

# CFP First Round: Tulane vs Ole Miss

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Oxford, Mississippi, USA

Vaught Hemingway Stadium

## Ole Miss Rebels

### Joe Judge

#### Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 41, Tulane 10

**Q. How would you describe the last few weeks, getting this team to put the chaos of Lane leaving in the past and kind of work through the issues that you guys have had to deal with as a coaching staff and get ready to play today?**

JOE JUDGE: Well, the best part of it was getting back to normalcy with football. When we got back to the meeting and focusing on Tulane and get ready for practice, that's the thing that kind of centered everyone back into what's the mission at hand, you know, having those guys come back up.

Charlie did a phenomenal job the last two weeks, he really did, coming back in here.

It's not easy for those guys to come back in this building. They were nervous too coming back in this building how were they going to be received? Charlie did a phenomenal job of really kind of connecting with the players, you know, really building on he was here to help them win. You know, he was all in this team.

Look, there's a lot of leadership he showed the last couple of weeks. Did a phenomenal job preparing the team, and all the coaches really worked together well.

But it was obviously a smoother transition once the football started, when you kind of let the dust settle and the other stuff. That was really good.

I was really proud of the players, how they blocked out a lot of the noise and took a lot of the external stuff and turned it into motivation, what they're doing on the field.

But really the main focus wasn't any of the other stuff out there. It was about Tulane. They were too good of a team to overlook. Our guys knew that, and we knew they were



## PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

coming in to play well tonight.

**Q. Coach, two questions. I asked you earlier about your journey this week -- earlier this week about your journey coming from East Rutherford, Foxborough, to now Oxford. What did tonight mean to you, and how great was it tonight to see both of your quarterbacks go out there and perform at a high level?**

JOE JUDGE: Tonight was awesome, man. I mean, tonight was awesome. I mean, that's the second time in a stadium in a postseason game where the crowd just sang "Living on a Prayer" without the music playing.

That's one of the coolest things, you know, from being on. Sometimes you can step back and realize the moment you're in and how cool and just how exciting it really is and be truly happy for the players, because the game is about the players, right? I mean, that's what it is.

Look, you could fire every coach. There's still going to be a game. There's players to play. Who are you going to coach if there's no players?

Seeing these guys achieve the success and give themselves another opportunity in a couple of weeks against a very good Georgia team, that was really, really good, because they worked very hard. They stayed focused, went through a lot of long, extended days.

You've got to remember, you know, that normal routine that they went through for 12 weeks changes when finals are over, right? Everyone else leaves town. You know, Oxford, everyone is kind of going home for Christmas break, all that type of stuff.

These guys now have a little bit later meetings, sort of the start of the day. Their routine is thrown off. It's not quite as lively all the time in these kind of breaks in between semesters, but these guys were in here for extended periods of time, came up here, put a lot of extra hours in, film time, some walkthroughs on their own. They did a really good job on that.

The reward of seeing these guys, you know, happy in the locker room afterwards, that's what you do it for.



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**Q. Trinidad got banged up. Then eventually went back in. What do you see out of him, the toughness, the grit?**

JOE JUDGE: Yeah, he's a tough dude. Look, it's football. You're going to get hit. He got hit. Those guys hit hard too. He got up. He wanted to stay in. We had to explain to him, you go down, you got to have at least one play. The medical staff had to make sure that he was clear to go back in, doing their job. Pat and staff does a phenomenal job on that right there.

As far as Trinidad, he's a tough dude. He's a tough dude. He's a gritty dude. He's got a lot of mental toughness. I think he's shown that through his journey of being willing to take on these challenges. You know, going from Ferris to here in the SEC and then fight through a position battle and how he's responded through a lot of adversity along the way.

He's a tough dude. He's as physically tough as he is mentally.

**Q. Joe, the offense came out with almost two borderline perfect drives there. How critical was that for you guys to just silence everything that's been around and just go and play football there?**

JOE JUDGE: Well, you can't get too high or low in these games, right? So it was great we were able to come out the first two drives, you know, go down there and just score. I mean, that's ideally how you want to start every game, right? Play from ahead, you know, kind of shapes the way your defense can play as well if you can put the other team in more of a passing, catch-up mode. Playing from ahead is the way every coach wants to play.

But at the same time, you know, one thing I'm most proud of this team, speaking specifically for this offense with these guys, you kind of go through all of our games throughout the year. Like just start off in Kentucky, right? We were down multiple scores in Kentucky, you know, Week 2. How many games we trailed or were in close games.

Me and Trin were looking at the Washington State stuff the other day in case there was any copycat schemes that came up. Trin had to ask me, Gee, I forgot we were down in the third quarter in this game.

Yeah, we were.

