ever really capture, I guess.

Yeah, the grass isn't always greener on the other side. Everybody knows that. Everybody has their own situations. But man, I really do love Tennessee, and it's been really good to me.

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