

CFP First Round: Alabama vs Oklahoma

Friday, December 19, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide

Coach Kane Wommack

Coach Ryan Grubb

Postgame Press Conference



PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

like that, to get something going, the pressure that you think about what they were bringing, and credit them, they had a really good plan early on coming into this game. They changed tendency at pretty much every 1st, 2nd, 3rd down, and our players did a really good job of just adjusting.

We saw something that we thought we could get them and bait them into it. We had showed a little bit of zero pressure, and then all of a sudden we baited to a drop-eight cover two, and Zabien made a hell of a play.

Q. For Coach Grubb, I understand you were back in the booth after a couple games on the sideline. Can you just speak to that change back?

RYAN GRUBB: Yeah, Coach Shephard is obviously at Oregon State now, so Tyler Hughes, one of our senior analysts, is coaching the receivers. That's a big job on the sideline, getting the right guys in the game.

With his eyes not up in the box for me and Coach Dahlen wasn't here, he's been at Oregon State, so having him all week, so I just felt like just to be accurate and make sure I've got the things I needed from the sky -- normally I have a couple guys up there giving me information and I feel really good about that, but didn't have that exact scenario, so just felt like it was the prudent thing to do to be up there and make sure I got good pictures.

Q. Coach Grubb, what did you see from Lotzeir tonight stepping up, just really the whole game as a freshman, especially that first 3rd down conversion of the game that was y'all's 1st down, just how he stepped up tonight?

RYAN GRUBB: Well, not to TMI here, but I saw Herbstreit in the bathroom at halftime, and he was like, man, you were right, Brooks is the guy. I just had a feeling, I had said before the game, that I thought Lotzeir was in a position in this game plan to step up. We see it every week from 17 just on the practice field. We've got a really talented field with him and Ryan and Isaiah and Germ, but those are the plays we needed to have from all those guys, and I don't think there's anybody on that sideline that was surprised a bit that 17 made those plays. He's a stud.

Alabama 34, Oklahoma 24

RYAN GRUBB: It wasn't pretty for sure. Played really good defense. But made the plays when we had to. There was definitely some we left out there, but I got in the locker room and I just told the guys, that's the guys I know. That's the fight that I saw all the way back in August and in spring, and just seeing it come to life today, the last thing I told them was job not done. We're still rolling.

KANE WOMMACK: Great fight by our football team. When you're down 17-0, the way that you have to protect your sideline, the energy, to go on a 34-7 run after being down 17-0, that's what we're trying to build this team on. You think back on where we have gone, and you think about a year ago not being able to answer the bell and not punch back, and now I think all our kids do is they fight, they punch, and they just keep punching, and that's the only way you come back from a 17-0 game like that. You play great team football. You play complementary football.

Love the energy and juice. Our sideline is a living, breathing organism, and our guys are doing a great job of putting themselves in position.

Great football teams get better, and this is the time you just continue to work and strive. But that was a good team win that we just had right there.

Q. What kind of momentum shift was that from Zabien?

KANE WOMMACK: About like all momentum shifts from a pick six come. When you can not only flip the field but then score in that situation, really awesome.

I thought our offense was ready to answer the bell. They answered the bell in just critical times. When you're down



... when all is said, we're done.®

Q. Kane, obviously that was an offense you guys limited somewhat in the first game and then they storm out to a fast start. What was the message on the sideline to those guys making sure they don't get freaked out by that?

KANE WOMMACK: Well, I think we talked about it before the game, there was going to be wrinkles, there were going to be things that they did. I thought they had a great plan early on. I thought the quarterback played out of his mind in the first half. He was dialed in, did a really good job.

We didn't affect him early enough from a pass rush standpoint, and then we started affecting him, and then it drastically changed the outcome of the game.

Just finding ways to just settle in, let's see what their pictures are, let's see what their game plan is, what they're going to do, and then being ready to adjust whichever way we needed to.

We haven't played a lot of man coverage this year, but that was what we needed to do to win the game. Our DBs were begging for it. By the time we got to the second half, they wanted it. That's what you want. You want kids that are fighters, that want the ball in their court. They want to be challenged. They want to go challenge people.

Our players won this game. They won the game with sheer will.

Q. Ryan, what did you see from Jam, whether as a runner or as a pass protector?

RYAN GRUBB: Jam did a good job. We tried to keep his reps down a little bit. Him and Daniel obviously shared the load back there tonight, and I thought he did a good job when he was in. He's still nursing back to health a little bit, but he's a soldier, man. He was out there battling. I thought he did a good job.

