

CFP First Round: Miami vs Teaxs A&M

Saturday, December 20, 2025

College Station, Texas, USA

Kyle Field

Teaxs A&M Aggies

Mike Elko

Postgame Press Conference

Miami - 10, Texas A&M - 3

MIKE ELKO: They were able to find a drive and we were able to respond, and we just weren't able to finish. We weren't able to get it done. We came up five yards short. That's something we'll have to live with throughout the off-season.

Still proud of this team, proud of what they accomplished, proud of what they did. From there we'll open it up for questions.

Q. Coach, in your mind, what should the history books say about these 2025 Aggies?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, what I just told them. I said to the seniors who just played their last game, they left a mark on elevating this program that will never go away. From where this program was two years ago to where it is now, I don't think that can be lost on people. I think it's made massive strides.

Then I said to the guys coming back there's still another major step we have to take as a program to finish. I think the last two games showed that.

It's a rallying cry to the guys who are still here and still have time to play, but I don't think we can turn our backs on the guys who just finished their careers here and everything they accomplished and everything that they did for Texas A&M football.

Q. When you think back to the offensive struggles, what do you think made it hardest on you guys to get points on the board?

MIKE ELKO: We lost the game at the line of scrimmage, and I think it got worse in the second half. I think we just couldn't keep them off of us. We couldn't get the run game established. We became one dimensional. Once we



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became one dimensional, they were able to tee off. I think they finished with seven sacks. We didn't win the line of scrimmage.

You can't play playoff football and not win the line of scrimmage. Obviously they were able to get the run game going, and we wound up losing the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball, and you're just not going to win when that's the case.

Q. How much did you feel the wind was a factor? Could you feel it out there?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, I think it played a role, but it played a role for both teams. It was challenging to be precise with the football. I think it took some of the screen game out of the equation because of that, but it affected both teams evenly.

Q. What exactly happened with Le'Veon? Was it a reaggravation of what he had already dealt with?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, it was a reaggravation. He's good. Scans were good. Everything came away clean. He'll be fine going into the off-season for what he's going to do now.

Q. I'm just curious, on the fake punt, is that something that you all had seen that you automatically do, or was it a case that you were thinking, hey, there's just not going to be a lot of points scored today and we've got to manufacture them?

MIKE ELKO: Probably a little bit of both.

I think it was probably a little bit of both. It was something we felt like we had a chance at. I think we did. It was something we wanted to run around that area of the field, and it just felt like the right time to try to see if we could get a lead going into halftime.

Q. On the final play, what was the look you were hoping to get on that last offensive play?

MIKE ELKO: It's hard to say. I think -- yeah, it's hard to say without watching the tape.



Q. Did you think that there should have been a stoppage before that for a targeting look?

MIKE ELKO: I don't think that matters.

Q. What happened on -- when Fletcher got loose for that 56-yard run that took them and set them up for that touchdown drive, anything specific happen on that, or did he just get loose?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, he just got loose. They found some surfaces and some runs and started getting their receivers involved in inside gaps and really created a very, very -- it was a heavy power football they were playing with three wide receivers on the field. We just didn't handle it well enough.

Q. The way that your run defense had been playing all day, though, that play and then Toney's run around the edge, did you just feel like bend but don't break and they broke? What do you think?

MIKE ELKO: No, I just think we didn't make the plays we needed to make down the stretch. That's all.

Q. Marcel obviously had a great year. Ending didn't go quite the way you wanted it to. But when you look at his overall play, and specifically today, what do you feel like he needs to work on to become a better version of himself and what he can be?

MIKE ELKO: I think he's still a young quarterback. I still think there's a lot of room for development and growth from him. I think you saw major strides this year, but I still think there's a ceiling there that he's not close to hitting.

He's a great kid. He's a hard worker. I know he'll go back to work this off-season, and I think you'll get a much better version of him next year with another year of continued development in our system.

Q. How do you want this team and this group of players to be remembered moving forward?

MIKE ELKO: I think kind of how we talked about the first question, that was the same one. I think they left a legacy in terms of redirecting this program. 11 wins, playoffs for the first time, and then a little disappointed that we weren't able to finish it down the stretch.

Q. After those 11 straight wins and being in the top five all year, how much pain are you feeling wanting it so bad and not being able to deliver today?

MIKE ELKO: No, it's not about me. It's the pain the kids feel. I'm fine. I'm a grown man. I can handle it. You hurt for those kids because you know how hard they work, you know what they put into this thing.

People will try to knock at what they did and what they accomplished, and that won't be fair to them, and they'll have to deal with that. That's life today, in this day and age. I hurt for them. It's a great group. I enjoyed being around them. It was fun to come to work to them every single day, and I'm going to miss being able to do that.

Q. What went into the decision to pick Zirkel as the field goal kicker, and what went wrong on that kick?

MIKE ELKO: It was just low. It didn't get the height it needed. It didn't get the trajectory it needed.

Q. Was there something in practice you saw that led you to pick him as the guy?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah.

Q. Just Marcel's play in this game, how would you kind of assess it? What were some of the struggles due to the trenches play you talked about?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, there was a lot of pressure on him. When you can't establish the run game, it's really challenging, and the last two games we haven't been able to run the football. That makes it really, really hard when you play good teams.

I think you see something very similar with us. If teams can't get the run game going, we've been able to tee off on them, it's the same kind of thing. So I think it starts with our inability to run the football. Marcel can't be our leading rusher. He can't have the most carries. It just can't happen that way.

We've got to go into the off-season and figure some things out and how to do that better. I think he'll tell you he was up-and-down a bit. The pressure impacted it. Give Miami credit, they certainly impacted it. They're a really good defense. We've just got to figure it out.

