

# CFP First Round: Alabama vs Oklahoma

Friday, December 19, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium

**Oklahoma Sooners**

**Owen Heinecke**

Postgame Press Conference

Alabama - 34, Oklahoma - 24

**Q. What was it like for you to emerge this year when you look back? I know tonight's tough to talk about right now, but big picture, look back at your season and how you emerged and maybe the way this team grew into, you've got leaders kind of pop up it seemed here and there, like yourself, R Mason. Where does that come from? Is it the coaching staff? Is it Coach Venables and the plan that he established four years ago?**

OWEN HEINECKE: That's a good question. Being able to contribute in a meaningful way this year was awesome. It worked out in perfect timing, and I'm super grateful for everybody who has helped me along the way.

As far as leaders go, that was part of our success this year, a huge part, was that we had leaders everywhere. When somebody wasn't having the best game, there were other people that would step up and take that role from him. So having leaders all across the board is something that's great in games where they're super close and you've got to rely on a couple of people to come up clutch.

I think Coach V does a good job of making sure everybody has a chance to be a leader. He doesn't put you down based off age or how much you play. In fact, he expects everybody to make an attempt at being a leader. It lets guys that probably wouldn't be outspoken or super vocal get to be vocal.

I think that you're starting to see that in the culture that's being built here, so just a testament to this team and all the leaders and all the hard work everyone's put in.

**Q. I know it just ended and everything's just kind of a whirlwind for you right now. You answered the big picture. But you have opportunities now, Senior Bowl, all that type of stuff. Congratulations, by the way. Do**



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**you have any inkling of what your future may lie ahead for you?**

OWEN HEINECKE: Yeah, up to this point I've been super focused on winning this game and giving my all for this team and this season. So to be honest, I hadn't thought a whole lot about it.

As I mentioned a while ago, I'm currently in an appeal with the NCAA for another year, and I'm waiting to hear back on that.

I think the probability of that is not high, but I'm hoping that all the evidence and the fact that I hope the NCAA will see that I'm not just another football player who is wanting a bunch of NIL money, I'm someone who cares about the university and stuck their time out with the same place and is just starting to kind of reap the rewards, is wanting another year to go at it. I'm hoping that they'll see my case for that and not just kind of clump it with everything else.

Once I hear back on that, I'll be able to make some decisions. But until then, it's kind of up in the air.

**Q. I think people would say a double-digit win season, an appearance in the playoff, pretty successful season. But I'm curious what you think. And if there is a measure of success in your mind for this season, does it go beyond the wins and the playoff appearance?**

OWEN HEINECKE: As far as I'm concerned, this season was a success. It didn't end how we wanted. Obviously our goal at the beginning of the year is to win a national championship.

But I'm super proud of the team, super proud of the fight we put up all season. A lot of people expected us to not come out of our season and our schedule the way we did.

But we just fought all year. Our motto was "Hard to kill," and the team took that and ran with it and really embodied that. So as far as I'm concerned, yeah, the season was a success. Did it end the way we wanted it to? No. But you can't discount all the great moments and all the hard work that everybody's put in throughout the year. Proud of



... when all is said, we're done.®

everybody. Proud of all the leaders. Proud of the coaches who just worked so hard to get to us this point. Wish we could have capitalized more tonight.

Give credit to Bama. They did a really good job. But the season was a success for me and the team and I think everybody that's a part of this program.

**Q. Owen, it's so tough to get momentum in this game and the offense gave up the pick-6 and things and you guys came up with some stops. From a defensive standpoint today, how well did you guys feel like you guys played?**

OWEN HEINECKE: I thought there were a couple of plays that we left out there. I think when we watch the film back, there are going to be a couple plays that everybody on the team wishes they had back.

A lot of competitive plays that didn't go our way, where we were in a position to make plays. But it's a testament to Alabama, and they've got great players too. They recruit at a high level. They've got high-level coaches, and they were able to execute on plays that really mattered.

So as far as the defense is concerned, I thought we fought our ass off all night. I'm proud of the way everybody came out, even on the last drive after a missed field goal we came out and went 3-0.

That's kind of the mindset of the defense all year. Proud of the way we fought. Unfortunately, a couple of plays where we didn't execute properly and it cost us. But the defense, all season, has fought super hard, and I think that tonight was no different.

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