

# CFP First Round: Tulane vs Ole Miss

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Oxford, Mississippi, USA

Vaught Hemingway Stadium

**Tulane Green Wave**

**Coach Jon Sumrall**

Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 41, Tulane 10

**Q. Ole Miss has a really good offense anyway, but the first five plays were really, really bad. Did you feel like guys -- the moment, or what did you feel like happened?**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, the first play was an access throw to a wide receiver. Just don't make a tackle, big gain. First drive was three plays, 75 yards. We looked a little slow on the perimeter, kind of similar to the first time we played this bunch. They're very talented. Hats off to them. They made plays. We didn't make plays. Some of that was because of them, some of that was we didn't do a very good job.

But yes, the first two drives, it's like you blink and you look up and it's 14-0. Then we settled in and played pretty good football at times defensively.

I thought we got a little more aggressive. The third drive we got a tackle for loss on the 1st and 10 to start the drive, and that put them behind the chains and gave us an opportunity to maybe create some momentum defensively.

For us to give up those first two drives like we did and go into halftime 17-3, I'm like, all right, we responded, but we just couldn't keep doing it the whole game.

**Q. Offensively you had over 400 yards but nothing to show for it. Once you got across midfield it seemed like nothing went right.**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, you think about we threw an interception down there on the drive early in the game. If we don't have that pick and we match maybe the touchdown and go 7-7, hold serve.

I think at halftime they had 250-ish, 260 yards. We had 206, I believe. The yardage wasn't that big of a



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discrepancy, but the situational stuff wasn't good for us. In the second half tonight on the 4th downs we went under center twice on 3rd and 4th down trying to get it with a yard to go and didn't get it. The second time we went under the gun because we're like, if we can't sneak it, maybe we should get on the perimeter, and we couldn't get it that way.

We just could not situationally capitalize on opportunities to maybe get some momentum going to where we could have a fighting chance.

**Q. It was a pretty similar scoring result of the first one. What were some of the main points of emphasis you had watching the film of that first Ole Miss match-up and how do you feel like you attacked those points of emphasis today?**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, I feel like in game 1 we got really exposed on the perimeter on both sides. Tonight I felt kind of the same. I don't know that we were able to offset what happened in game 1, so that's disappointing.

Some of it was I don't think we were maybe as aggressive as we needed to to just go make plays. We were playing a little bit passive I felt like, and we looked a little slow. Some of that might be because they're fast. Could be a little bit of both.

But the biggest thing I saw that was an issue for us in game 1 was still the issue in game 2. And then we can't turn the ball over like we did. You can't beat a team like this turning the football over the way we did.

You had the interception, we had the fumble, like just things you can't do and win a game like this.

**Q. Obviously a very emotional scene out there with some of those guys who put their blood, sweat and tears into this team. What did you tell them after this one?**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, I told them it's never okay to lose, so anybody that tells you it's okay to lose, get away from them for the rest of their life. I don't care if we're talking about in football or in 40 years from now. Anybody that

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tells you, hey, it's okay, you lost; no, it's not. It's not okay we lost. I'm not okay with a loss. Never will be.

Also told them it doesn't change how I feel about them. I love this group. Love each guy on that team. This team will walk together forever as champions because we won a conference championship, all right?

So while the outcome tonight sucks - I'm not happy with it and there's nothing about it I feel good about - I still feel good about this football team because we hoisted a championship trophy two weeks ago. I told them that in 30 or 40 years they'll bring them back for a celebration. I'll probably need a cane to walk around and celebrate with them, but I'm going to celebrate.

I also told them that for the rest of my life if I could ever do anything for them, I'm a phone call away. If that means for a reference for a job or if that means when they get married or they have kids, I want to hear from them. I love these guys. They're all like sons to me.

The way I coach and the way we interact with our team, man, we do life together. These guys have other stories, and I want to know the rest of their lives. I want to be a part of what they're doing and follow them. I told them I loved them and that regardless of what was next for each and every one of them, whatever they needed from me, I would be there to support them in any way I could.