Q. In the first half especially, you all did a great job containing Carson Beck. He was having a lot of difficulty, you all were getting a great pass rush on him. Then loosened up a little bit there in the second half. Did you see the adjustments they made in the second half to allow him to do that?

MIKE ELKO: No, I think it was the exact opposite of what I just went over with us. I think our struggles were we could

never get the run game going. I think what they were able to do in the second half was get the run game going. That let them play in front of the chains a little bit more. It wasn't as many obvious passing situations. The third down distance change, we weren't able to put them in as many third downs as we were in the first half.

Then obviously he came out in the opening drive and made some throws. He's a talented kid. He was going to do that at some point. It was more they were able to get the line of scrimmage going and forced us into different looks run-wise. I think it was kind of more of that than anything else.

Q. Obviously this was y'all's first playoff game, and y'all were neck and neck for the most part. Do you think that getting these players more playoff experience or experience in big games like this will help you guys down the road to achieve the big goal?

MIKE ELKO: Yes. I think in order to ultimately complete the playoff quest, you've got to first get in. You've got to learn what it's all about, and then you've got to get good enough to win games in the playoffs.

Q. You guys, what were your conversations like at the half? You had some scoring opportunities there in the first half and deep in their territory that you came up empty on.

MIKE ELKO: I think it was just the one, right, in the first half where we missed the field goal. It just felt like we were having a hard time getting unhinged. We weren't doing a really good job in the field position game on special teams that had the big return that flipped the field. We had a couple low line drive kicks that didn't help. We weren't able to get the return game going. So their net punt was better than ours.

It felt like the field just kept tilting away from us in a defensive struggle, and that makes it challenging. We got the one drive down there. We weren't able to finish it. Then we got the field goal blocked. Then on the flip side, I thought defensively we went into some short field situations and really made some stands.

Then when you do that, then your offense has to come out and go a really long way. In that type of game, it just creates challenges.

Q. Were there any positive that's came out of this game, and what were they if you thought there were?

MIKE ELKO: It's hard to take positive in a playoff game that you lost that ends your season. I think there's

positives in the big picture direction of Texas A&M, but I wouldn't say in this game.

Q. How frustrating is it to see a problem that you've recognized and dealt with all year, the run defense, come to this point. And the same thing repeats itself. A guy breaks off for 172 yards, and that's the difference in the game.

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, I think that you're not really in a position to talk about these things as the year's going on because you're just trying to find ways. Clearly that was a weakness of ours that goes without saying. It's hard to make a weakness a strength in the middle of the season.

Again, we've got to look at what we're doing. We've got to look at how we're doing it? We've got to figure some things out this off-season. But when you're in the middle of it, it's certainly very challenging to turn a weakness into a strength.

Q. I realize it's fresh, but what do you feel like are the biggest things you guys need to accomplish this off-season to keep this thing going the way you hope it's trending?

MIKE ELKO: I don't hope it's trending. It is trending. I see the direction it's trending. 8 wins to 11 wins, I see the direction it's trending. We're going to finish the season ranked. That hasn't happened in a while around here.

What has to happen? We've got to continue to elevate. We've have to continue to move this thing in the right direction. We've got to continue to make positive strides building this program.

We were not an elite program ready to compete for a National Championship when we took over. We're still not. We're working to become it. We're battling to become it. I think clearly these last two games have showed there's still room in areas that we have to continue to grow, but that's what this is. That's what this should have been.

I think it's a credit to those kids that they put ourselves in this position and got us to where we were, but we've got a lot of work to do to continue to develop this program into what ultimately it needs to become. We're still in the infant stages of that.

Q. I think in the last four games this season, you all end up minus 8 turnover-wise. What are the factors that you see kind of causing those problems? I guess when you're playing really good teams, how does that make it tougher for you guys?

MIKE ELKO: Yeah, it makes it really challenging. I think it's a huge part of it. I think we finished the season minus 8 in turnover margin. It's not a great stat. It's not where you need to be. You have to be on the other side of that ledger.

I think that some of it comes down, again, to we've got to figure some things out in terms of how to control the line of scrimmage better than we were able to do this season. That's really what it's going to come down to.

Q. You talked about having to live with this throughout the off-season. What do you think will nag at you the most about the way this ended?

MIKE ELKO: Just that it ended. I thought -- you know, we came into this season, and I think the very realistic conversation about this team was we were a really good team that was going to have a chance in every game they played, was going to have fairly small margins to be successful, but was going to have an opportunity to go out there and be successful.

I think that's exactly how it played out. We weren't able to tilt the margins in our favor the last two games. That's going to be a killer. One, to not go to Atlanta. One, to not go to the quarterfinals. So that's a killer. You've got to swallow it, and you've got to move forward, just like we did last year.

Q. You talked about some of the run defense issues there. We had talked to the players a lot throughout the season. They always felt it was gap integrity or some simple fixes. As you look at the season as a whole, was it just simple fixes, or was there more nuance as to why you guys struggled down the stretch there?

MIKE ELKO: Obviously there's a ton of nuance in it. If it was as easy as just simple fixes, we would have simply fixed it, not to be disrespectful. There's a lot that goes into where the struggles were. We've just got to figure it out. I'm sorry I don't have a much better answer than that.

Q. After being amongst the top sack totaling teams all season, what led to the inability to get to Beck tonight?

MIKE ELKO: I don't know if we had an inability to get to him. I think we sacked him twice in the first half. The problem was in the second half we couldn't get them into third down where he had to throw the ball.

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