

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Monday, January 1, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Nick Saban Jalen Milroe Deontae Wilson

Postgame Press Conference



Michigan 27, Alabama 20

NICK SABAN: Well, obviously we're very disappointed about the outcome of the game. I don't think we played great in the first half, but I was really, really proud of the way our players played in the second half.

We just didn't finish the last four minutes of the game like we would like to, and we're all very disappointed, and the players are disappointed, as well.

But one thing that I told them in the locker room after the game, this is one of the most amazing seasons in Alabama football history in terms of where this team came from, what they were able to accomplish and what they were able to do, winning the SEC Championship, and really, really proud of this group.

I just wish that I could have done more as a coach to help them be successful and help them finish, and all we can do now is learn from the lessons that sometimes failings bring to us.

Q. Coach Saban, what does this mean to have the opportunity, first of all, to play in the Rose Bowl Game, the granddaddy of them all to you, as a coach?

NICK SABAN: Yeah, I grew up in the Big Ten, coached in the Big Ten for 12 years, and it was win the Big 12 Championship and go to the Rose Bowl. That was always special.

We've had several opportunities to do it, but this is a great atmosphere here today. It was a great football game. Congratulations to Michigan. They played a really good game.

I just wish that we could have finished a little better, but it was a great experience mere for our players, and we really appreciate all the Rose Bowl folks who did a wonderful job of creating some really, really fine hospitality for us all week long.

Q. I was wondering if you could elaborate on why you said this was one of the best seasons for Alabama football given obviously you guys have won National Championships like you have?

NICK SABAN: Well, I just think that I don't look at it necessarily from winning and losing, you won the championship, you can't win the championship. As a coach, you're always trying to get your team to improve and be the best that they can be, and I think this team probably improved from the South Florida game and the Texas game early in the season as much as any team I've ever coached.

That takes a lot of hard work. A lot of people being very committed to doing things that they need to do to self-assess and improve their game, and all these players bought in on this team and did it in first-class fashion.

That's why I think for me as a coach, maybe not for everybody else, it's one of the teams that I'll always remember the most and always be the most proud of.

Q. Jalen, Coach said he wished you could have done more, but people were saying this was one of his best years coaching. What does Coach Saban mean to you and this team mean to you in general this year?

JALEN MILROE: 100 percent. Coach means a lot to us. We play even harder knowing that Coach has the belief system in us. Just listening to him talk, he talks about how proud he is of this team.

We have a lot of things we can be proud of from this season. Could have easily lingered and past mistakes could have easily went in the tank when things weren't good, but the biggest thing was we continued to improve, continue to have singular focus in our approach when it



came to preparation and when it take to attacking the task at hand.

There's a lot of things to be proud of, but one thing I am proud of is how much Coach Saban harped on his belief system on us.

Q. Coach Saban, in the first half they were sending blitzes and pressures, and I think they got to you four or five times in the first half. From a communication standpoint what was breaking down in the first half?

NICK SABAN: Well, not one particular thing. There was a couple times where we could have redirected the protection, which we kind of put on the O-line to a large degree, and we didn't do it.

A couple times the shot clock was running down and we didn't get a chance to do it, and a couple times we didn't fan and miss-executed up front in terms of getting the right guys blocked when we were in the right protection.

It was a combination of several things. I thought we did a better job in the second half, but we didn't give Jalen an opportunity to make some plays, nor our receivers to make some plays down the field, which was a big part of this game.

Q. Could you talk about the last play and made that one the best one that you wanted to go with?

NICK SABAN: We called three plays. One they called time-out, one we called time-out, and the last one that didn't work. The fact that it didn't work made it a really bad call. You know what I mean?

But we called time-out because we had a bad look. We had a good look on the first one. They must have known it.

But Tommy just felt like the best thing that we could do was have a quarterback run, which was kind of our two-point play, one of our two-point plays for this game.

The ball was on the 3-yard line, which is just like a two-point play, but we didn't get it blocked so it didn't work. We didn't execute it very well and it didn't work.

They pressured and we thought they would pressure, but we thought we could gap them and block them and make it work, and it didn't.

Q. How did you see that last play unfold, and why didn't it work from your perspective?

JALEN MILROE: First thing, I'm appreciative of my

coaching staff for believing in me to have the ball in my hands on that last play. You win some, you lose some. That's all part of the game.

With anything, all it came down was fall back to your level of training, and we just failed on that play. That's all it was.

At the end of the day I just trusted the guys up front for believing in me on the last play to have the ball, and unfortunately we just missed and we just didn't get in the end zone.

Q. Jalen, how much have you and Seth worked on that quarterback center exchange this year, and why in your mind was it still an issue at this point in the year?

JALEN MILROE: With anything it takes preparation, whether it's pass protection, whether it's the running game, the passing game. The quarterback and the center have to have a great relationship and that's something that we tried to build throughout the whole season.

There's a multitude of things that me and Seth talk about in that regard. That's something that we do talk about.

Q. Coach Saban, special teams was an area where you seemed to have a pretty big advantage tonight. It was a big reason I think you were only down three at halftime. Can you speak to special teams tonight?

NICK SABAN: I think special teams did a good job tonight. We did a good job of controlling field position. I think both specialists did a really, really good job. James did a great job of punting.

They had time to maybe go two-minute at the end of the game, and the fact that Christian bobbled the 2-yard line or 1-yard line or whatever was really, really good.

Will made some huge kicks, what, two around 50-yard field goals. They missed a field goal, which put us in great position to have a chance to be successful at the end of the game.

But us not finishing a couple drives, and if you really analyze the game, one of the biggest things is we didn't play well enough on defense when we needed to, and the second thing is we had too many drive-stopping plays on offense. I mean, we shot ourselves in the foot. A sack is a drive-stopping play. Getting a penalty usually is a drive-stopping play.

Some of those things we self-inflicted. I told the players after the game, I told them before the game it's going to be about what we do, and when you look back at it, it's kind of

about what we did and what we didn't do.

Not taking anything away from Michigan. They played a great game. They've got a good team. They're really well-coached and wish them the best of luck in the future, but we could have done things a little better, as well. That's on me, on the coaches. It's not anybody else.

Appreciate what the media has done all year long. It's great you create a lot of interest in our sport. Thank you for that.

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