

# CFP First Round: Alabama vs Oklahoma

Friday, December 19, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium

**Oklahoma Sooners**

**Coach Brent Venables**

Postgame Press Conference

Alabama - 34, Oklahoma - 24

**BRENT VENABLES:** Alabama has a really good football team and really good staff. They were able to start to slowly surely creep back into the game. And we had a couple of ill-timed mistakes that they capitalized on, the pick-6 there, and going in 17-all in the half.

Came out, got a three-and-out on defense. Offense goes and goes three-and-out, and then we had not a great punt, and then we get a penalty, a personal foul. And that gave them a short field. They convert. They score out of that.

And we just couldn't dig ourselves out. We end up scoring a touchdown there later in the quarter, but we couldn't complement each other when we needed to the most and make the plays that we needed to and we have made all season. Kicking game, there were times it was really good tonight and other times we just didn't have what we had all year long.

Doesn't take away from the kind of season we had. Again, it's really, in many ways, it's pretty ironic how the story line just -- we just changed the helmet from -- I thought our offense was in great command. Defense, we really got things rolling early. We actually were dominating a part of the game. So some ways the same, some ways not.

And then the turnovers, the penalties, the missed opportunities, the dropped punt, poor punt, the missed field goals. Again, the poor penalties we had. And couldn't get the stops when we needed to.

But it doesn't take away from, again, the pride I have for the group of seniors, the guys that won't be here in the future. I couldn't be more proud of them, the deposit they chose to make. In an environment, a world where everybody's trying to get theirs, this is a group of guys that chose not to take a withdrawal but leave a deposit and leave their mark, do the things that we needed them to do



## PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

to help elevate this program moving forward just by putting their head down and loving each other, loving the opportunity, loving the brotherhood and loving the opportunity to fight for the Sooners.

Couldn't, again, be more thankful and proud for that group of guys and the group of guys that are returning as well. Again, easily one of the funnest teams I've ever been around, the spirit of this team, their love to compete, their love again for their brothers, their willingness to allow us to coach them day in and day out. What a joy that they've been.

Incredibly disappointed for our fans. It was an amazing season by them, our students, our band, just fantastic. The passion, the energy, the support is second to none. Just thank them for showing out like they have all year.

Our best days are sitting in front of us. I really believe that. We've got a great foundation coming back, and I think a vision for what it needs to look like moving forward.

**Q. Tate and Grayson were so good for you all year. Were you surprised by how poor the special teams as a whole was tonight?**

**BRENT VENABLES:** Nothing surprises me. It's football. There was a heck of a lot more that was amazing than poor. I put it all in perspective, I know what it takes, the strength of this football team, and those things couldn't afford to play poorly against a good team at times. At times, we were solid. At times we weren't what we needed to be.

But, again, you look at the body of the work. Again, the scoreboard is all that matters. I know what we preached last time when we played them. But you go down, you look, without seeing some of the penalties and maybe some of the special teams plays, you look at the statistics and you would have thought -- it was, we had our opportunities all the way to tend, despite some of those issues.

That shows you the type of team that we have. We had the ability and the opportunities to overcome that even in just the last several minutes of the game, despite some just

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
**sports**

incredibly critical mistakes. It just wasn't in the cards for us tonight.

That group of guys, we wouldn't be in the position we were tonight had it not been for the consistency and how special they have been all year long.

**Q. Mistakes killed you, well documented, but just in terms of the line of scrimmage and making plays, your offense was great early, your defense was great early. That flipped about almost late in the second quarter. What happened with the offense and the defense to where Alabama got the upper hand and you (indiscernible) let it go?**

BRENT VENABLES: Yeah, they had, I guess it was maybe a 75-yard drive there. They converted. Got them to third-and-6, backed up and they throw a corner route. We lost leverage on it. We had our opportunities, got them to fourth-and-2 inside the 10. And they catch it underneath. They threw it quick, just a little window. And they scored a touchdown there.

