

# CFP First Round: James Madison vs Oregon

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Eugene, Oregon, USA

Autzen Stadium

**Oregon Ducks**

**Dan Lanning**

Postgame Press Conference

Oregon 51, James Madison 34

DAN LANNING: The team realizes this is a growth moment for us, an opportunity to continue to improve and get better, but we're going to have to play better football to be able to reach our goals when it's all said and done.

There's some moments that really showed up, obviously special teams with the blocked kick, blocked punt. There were some big plays there. But to not be able to come out and have the same success in the second half that we had in the first half is certainly disappointing and I think our players will certainly learn from that.

**Q. Focus on some of the positives in the first half, the offense was really clicking. What was Will doing? What were the players doing?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I thought they had a great plan. Starting off, they had loaded boxes inside. We were able to get the ball in the perimeter. We were able to take shots where we thought we could win. We connected on a couple of those. I think we scored all five of the first five possessions but then obviously threw a pick in the last drive, right? Which isn't good.

**Q. Earlier in the week Tosh had talked about defense's goals with us to take away the opposing team's identity. You've certainly done that at times. Do you feel there was any facet of their attack you guys took away tonight?**

DAN LANNING: We didn't play well enough as a unit to do what we want to be able to do, and, again, the explosive plays there's probably a piece that really started. They had 13 third downs in the first half. We got to be able to get off the field on third down. I think our offense only had one in the first half and then in the second half they had a few more, but they did a much better job moving the ball on early downs.



## PLAYOFF FIRST ROUND

**Q. Jeremiah McClellan, really successful today. How have you seen him evolve throughout the season. He had a really strong Washington game and then tonight, what makes him so successful?**

DAN LANNING: He's been really consistent down the stretch, he's where he's supposed to be. He's making tough catches. I thought that other one was really close again today where they had the PI. But he's attacking the ball, right? And playing strong at the top of routes. He's playing some good football for us down the stretch.

**Q. One of the questions coming into this game is how you guys will deal with the rest, the layoff after last year. You said you had a different plan this year. How do you think you executed that and how that plan came to fruition?**

DAN LANNING: I think we started off hot, like I said. Ultimately we could have been better defensively in the first half but able to hold them to field goal attempts instead of touchdowns there in the first was a positive, but the second half, as a team, we didn't play the way we need to be able to play. You got to find moments like that when you have a big lead to be able to choke somebody out and we didn't do that.

**Q. Dan, what would be the emotion you would use to describe how you feel right now? Is it upset? Disappointed? Or something else entirely?**

DAN LANNING: I probably wouldn't describe it.

**Q. Feels like no matter what running back was in the game today, you guys were having success, whether inside zone, outside. Kind of just talk about the different successes that you were able to have with the run game and how you want to carry that into your next match-up with Texas Tech?**

DAN LANNING: When you run the ball well, you have a chance to win games. You can stay on schedule and be able to take some of the shots that we take. Stay out of the chains, not force yourself to make some tough third downs and we did that pretty effectively today.



... when all is said, we're done.®

**Q. Several of the red-shirting guys and injury guys coming back, your initial impressions of Dak and Gary and Makhi getting out there. I believe Gavin Nix also getting some runs, all the guys who came back from both health and red-shirting.**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I'll have to watch the film and see how each guy did individually. I think, again, there were some positive moments but certainly moments for improvement.

**Q. Coach, you talked about the defense giving up some explosive plays but your offense had quite a few as well. Nine plays that went for 20 or more yards. What did you see JMU's defense that allowed you guys to create so much success attacking deep field?**

DAN LANNING: They're an aggressive defense, so when you can get a hat on a hat, you're going to have opportunities for guys to go make big plays. I thought we did some good blocking on the perimeter which was necessary to create that. We didn't have really penalties in that area as well, which is important whenever you're going to be aggressive.

But when they play aggressive and they're going to have a lot of hats, you're going to get opportunities for one-on-ones outside and you're going to get opportunities to create big plays.

**Q. Dan, are you glad you had this game, having now had a first round home game? Do you subscribe to the idea of the value of a tune-up maybe as opposed to the experience you guys had last year?**

DAN LANNING: I'm always glad to play football. It's exciting. You don't get a lot of opportunities to play football so certainly glad to have that opportunity.