Some of that means they're exhausting eligibility and they're never going to play again. Some of them it means exhausting eligibility and they may be trying to play football professionally later after this. Some of them are freshmen.

I said, guys, I can't wait to watch what y'all do next. Like some of you true freshmen that redshirted this year, I can't wait to see the impact they make on Tulane football.

**Q. How tough has the last 48 hours been for you?**

JON SUMRALL: It's been hard. I'm not going to deny it. I called my mom Friday morning at about, I don't know, 6:00 a.m., whatever time, when I was driving into the office.

She picked up and she just said, Jon, I was going to call you in about an hour, but Dad passed last night, through the night. I'm like, all right, Mom, what can I do, what do you need. She said, I've got -- she had the emergency people there to help.

I told her, Mom -- she had gotten my dad to the last couple games. They came to the conference championship game, they came to the Charlotte game, they came to the FAU game. My dad had been facing some struggles for a

while, and my mom is tough as nails. And I told Mom, I said, Mom, you don't have to come to the game but I'd love to have you there if you want to be there. You make the call. She said, I'm not missing the game. So Mom is here tonight.

My dad, he had had some battles health-wise for really since March is when it got severe. Man, it's been hard. But I loved my dad. I'm a lot of who I am because of how he raised me, and I can smile knowing that I'm going to live a life that's going to honor my dad.

He watched us today. He's probably got some questions about how we played, just like I do. I just don't have to hear them tonight from him. I'm sure I'll hear them from my mom, though. But man, it's been hard.

I've been very grateful that my family was here tonight. My brother was here, my wife was here, my mom was here. Makes it a little bit better.

**Q. I'm curious, there's a lot of emphasis on who wasn't here tonight. Did Ole Miss look differently offensively to you or did it look like the same team you saw in September?**

JON SUMRALL: Looked very much the same to me. I didn't notice anything different. The only thing I've noticed maybe different is like on 3rd downs when you heard somebody whistle, you knew that was Lane and he might change a play.

But other than that, I thought the offense looked structurally very similar. The players are the players. They've got really good football players. The back is a good football player. They've got great receivers. The quarterback is obviously big time.

I didn't feel a whole lot of difference in regards to how they played the game offensively. Felt very similar.

**Q. Were you trying to maybe put an extra hat in the box just to take Lacy away a little bit and force Chambliss to beat you?**

JON SUMRALL: Well, game 1, we got torched by Trinidad. We held Lacy in better check. What really aggravated us in game 1 is Trinidad threw it great but he also ran it great, too.

So my biggest concern coming into the game was like, hey, don't let the cornerback just go crazy like he did in game 1. The challenge that these guys present is the running back can beat you, the quarterback can beat you, the receivers can beat you, the tight end can beat you.



They've got a lot of different ways to beat you.

As a defensive play caller, our defensive staff, you can only -- somebody has to win the hard down. Somebody has to win a one-on-one match-up, and we just didn't win enough of those tonight.

But they felt the same to me offensively. Watching them, I didn't feel a whole lot of difference.

**Q. You coached your first game as a head coach here. This was Pete's first game. I know you guys are close. How do you think he'll do as a head coach as you guys are about to be contemporaries in the SEC?**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, Pete will do a great job. I've got a lot of respect for Pete. We've sort of zigzagged career-wise. He was at South Eastern Louisiana and I was at Tulane. He went to UTSA, I was at Troy. I came here to Ole Miss, he went to Alabama. I went to Kentucky and then he came here about the same time I became a head coach.

Pete and I have been friends for a long time. We've FaceTimed probably four or five times in the last couple weeks. I'm very happy for him. I think he's going to take great pride in being the head coach at Ole Miss. It's always nice to see another defensive guy get an opportunity.

