

# CFP First Round: Ohio State vs Tennessee

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Ohio Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## Will Howard

### Postgame Press Conference

Ohio State - 42, Tennessee - 17

**Q. I know you didn't question the game plan but when you guys were preparing for Tennessee and you're seeing the game plan being put together, where you were going to get opportunities to push the ball down the field, were you licking your chops at the opportunity to do that?**

WILL HOWARD: I think giving us the two or three weeks that we had to get ready for these guys, I think, gave us a little bit of an edge. And we were able to really break them down and figure out what we liked, what we didn't like and figure out what we were doing well.

And I think coming into this game I was really fired up about the game plan, like more than usual. And I think the way that we were able to execute it -- at the end of the day, it's how you execute it.

Like, I never go into a game like feeling bad about a game plan. It's how you execute it at the end of the day. But, yeah, I was fired up about our game plan today. And I think we did a hell of a job executing it.

**Q. Will, why more fired up for this game plan than other game plans?**

WILL HOWARD: I don't know. I mean, you saw it was a pretty good game. That's probably why.

**Q. When you guys play aggressive like that -- and you've said multiple times it's the best special teams corps in the country -- you mix it with getting Tre out of the backfield and hitting Gee, what's it like when you're in sync in a big game like this?**

WILL HOWARD: Yeah, it's huge. Getting the ball in our playmakers' hands is big, especially in space. You see what they're able to do. Tre busted that last run, I was,



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like, I don't know what he even saw. It was crazy.

But just giving those guys opportunities to get in space and do what they do is huge. And I think we did a heck of a job doing that tonight.

**Q. Tennessee's front has been pretty good throughout this year and your line kept you from getting sacked. You had a clean (indiscernible) a lot of times. What did you think of the protection you had tonight?**

WILL HOWARD: I'm so proud of those guys. I had to listen to them get just harassed for the last three weeks. And I had to sit here and just act like it didn't affect me, because those are my brothers, and I go to war with those guys every single day.

And for them to show out and have the performance that they had tonight, it was huge -- and against a really good front. I mean, they're probably the second-best front we've seen all year.

For them to come out and do what they did against those guys was huge. And I'm just so proud of those guys for not listening to the outside noise and sticking their noses down and really getting gritty and working for everything.

**Q. Just your thoughts on Jeremiah stepping up? True freshman doing this. Does he surprise you anymore and your thoughts on his game overall?**

WILL HOWARD: No, he does not surprise me. I think all of us can agree that we're not surprised by how good he is now. He's a dude, man. I think he's the best receiver in the country. I think we've got the three best receivers in the country, but I'm a little biased.

But you see what the kid does with the ball in his hands and what he does with the ball not in his hands. He runs unbelievable routes. He's smart. He works hard. I mean, he's everything you would want in a teammate and receiver.

And all those guys, man, are studs. So you are able to see that, put it on display tonight.



**Q. Given the way that the first meeting against Oregon ended, what do you think about the rematch ahead?**

WILL HOWARD: I'm excited. It's going to be a heck of an opportunity for all of us. I think we've all been looking forward to this one and for another crack at these guys.

And the way that last one ended doesn't sit right with me. It still doesn't. It still bugs me. And I'm just thankful for the opportunity that we get another crack at them.

And in life, I said this before the game, in life you don't get a lot of second chances. The fact that we're getting a second chance here is a blessing from the Lord. And we're going to go out there and have some fun and let it rip, man, because this is all we've got. It's win or go home.

**Q. There were questions leading up to this game about what the atmosphere might be like with Tennessee fans. How do you think the fans were for your final home game?**

WILL HOWARD: Great. Great. I think they thought they were going to take over this place, and we showed them pretty quick that we weren't going to let that happen. I think obviously us jumping out to a pretty quick start helped with that, but I've got to give credit to Buckeye Nation for showing up and being loud, and that drone show in the third quarter was pretty damn cool.

**Q. You threw your arms up at the end of the first quarter, three touchdowns, three possessions. How much of that was frustration like released and you guys just playing, like you said, executing the game plan and, I mean, when you guys are clicking like that, kind of hard to stop you guys.**

WILL HOWARD: I don't know about frustration, but more excitement and just I was thrilled that we were having the success we had, but we were far from done and I think we showed that.

**Q. Chip volunteered it like you were finishing the plays in practice and in the game. You're a fifth-year guy. You've been through it, but is that as locked in as you've been? Where does that come from, where you can finish the plays?**

WILL HOWARD: I like to think that I can do that every week. That's something that I try to get in my preparation.

When we go in there, we install a bunch of stuff going into Tuesday, it's like maybe I'm having to -- because he's telling me the plays and I'm trying to learn, like, this week what's the verbiage going to be on this one? Really by like

Thursday I try to have them all down pat, where I can finish them. Literally, he starts it and I'm like, okay, I know what the play is.

Just understanding the game, knowing we're in the red zone, it's third down, I know we're going to call this. There were times tonight where there was a third down and I knew that we went into a certain personnel package and I knew what he was going to call.

That's just us being on the same page. A lot of that has to do with me trying to get in there and around those guys as much as I can be so that we're all on the same page with what we're calling, and part of that is just my preparation. That's how I like to operate.

I want to know the game plan inside and out and why we're doing what we're doing, and I like to think my memory is pretty decent. I like to try and memorize the plays.

**Q. Coach Day always talks about leaving no doubt. How important do you think it was for you guys not just to win, but to leave no doubt tonight?**

WILL HOWARD: It was huge. I think we did a hell of a job not letting off the gas. Because when it's 21-0, 21-10 going into the half, we could have let that go sideways, but the defense came out, got a huge stop. We go down to score, score again, and it was like we left no doubt. We could have let that become a game, but being able to go out there and continue to keep the foot on the pedal was huge.

**Q. Couple of your passes, especially to Jeremiah were what they call dimes in a Coke bottle -- you understand what I'm saying.**

WILL HOWARD: You crack me up, Tim.

**Q. But did it feel like that? Did it feel like you were on tonight, for want of another term? I don't know, how important was it for you to have that feeling?**

WILL HOWARD: You kind of, as a quarterback, you kind of get into a rhythm and you get into a flow state, and I felt like tonight we were able to get into that. I feel when I'm able to get completions early, get the ball out of my hand and get the guys in space, you catch a couple of breaks. On that first drive, I get a face mask penalty on pressure to throwing the wheel to Q, but you luck out and you've got to catch a couple of breaks.

But once you're able to get that first first down and get moving, you kind of get into that rhythm and that rhythm is huge, for me as a quarterback and really for the offense. We always talk about getting that first first down, and it's

downhill from there.

**Q. TreVeyon Henderson had a game, running and catching, what's your impression of his game tonight?**

WILL HOWARD: I'm so proud of him. Him and Q did a great job tonight. But Tre made some unbelievable plays. That kid, he just shows up to work every single day. He continues to amaze me with his abilities, how connected he is to the Lord and to his faith while he's also going out there and laying his body on the line. I'm just lucky that I'm on the same team as Tre and a lot of these guys.

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