And then we come back and we go -- when we weren't in rhythm, it couldn't have come at a worst time. We go three-and-out, and then we send the punt team out. And then we have a delay. We've got to have better awareness there. Get the delay, dropped the punt, give them short field. We go three-and-out. They kick a field goal. And then we punt and they get the ball and we have a personal foul. I think we pick-6 after that and threw a pick-6. Next thing you know it's 17-17 going into half.

Again, as we showed, we pulled it within three in the fourth quarter there. Came out the first drive of the second half defensively and really got after them. And then we went three-and-out. And then we punt, a poor punt, not a good punt. And then we have the penalty after that. Now they've got a 30-yard, they get maybe a 30-yard touchdown drive or field goal drive.

But either way they end up getting up by 10. We pull it back, get it to three. And again when we needed to, we couldn't pull one out like we have several other games this year.

**Q. Seemed like from afar, at least, John improved a lot health wise in this game, felt more comfortable. Curious how you thought he played tonight and reflecting on his season and what he fought through the season, what you think of him?**

BRENT VENABLES: He's a warrior. He's got everything that you want in a competitor, in a leader, in a quarterback. He's got great talent. He fought through -- he'll be his

testimony. He was determined -- just even the game after he hurts it, where a lot of guys want to cool and be on the sideline, put their hats on, their shades on, wear their jewelry and stuff like that, he's like, I want to suit up, I want to be with my guys, I want to go through warmups.

That's just the kind of human being he is, the type of leader he is. He leads from the front in everything that he does. He takes way more responsibility when he shouldn't, when things aren't going well. And that's why he's going to be a great player and play this game a long time.

But I think you saw glimpses of how special he can be all season long, despite some of the injuries and things of that nature that he fought through.

I think you saw tonight, if we had been a little better on defense when we needed to, a little better on the special teams, I really believe that we would still be playing, and we'd be talking about we won the game because of how well John played at the right times.

**Q. You mentioned this a couple times in your opening statement, that this just doesn't take away from the big picture of the season. Obviously double-digit wins, making the playoff. I mean, the tangible results that you got are evidence of that. But I'm wondering, from your perspective, what else about this season stands out for you that makes it successful in your eyes?**

BRENT VENABLES: Like I said, just the selflessness of the football team, the leadership of really the whole locker room, but led by our seniors, guys that made a decision to leave a deposit and not just take a withdrawal and see how much they could get out of it and make it all about them.

They were completely and totally immersed in the moment. In this day and age, when there's a lot of easy things to be distracted by, whether it's NFL opportunities, making your plays and your stats and looking for a whole in the fence, it's like R Mason. It could have been so easy for R Mason to just sit this one out.

He's got a great, great future in the NFL. And he's invested too much. And he fought like hell along with our training staff to be back and be part of tonight. And we had a lot of great opportunities to go win the game tonight because of him.

That's what I take the most from this group of guys. I told them, they're going to leave their mark. And, again, it's not a badge of honor and those types of things, but this is a group of guys that got us to our fifth playoff and did -- again, in many ways, to many people -- the unthinkable, and be an amazing example for the returning players, what

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

it needs to look like, what the standard of Oklahoma looks like, what the expectations are here.

And then this is how we do it, how you play, how you compete, how you show up every day, the level of consistency, the level of sacrifice and love that you've got to have. And made it kind of re-established the brotherhood as much as anything and how important it is.

**Q. We saw some new plays today, some new formations, sugar huddle, stuff like that, some different stuff. But what I'm wondering, as it got tougher and tougher to run the football and there was more and more pressure on John, running for his life a little bit, coming into this game, what did you like about the offensive game plan in your conversations with Ben, things that you guys thought would work and hold up?**

BRENT VENABLES: I really loved the entire game plan. I thought there was creativity. I thought a good part of the game we didn't allow the defense to just sink their teeth in and dig their cleats in the ground and manipulate, create leverage in the run game, the pass game.