But the thing about this team was the entire time there was never, like, pointing a finger. There was never a high and

a low. There was never an overreaction. It all stays right here. You know, this team has done a really good job.

We knew going into this postseason there's going to be highs and there's going to be lows in the game. We just got to keep it right here. We're very pleased how we started off tonight, you know, both halves, as far as going down there and being able to execute, score, come away with touchdowns, you know.

But at the same time, if we had started out slow, that can't be a reason that we don't finish the way we want to. We've just got to go ahead and keep on the process and put the plays together and keep getting the ball down the field and confronting those situations.

**Q. You've been a part of championship organizations, programs before. How does this compare pedigree-wise in that locker room? Do you feel like this team has true championship DNA?**

JOE JUDGE: You see a team that's very unselfish. You see a team that plays for each other. You see a team that's very accountable to each other, and they work extremely hard.

Because they've been able to go through a lot of games, that this is a very, very tough, competitive conference, they've been able to win a lot of big games when they've been up, when they've been down, you know, closing games out when it mattered, executing in situations, two-minute drives, things of that nature.

That's just the formula that you have to have to have a chance for success. There's a lot of talented teams in this country that are sitting home watching teams play right now, okay? More talented teams in a lot of instances right there, but they don't have a team, right?

So, you know, PG did a great job this week of getting these guys really bonded and buying in and blocking out the outside noise and really focusing on Tulane. But in terms of, like, the next step of where we're going, you know, again, we kind of talked to the players. Like, you don't talk about Fight Club. We got the Georgia Bulldogs. Whatever is after that doesn't exist right now. So whoever is thinking about hotels or trips, whatever it may be, that game doesn't exist.

We've got the Georgia Bulldogs. They're a really good team. A really good team. Coached as well as anybody in the country. They play tough. They play fast. They're extremely talented. They're going to be very prepared.

We've already played them. They're going to have a



jump-start on us, because they've had time this week where they can sit back and just really, you know, hone in on what we do, Tulane does, knowing they've got one of these two opponents.

Yeah, we have not overlooked Tulane that we've jumped ahead on Georgia right now. We have to use some of these extra bonus days right now on the front end of prepping up for them. But in terms of, like, the down the stretch where it's going to go type of deal, we got one game that exists right now. We've got to earn the right to have another Monday, another Tuesday, another Wednesday every week in how we practice and prepare.

**Q. On those first two drives, was that Charlie's script? I was curious how far out y'all go and if you do any for the second half too, if that's not confidential?**

JOE JUDGE: I mean, look, there's not too many secrets. I mean, look, people start out with a script. Some for different reasons, right? You play Andy Reid. He's going to play -- him and Sean Payton are going to play every formation, every personnel group, and everything to find out the answers to the test that you're going to try to present to them. Then they're going to know the information you've worked on all week and go ahead and find a different formula.

Some guys form scripts that they are going to try to take advantage of something you do schematically and play fast on it. We've had weeks where we do both, okay? It kind of changes in and out.

That's Charlie's script. That's Charlie's offense. He designs it with help of all the assistants. He calls it, okay? He does a phenomenal job of it. Charlie has done a really great job all season calling the offense, and I was glad for him to go out tonight and have that success right there.

But, absolutely, look, you talk throughout the first half, you know, what are they doing, what are they doing differently than we expected, what's the same? You talk throughout the half, and then you go to halftime, and you just kind of say, okay, here's a handful of plays we want to go ahead and use to get started. You're not really calling plays thinking, okay, three, four plays in, this is going to be a touchdown. You're just trying to go ahead and get the first down and get the sticks moving.

Our message to our quarterbacks all year has really been play point guard, right? Get the ball in the hands of the guys who can make plays with it. All reality is you're standing four or five yards back behind the line of scrimmage. You can't really do much to help us, right? We've got to get the ball to someone who can by moving it

forward right there.

Just take access passes, take good matchups. You know, if we see a scheme that we know something is going to come open, let's take advantage of it. If not, get us out of Dodge, hit the checkdown, hand the ball off whatever it may be and let's keep on moving.

**Q. What was head coach Pete Golding like today?**

JOE JUDGE: Pete is Pete. I think that's what makes him so special is he's not going to change no matter what title or label you put on him. He's always been the same guy. You know, he saw that the game from big picture standpoint when I first met him last year, same as he did tonight.

I think he did a great job really delegating. It's not easy to call a defense and be responsible as a head coach to manage the game. So we kind of delegated throughout the game as far as when the defense was up, what my responsibilities were, and the communication we'd have throughout the game.

But PG is not going to change because you put a label in front of his name. That's so much that I know about him. That's a huge reason I wanted to stay and work for him, okay? You want to work for people that are good, genuine people, okay, put the team first, and that's who he is.

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