But I think Pete will do a really good job. This place has gotten it going. I think Lane did a good job, I think Pete will do a good job, I think Keith Carter, Walker Jones, all the people that have created the success here, it's obvious that they're all pulling the rope in the same direction administratively here, and that's why there's been success created, because they're all marching to the same beat.

I think Pete will continue to keep that thing going.

**Q. There have been a lot of critics about James Madison and Tulane having their place in the playoff. As you move on and you're going to go obviously to a Power Four program, do you think in the future of this College Football Playoff, these schools still deserve a spot at the table in the playoff?**

JON SUMRALL: I mean, look, we're our conference champion and the rules are what they were, and I think there should be access for at least one G5 team moving forward. I do. I think you should have given the American champion an opportunity before the ACC champion this year because we beat the ACC champion. So Duke won the ACC Championship; we beat them.

I do understand the gripe. By how we played tonight, we maybe didn't help the critics of that. But I think there should at least be one G5 representative. But I'm not in charge of the playoff. I need to coach whatever team I'm coaching better than what I did tonight. That's what I've got to worry about.

**Q. You also talked about when you leave a place how important it is for you to leave it the right way. As you move on, what do you think about the future of Tulane football and how you leave it for Will and the next group going forward?**

JON SUMRALL: Well, look, I'm a Tulane Green Wave fan. I always will be. This place, Tulane, gave me my first FBS full time assistant coaching job. I was the defensive coordinator at the University of San Diego. I think I became a defensive coordinator when I was like 28. I was 28, 29 years old and I was a defensive coordinator there, and then I got an opportunity to come to Tulane. It was a big-time break in my career, for my upward trajectory, my mobility upward.

I was here for three years, '12, '13, '14, and it's been a privilege to be back as a head coach. My oldest two kids were born in New Orleans. I'm not from there, but I might as well be at this point. It's home in a lot of ways.

I'm excited for Will. I think the program is in great hands. The nice thing for me is there's certain guys on my staff that I know are going to be kept here. There's a couple guys that will go with me after this game to Florida, but I'm also able to work through the staffing with Will to make sure there's more of the same, which will be probably a lot more continuity that people realize, and a decent number of guys remained that have been with me that are going to stay with Will.

I think David Harris and Mike Fitz, the administration at Tulane are committed to having long-term success in football. It's really cool to see 2021 Tulane went 2-10 and then what's happened the last four years, the momentum that's been created. I want to see it continue. That's why my wife and I made the gift we made, and anything I can ever do to help Tulane football, I will.

**Q. Now that your time as the Tulane head coach has officially ended, what do you hope and what do you believe you'll be most remembered by around Tulane within the program and also by the fans?**

JON SUMRALL: I think by the fans, probably RMFW. People remember that. I just think, look, I'm a passionate, fiery guy. I think that fits New Orleans and fits Tulane. So I think the fans will probably remember that.



I don't know how they'll remember what we've done. It's been an honor and a privilege, and winning a conference championship this year was special. It's something that I'll remember forever.

Honestly, I think winning a conference championship with all the roster attrition we had last year. We returned Derrick Graham, Shadre Hurst, Cam Hamilton, Sam Howard and Bailey Despanie. That was all our returning starters back, five of them.

For that few guys to be back and to find a way to get to where we've gotten. I'm just very proud of how the team came together. But I can't really speak to what people remember yet, but I've just got a little bit of a bad taste in my mouth from tonight. That's what I'll remember for a little while.

**Q. You had exactly one snap in the red zone in this game and that play took you out of the red zone. Is that an example of one of the situational plays that needed to work for you?**

JON SUMRALL: Yeah, it should have worked. We had leverage and didn't get it. Yeah, that's the frustrating part is we moved the football yardage-wise, but we weren't able to extend it into the red zone the way we needed to. We had some big explosive plays. Shazz Preston had a couple of big plays. But we stalled out too often after having drives.

You have to situationally play better than we played to win against an opponent like Ole Miss.

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