**Q. In what ways did JMU's defense limit your explosive ways in the second half?**

DAN LANNING: I just don't think we clicked on all cylinders, like I said. There were some moments we had success and a drive would stall out. But I'll have to go out and see specifically what they did differently.

**Q. Malik Benson, two touchdowns tonight. Elite speed. How would you describe him?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, Malik's showed up for us, certainly down the stretch this season, certainly great today. Obviously had some big balls that he caught and I've been really proud of his progression and his growth for us in this

program.

**Q. Haven't really addressed it too much but you guys are advancing, get an opportunity to play in a couple weeks. What do you think this team is ready to do?**

DAN LANNING: Go work. Ready to go to work.

**Q. One of the better statistical days from Dante of his career. What have you seen over the last couple of weeks just as far as prep and his ability to meet the moment tonight?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we have a great quarterback, right? And he can handle a lot of situations. He can handle pressure. I know there's a couple he'd want back tonight but overall I thought he executed our plan well.

**Q. On the first couple drives in particular, it looked like they were throwing a lot in terms of scheme and formation, just a lot of variety. Anything that was either just a lot by volume or anything that Dean Kennedy did that you guys weren't expecting early on?**

DAN LANNING: No, they do a lot. You go watch them throughout the season, they've always had a lot of volume really on both sides of the ball.

**Q. A lot of batted passes at the line of scrimmage from the D-line tonight. How would you assess that group and how they've thrown this year, a bit of what you saw from them against JMU.**

DAN LANNING: That will be has a lower release. We thought that could make an impact and even when you're not necessarily making a sack, there's opportunities for plays like that. I thought our guys did a good job getting hands up.

**Q. I know the game didn't really end the way you wanted it to but I know Autzen Stadium really showed out. A lot of false starts on JMU's side. What would you say about the crowd and how the way the town rallied around this game and embraced a first-ever College Football Playoff game right here in Eugene.**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, our crowd was outstanding. They've been outstanding every time. We knew we could always count on those guys to show up and make it an unbelievable atmosphere. I think it's really special for our seniors to get to enjoy that and proud for them.

**Q. Seeing what the score is and how explosive your offense was, what gives you the confidence, though, that your team is going to take the criticism, take the**



**coaching that you're clearly disappointed in this finish to progress next week and in two weeks?**

DAN LANNING: Just because they have in the past. Our guys are about the right things when it comes to growth mindset. They're going to want to attack it and I know they share some of the same sentiments as me.

**Q. Seems like some of your team is echoing a lot of the stuff that you're saying, the disappointment in the second half. What does that say about the standard that you guys have set and how confident you are in them going forward?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, there's a standard here. There's certainly a standard for performance. Our players know that. They know what championship football looks like and the second half didn't look like that.

**Q. I know the competition's different, but did you take anything from last year's experience in the playoff that you used for this? I know the competition was different, but it's a win-or-go-home situation. Anything from last year that you used for this year?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, a lot of our prep was different this year. And, again, won't go into great detail with that but we did do some things differently.

**Q. Ahead of the season, the narrative surrounding this team was just young and unproven. Now there's been a full season of football and a lot of big games. How have you seen the freshmen and younger guys step up to the moment when it is a big game?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, some of those guys got some moments again today. We've had some growth. We've had strength in numbers all year where we're had a lot of guys who can play winning football. A lot of guys touched the field for us today. We started to roll some guys there in the second half. We'll have to go evaluate that film because obviously their performance wasn't as good there, so while there's been growth and there's opportunities to improve, there's still a lot of opportunities this front of us to continue to grow.

**Q. There was some personnel changes there in the third quarter. How do you plan on that or adjust in game on who to bring in and who to sit out after being up several scores?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, you just keep evaluating the game. We weren't playing well and we had to continue to put some other guys in. But ultimately, I think the game was at hand. It was just a matter of how do you finish and

perform? That's some good experience for some guys that are in there to be able to take advantage of. I just don't know that we took advantage of that today.

**Q. Any initial word on Theran?**

DAN LANNING: I think he'll be okay.