Q. Ryan, was it something that you changed there toward the end of the second half that let things maybe get more of a foothold, or was it just execution got better?

RYAN GRUBB: I think there's the ebb and flow of every game, and certainly there were some looks that we had gotten to that I knew we had to be able to come back to in a different way and made sure they were in the same coverage structure being able to go after it.

The guys did a good job executing that.

Obviously Coach Venables does a great job of presenting a lot of different pictures, so I think getting the guys in a position where they could formationally feel familiar with what was going on out there gave Ty a little bit of freedom, and then I thought they do as good a job as anybody of putting pressure on your quarterback.

It wasn't perfect; I know we gave up sacks, but there were some critical moments that we had some really big pickups.

Q. Coach Grubb, tell me what you've seen from Josh these last few weeks fighting to get back and what he gave you tonight?

RYAN GRUBB: Unreal. Josh Cuevas is one of the toughest kids I have ever seen play football, mentally, physically. To be able to do what he did tonight is absolutely unbelievable.

People that are a little bit older remember Terrell Owens coming back and playing in a Super Bowl with a broken foot. I think he had a spiral fracture. You think about those kind of stories with a guy like Josh. We didn't think there was anyway he was going to play, and he just kept saying he was going to find a way, and the doctors and Jeff do an incredible job, and they got him back out on the field.

His mindset and his perseverance is special. It's really rare.

Q. Ryan, why is playoff football so different than the regular season?

RYAN GRUBB: Well, I think there's obviously a finality to it. Certainly your back-against-the-wall mentality. I think everything feels a little bit more on edge.

I think as much as you'd love the week 2 game to be just as important or as much intensity, I think sometimes when you have that mentality that's win or go home, I think certainly that puts some different value on the game, I guess.

KANE WOMMACK: I think we have been playing like a win-or-go-home mentality all season long. It's a mentality thing as much as anything.

You think about where we were coming out of the Florida State game, these players have had a supreme urgency to get themselves better every single week, and great teams just get better. They just take little steps to go out on a Tuesday practice and then go out and prepare.

I thought our guys prepared with the same level of



dedication that they've been preparing for all season long, and it put us in a position to go fight and win the game.

But the cool thing about the playoffs, we didn't come here to win the first round of the playoffs. We're going to enjoy the hell out of this. We're going to celebrate it with our players. We're going to talk to them and praise the things that they did well. But we've got to correct the things that we didn't do well enough as well as we move into the second round.

Great job by our guys, but this is not the end for us.

Q. Down 17-0, no one outside of the building thinks you guys have a chance. Why was this team able to pull that off today?

RYAN GRUBB: I would credit, unfortunately, a little bit of the SEC Championship. There was an address made just with the guys, the mentality that you have to have in a football game that games aren't over when it's 14-0, especially when you're getting the ball in the second half.

I didn't feel the same resolve in Atlanta that I felt here tonight. I didn't feel like the guys were -- even when it was 17-0, talking to Ty on the headset, getting with some of the coaches, I felt like there was a belief that the defense was going to make a play, we were going to make a play, and nobody was giving up.

Ultimately something happens and springs it loose, and that's what it really takes is to keep that momentum and that mindset. Somebody has to make a play eventually, and when you do and you have a big play, it brings it all to life.

KANE WOMMACK: Yeah, you don't win those games without great culture. You have a great team culture. You've got a bunch of fighters, a bunch of punchers. That wasn't who we were a year ago. We learned how to do that. We fought to do that. We prepared in the off-season. Dave Ballou and our fourth quarter program and Jeff Allen getting players back, our players, our leaders stepping up in those moments, we've learned how to fight. So now we have a culture of fighters, and that starts with our head coach who's a puncher, and it just rubs off on the rest of our coaching staff and our players, and that's how you win games like that.

Q. Coach Grubb, can you talk about the utilization of different offensive linemen tonight, whether it was seeing Jaeden Roberts for the first time in quite some time and obviously you've been mixing in Geno VanDeMark, just the mixing of the offensive line and still being able to have a performance like this?

RYAN GRUBB: Well, really the starting lineup is the starting lineup with Michael at right tackle and Wilkin at right guard. It really was more of just keeping guys healthy and keeping them fresh, so just giving the guys a blow there for a series. Got J-Rob in there and then Dew and Geno have been rotating a little bit more quite a while, and a little bit of that's Dewberry's foot, just trying to make sure he's okay, and Geno is banged up, as well, so those two older guys is like .5 and .5 and they make one guy, but they did a good job.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