Alabama's one of the best defenses in college football, with a group of personnel that is as good as there is and incredibly well-coached. Moving the ball, scoring points, creating explosive plays, which we did all of those things, it was going to be incredibly difficult.

Again, the timeliness of again how we played -- again, if you're going to win, you're going to win typically by how you complement each other. And some of the mistakes we made in all three phases really stagnated us as a football team and created opportunities for them.

But by and large, again, we're really good in the red zone. Again, overall, created several explosive plays. Outgained them in total yards and third downs, fourth downs. Dominated the totals there. They were 23 percent conversion rate. We were just under 50 percent. And thought we were efficient in throwing the ball.

Again, they're going to stack the box and not let you run it too. But both of us ran it for under two yards a carry. We've got to be better there. That's got to be a tremendous focus for us moving forward. We've got to get better at running the football.

But incredibly proud, we had three freshmen start all year. And thought those guys really grew up.

I really liked how I felt like we were more on the attack. There's plenty of drives that we left a lot to be desired. There's several drives there, when we needed a drive or

needed to move the ball a little bit -- that's part of winning too. Just move the ball, get it off the goal line, make a first down or two, and let's punt and let's get the field position back in control.

And we weren't able to do that when we needed to. And we played a part on defense, the kicking game played a tremendous part. Lack of discipline played a part. And then Alabama has got a good team and a good DNA and they were able to control that part of it for us.

**Q. Obviously not the result you wanted tonight, but still a big shift from last year to even be in this spot. What was the biggest life lesson you've had over the course of this year to get you to this point?**

BRENT VENABLES: Don't let anybody on the outside put limitations on you, what we can and can't become. And it matters about what we believe. It matters the work that we put into it.

I think the strain, the love, the sacrifice, the work, the talent, I think there's lots of layers to all of it. I think our staff has recruited incredibly well. I think that showed again this season. I thought that was kind of a foundational piece. I thought we brought in good players through the portal that helped us have the kind of season we needed.

I thought culturally speaking, I think I was is pleased with that piece as well. Everything starts with me when it comes to being a tone-setter, the things that are important, our standards, the things we value, the things we're going to be about, the things we're willing to tolerate and not tolerate, the type of people we recruit and then what we nurture every single day, because if you're going to do it the right way -- and for something that lasts longer than just this moment, then you have to nurture it every single day.

Then the people make the place at the end of the day. I think we have incredible people in this building, both players and coaches.

And, again, I'm just incredibly proud of the group of guys that are both returning, especially the ones that are exiting. We couldn't have done it if they didn't stick with it, if they didn't continue to believe when a lot of things were going on around them that easily they could have bowed out and they chose not to, players and coaches alike.

So they had some sticktoitness to them. And that's what it takes. You've got to have all of those things. What you do speaks a lot louder than what you say. And this is a group of guys that were certainly about the doing all year long.



**Q. It was another pretty good defensive effort today. And you've built this defense all year. Do you feel like it's left you a great foundation that you can move forward with?**

BRENT VENABLES: Absolutely. Most games I've coached in, there's the "I'd love to get that drive back or this call back." That certainly is the case tonight, how you could have helped them be more successful. But it's been a dominant group. It's been a group with incredible passion and energy and toughness, having an edge to them, a belief, never-say-die mindset, a group that never pointed fingers or blamed. If they did anything, they brought the team closer together. They were a force field for the football team. They really were. They elevated everybody around them, and I think people, when they watched them play, they made people proud. If you didn't like the Sooners, you respected the Sooners after watching the Sooners compete.

Again, they played like it was recess. Played with great energy and just the relentless mindset, I think, resonates with everybody. If you love football, you saw that in this group of guys. The foundation that they left, the legacy that they left, really, really special, really special, and we'll be so much better because of them and the contributions that they've left behind.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports