

CFP First Round: Tulane vs Ole Miss

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Oxford, Mississippi, USA

Vaught Hemingway Stadium

Tulane Green Wave

Jake Retzlaff

Sam Howard

Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 41, Tulane 10

Q. Jake, y'all were able to move the ball pretty well in this game, but no matter when it got deep, no matter if it was a turnover or not being able to convert, what do you feel like prevented y'all from being able to score, especially early on?

JAKE RETZLAFF: Yeah, it was obviously a really good defense we played there tonight. Like you said, we moved it pretty well throughout the field. Kind of like déjà-vu ish for us because we kind of had those issues earlier in the year. Just a really good defense. We've got to execute better. It starts with me. I've got to be better. But I guess that's all I can say about that.

Q. Sam, was there anything that surprised your defense on those first two drives, and after that how were you able to adjust to keep them out of the end zone for the remainder of the first half?

SAM HOWARD: First and foremost, I appreciate all you guys for having me up here once again. Yeah, the first two drives I think we just had to settle down. I think emotions were high, and we just didn't execute at a high level.

Once we settled down, I think we kind of found the flow of the game and started executing better and started creating havoc plays, and like you said, it's a momentum game, and once we started making plays, I think the offense fed off of it.

Yeah, we've just got to find ways to be more consistent with that and start faster. That's what I would say.

Q. Sam, now that your time at Tulane is officially coming to an end, what's been your biggest takeaway from your time at the program, and what advice do you



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have for any players who are potentially considering coming to Tulane in the future?

SAM HOWARD: Tulane has been one of the highlights of my life so far. From the university as a whole, I've got to say the athletic department is ran by nobody better than Jada Buckner. She puts us in the best opportunities to not only be great athletes but also be great people and get the best opportunities for our careers.

Then getting to the team, Coach Sumrall, our position coach, Coach Polk, my DC, Coach Gas. My linebacker room, I've never been part of a linebacker room like this. We're going to live forever, man. They're like my brothers. Jake is like my brother. We just met in August but we feel like we've been together forever because this team is that special.

Like I said, this team is going to live forever just because we've learned to grow together. We've learned to hold each other accountable and learned to love each other. I'm just grateful, man, to be at Tulane. If there's anybody that's considering coming to Tulane, you're going to get the same thing: people that's going to love you, a community, a whole community that's going to love you, not just your coaches, not just your training staff, but people all outside the building are going to love you, and there's no better place to be than Tulane.

Q. I'm not sure if you were in the room yet for Coach Gas' comments about you, but he mentioned that he's incredibly excited to see what you do in the future and that he feels incredibly confident that your best days are ahead of you whatever you choose to end up pursuing in life. What does it mean to you to have that kind of praise, not just from your defensive coordinator but consistently coming from anybody who speaks about you around the program?

SAM HOWARD: I appreciate it, man. But it's not what I do, man. It's not about me. It's what God is trying to do through me, trying to -- what he's trying to do through me because I'm not good enough to do it on my own.

Like I said to the guys earlier, we're nothing without Christ. So just being able to hear that from my coach, at least I

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know I'm doing something right, that I'm moving in the right direction in my life, so I'm grateful to be around a coach like Coach Gas and a coaching staff like we have.

Q. Jake, obviously we've talked about your story a lot of coming in late, having to learn everything and whatnot. It's clear this program means a lot to you. We saw you get emotional on the field after the game. What does it mean to you that you got to come here and help this team make history?

JAKE RETZLAFF: Yeah, I think that -- Sam can attest to this, I imagine. I've never been the favorite in a lot of situations, whether it was recruiting.

I was a 0-star kid out of high school, a 3-star kid out of junior college, and I developed these incredible relationships, go to BYU, and get to come here, and it's been just an unbelievable blessing. Just the people here, the way they took a chance on me so late when they could have easily said no, they said, yeah, bring it on.

Guys like Sam Howard, just embracing me. Everybody in the program, the way they've embraced me -- I showed up late into a brotherhood that was unmatched, and I'm so grateful for that because it didn't feel like I was showing up to a new team the first day of school. It felt like I was showing up to a bunch of guys who wanted me to be around, and I'm forever grateful for that. It made my transition so easy.

Sam joked about it; I've only known him since July. It's been like the longest but quickest four or five months this year has been because this is my brother right here forever. But at the same time, the season is over now, and we're both going to go do our thing. This guy is going to get a shot playing at the next level, and I'm excited to see what he does.

Yeah, I've got a lot of gratitude in my heart for this program, the guys, just because when I showed up, it didn't feel like I was the new kid on the block. It felt like guys wanted to have me there. Like I said, I'm grateful.

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