

CFP First Round: Ohio State vs Tennessee

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Ohio Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Nico Iamaleava

Will Brooks

Postgame Press Conference



PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

half coming in I thought we could have played at a way higher level than we did.

Q. Nico, what do you feel like you need to take from this loss and carry it with you into the off-season?

NICO IAMALEAVA: I think just use it as motivation. We've been putting in work since January to get to this point, and it sucks to go out that way because that's not who we are.

I love this team. I love the team we have. Just the way tonight went was not the way we wanted it to go, and we'll use that as fuel and motivation during this off-season to really hit it.

Q. Both you guys, Nico, along the same lines, you guys have knocked down so many barriers the last couple days, beating Alabama, beating Florida, winning 11 games, winning 10 games, getting to the playoff. Then next step, what do you need to do to play better on the road against better teams?

NICO IAMALEAVA: I think that all just comes to executing on the road. Like I said, our coaches gave us a great game plan, and us as players, as the team, we're the ones out there on the field playing, and we've just got to hold ourselves to a higher standard and execute at a higher level.

Q. Will, what memories do you take from this?

WILL BROOKS: Yeah, really just being with the guys on the team. That's what really hurts the most about losing and not being able to finish the way we wanted to. Just the fact that I won't be able to be around any of those guys every day anymore, it really, really hurts.

Q. Nico, without Dylan's (indiscernible) and then Dont'e injured too, how much did that (indiscernible) the game plan?

NICO IAMALEAVA: Shoot, at the end of the day, man, whoever is out there, whether it's a freshman or not, we've got to be able to execute the same way with those guys or not, and we didn't do a good job of that tonight.

Ohio State 42, Tennessee 17

Q. Nico, can you talk about the struggles with the downfield passing game? Joey said it resulted in you running a lot more. Did you ever expect to run 20 times today?

NICO IAMALEAVA: I mean, 20Ks. No, I did not expect to run that many times. Some shots that were there, and overall as a team we didn't just execute the whole game plan, so got to be better.

Q. (Indiscernible) passing game that allowed them to --

WILL BROOKS: Yeah, I mean, I think they just executed at a higher level than us. We had the opportunities to make a couple plays and just weren't able to capitalize on it, so just execution.

Q. For both of you guys, Coach Heupel talked a lot about disappointment. How would you describe tonight, and when you think about disappointment, what are you guys most disappointed about how tonight went?

WILL BROOKS: Yeah, I'll start. It just stings kind of losing like that. Obviously we're all disappointed with the result. I feel like we had a good game plan, just weren't able to execute it. Obviously really disappointed with the result of the game.

NICO IAMALEAVA: Yeah, just started off slow. We were supposed to come in, had a great game plan to come in and fire first, and they hit us in the mouth first. We were just trying to recover that whole game.

First half I thought we did a great job of that, and second



... when all is said, we're done.®

Q. Nico, obviously most people who have ever played football won't play at a level like this, but to explain to those people the difference in playing offense on the road and at home, how much different is it in terms of trying to execute and doing things?

NICO IAMALEAVA: Yeah, I would just say there's a crowd noise that plays a factor in how we play. We can't play as fast as we want to without tempo, and that's really the biggest factor was crowd noise.

Q. Nico, what can be added to the open up the offense next year, and do you want to be in conversations with coaches about what can open up the offense more?

NICO IAMALEAVA: Yeah, obviously in the off-season, me, Coach Joey, and Coach Heup are always have conversations about how we can excel this offense, and it'll be that in the off-season, too.

Q. Will, (indiscernible) give a message to the younger guys?

WILL BROOKS: Yeah. Just said keep fighting, be ready for every single opportunity that you're presented, and just to take advantage of it. I hope people can learn kind of from my journey like you don't always have to come in and start right away. You can wait your time and just take advantage of everything that's given to you and good things will come.

Q. Talking about the outcome, tens of thousands of fans were in the stands tonight. You talk about crowd noise. What does their dedication mean to you?

NICO IAMALEAVA: Yeah, man, I love it. Man, I was so happy to see all the orange in the stands. It sucks the performance we gave out for them, but I hope they get home safe, man. I really appreciate their support.

Q. What do you think the future of the wide receiver room looks like?

NICO IAMALEAVA: Yeah, shoot, I haven't really looked too far ahead yet. Letting this one sting a little bit. We've just got a great young room in there. Obviously we've got some guys coming back. Yeah, man, we'll just look to keep getting better in the off-season.

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