

CFP First Round: James Madison vs Oregon

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Eugene, Oregon, USA

Autzen Stadium

James Madison Dukes Alonza Barnett, III

Postgame Press Conference

Oregon 51, James Madison 34

Q. How do you not let today's result cloud the way you look at what the team accomplished this season?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, I think you just have to look at things in retrospect. Obviously in the moment, as Coach has emphasized, it's important but it's not special.

But I think when you look in the rear view mirror, that's what makes things special, just thinking about how far this team, this offense has come from the beginning of the year to where we are now, the things we accomplished; being a top-20 offense and defense in the nation, winning the first-ever Sun Belt Championship, and many other things we have to be proud about, things that we can look back 25, 50 years from now and tell our kids about and smile.

In that case you can't let a moment like tonight take away or have a dark cloud over our season.

Q. Kind of going off that question, when you see people talk about this team in the future, how do you want this group specifically to be remembered five, ten years down the line?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, I want this to be remembered as one of the closest, unified teams ever in JMU history, in college football history. The things that we were able to do, obviously the adversities we were able to battle, just the individual stories and how we truly came together as a collective and really represented this university in a really good way and a bright spot that will be looked at years from now.

Q. There's a narrative out there that G6 teams don't necessarily deserve to be in this spot, to be in the playoff. Do you think you guys with the body of work you had this season and the performance tonight, you guys proved that you did belong here, to be on this



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stage with Oregon?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, no doubt. Obviously it wasn't our best performance all around, but I believe people saw that we were meant to be on this level. When you look at the Power Four teams and whatever, the destiny is really -- the ball is in your court. You control your own destiny.

Most of those teams that didn't make it, they controlled their own destiny, and we handled what we could handle and we didn't give into outside noise. People say this, people say that, he say, she say. At the end of the day, you have to control your own path and own your own path.

Some teams didn't do that, and that allowed for us to get in there. We controlled our own path.

Q. Zo, I know you guys did what you could at practice to try and mimic this environment. What was it like actually playing in it and getting play calls in and communicating with your teammates?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, it was pretty loud. This is what you expect a top-5 team in the nation, a playoff game to be: a tremendous atmosphere. Like I said before, one you dreamed of playing in. Sometimes we did have some troubles with communication, but that's what goes with it when you play in an environment like this.

Q. Zo, you guys were the first team to put up more than 400 yards of offense against Oregon. Instant reaction to that, and how were you able to do that?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Initial reaction, it wasn't enough. Obviously one thing that we emphasized going into the game, one thing we talked about was when we got in that low ray, we had to execute. We had to score seven points. Three points wouldn't be enough for an explosive offense like this for a top-5 team in the nation, and when we got down there, we shot ourselves in the foot sometimes.

I guess a really good defense, a really solid defense is going to be hard to score from 1st and 23 from the 23-yard line. Unfortunately we just didn't get the job done to the level that we know we could and that we should have got it



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done to win this game.

Q. Zo, you guys used some trick plays tonight, one of them being Nick's 50-yard pass. As a quarterback, what would you make of that performance and getting the ball down the field from him?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, that's really good. Obviously if a guy is that wide open you just want to put the ball in his vicinity, let him go get it. It's a play that we practiced before, and I think that just showed our mentality. We were going to empty the clip.

Going into halftime that's what we talked about, emptying the clip and leaving it all out there on the field. That's what we did.

Q. I know earlier in the week you talked about how much you liked Oregon growing up. What were your emotions actually stepping out there and getting to play in Autzen?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, obviously when you talk about that, the emphasis has to be on "was." I'm a Duke through and through, so the mentality coming out here and stepping on to the field, extremely grateful to be in an environment like this. Like I said, I dreamed of playing in a stadium and an environment like this, and to play in it this way, but the mentality was to win.

As a competitor, it doesn't feel good, and of course the environment is cool, but main focus is winning.

Q. Last year you ended up missing the Boca Bowl, and now you've had the injury, you've rehabbed through that, and now you're at one of the biggest stages in college football. Can you talk about your journey specifically from your rehab to this point now?

ALONZA BARNETT III: Yeah, it's pretty cool to be in this moment. It's obviously something I prayed for. I had real tears behind this, hard work, but God has been good to me. Just being able to be able to have surgery as quick as I did right after, no swelling, be able to kind of fight back and rehab, and for God to put the pieces around me like Tyler, my family back at home to really trust and believe in my process, and my stubbornness of getting back on the field, there were times they believed in me when I didn't really believe in myself.

It's just a surreal feeling. Obviously the goal is to win, but you have to be grateful because it's just something that's special.

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