

ReliaQuest Bowl: Michigan vs Alabama

Tuesday, December 31, 2024

Tampa, Florida, USA

Raymond James Stadium

Michigan Wolverines

Sherrone Moore

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan 19, Alabama 13

Q. I know you don't like to deal with ifs and buts, but for the last field goal if it wouldn't have given you a two-score lead, would you have considered going for it on 4th down?

SHERRONE MOORE: We won. That's it. That's all I've got.

Q. How much of what we saw from Jordan Marshall today is in his future?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I think he's got a bright future. Like I said, he reminds me so much of Blake in the way he approaches his business and what he does off the field to take care of his body. You obviously saw how he runs. He's a physical runner. He can make people miss. He can run you over. He obviously has that burst.

All the credit in the world to Alabama and the way they played defense, a physical style of defense, but I thought our guys really bowed up and played physical ball.

But Jordan Marshall, he's going to be a special back. He's got a lot of ability, but he works really hard, so I think that's the piece that really makes him different.

Q. Can you talk about your defensive line and the impact they had on this game?

SHERRONE MOORE: I mean, it was outstanding. You talk about one of the most explosive people in college football with Jalen Milroe, he can hurt you with his legs, he can hurt you with his arm, and I thought they did a really good job of funneling him in the pocket and making it uncomfortable for him, hitting him.

I thought our D-line just did an outstanding job, Coach Espo, Coach Wilkins, Coach Fee, Coach Lewis, all those



guys that work with the D-line, it was unbelievable to watch them.

Credit to the players. You don't have Mason Graham, you don't have Kenneth Grant, so people think there's this big falloff. Those are two incredible players, but our guys really take a lot of pride in being physical, and we wanted to do that all this bowl camp, and we really did, tried to tune up the physicality to make sure we're fundamentally sound, and I thought those guys did a really good job.

Q. On the way your team ended the season, what do you take away from that, and how did that change your perception of the season?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, we just want to finish. Obviously you want to win every game, and we didn't do that, so took a lot of pride in after that last -- we played Indiana, then we had a bye week, and really honing in and recommitting to the things that we needed to get better at, and it was really the fundamentals, the little pieces, doing those things really, really well, and those usually end up in those results.

We refocused, we retooled, and really proud of our staff and our players.

Q. On a similar note, how much of those three wins affirm the identity that you want to play with?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, just happy we got those wins. It was exciting to get those wins, to work to get those wins. Yeah, we want to be physical on defense, on offense. But we want to be explosive on offense. Those are things that we've got to work on in the off-season to make sure we're more explosive, especially in the passing game.

We had a great throw to Fred by Davis. It was a great ball in that back part of the end zone. That was awesome to see. But we want to be more explosive on offense, which we're going to work to do that.

But our defense played lights out. At the end of the year, Northwestern, holding them to six, Ohio, holding them to



10, these guys 13, you talk about -- especially Ohio and these guys, explosive offenses that can put up points on the scoreboard. I don't know what Ohio was averaging a game, I think they were in the 40s and these guys were in the high 30s.

Our defense played incredible these last three games, and big shout out to Coach Wink.

Q. It's been an up-and-down season. Can you just reflect on how this season went and how you think it's going to go moving forward?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, we talked about not losses, lessons. We had a lot of lessons throughout the year, and just learning from them so we learn the things that we need to learn so ultimately end up on the plus side, and we did that in these last three games.

Finishing on a strong note was huge for us and will build great momentum going into the off-season. We feel like we've got a bright future the way we're recruiting, the guys we're bringing in, the guys we're keeping, to make sure that this Michigan is the best version of Michigan that it can be, and that's all we're going to worry about. When we get to winter workouts, that's the first cycle we've got. We're going to attack that as much as we can and get better there, and then we'll go in the spring, we'll go in the summer and we'll go into fall camp and then we'll work to what that final piece will look like after fall camp.

But we're going to celebrate this one. We've got a happy flight coming up, so we're going to celebrate this one.

Q. That was big boy football today; that's exactly what you expect from Alabama, wasn't it?

SHERRONE MOORE: Oh, yeah. There was some hard hitting going on on both sides. You could hear the pads popping. Our guys were delivering hits, they were delivering hits. Three-yard runs, those dirty runs, those aren't bad plays, especially those are like body blows, and there was a lot of that on both sides of the ball and physicality, but I thought our guys stepped up in the moments that they needed to, and our offense took a five-minute drive to get down and get a field goal, and our defense did a good job holding them in the red zone was huge.

The physicality was there. We knew it would be that type of game, so we were ready for it.

Q. Obviously really sad to see Warren go down. Can you talk about how the game changed after that?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, not sure exactly what the injury is. Lower body injury. We'll figure that out and get him right. But I was really proud of the way he carried himself and what he did in the game. Took control of the offense, and he was really like that throughout bowl prep.

Then Orji came in and handled it well, just continued to -- we just felt like the way the game was going, our defense was holding them up, that we needed to possess the ball. I think we had 38 minutes time of possession, so that's what we wanted to do, and executed that at a high level.

Q. Do you expect him to remain here after the transfer portal window?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, we'll see. Like I said in media, my media availability, I think it was yesterday, it's leaning that way, but those are conversations we'll have to have.

Q. Sorry, I meant Alex.

SHERRONE MOORE: We'll see.

Q. With winning this game and the number of opt-outs you had, what do you think it says about the state of the program?

SHERRONE MOORE: That we've got a great culture, and we've got great kids. No one person wins a game. No one person, no two people. It's a team. It's always going to be a team sport. If you look at it any different, then you've got issues, and we're always going to look at it as a team sport and be the best team we can be, whoever is out on the field.

Q. How surreal were those first 15 minutes? It's not often a team forces a succession of turnovers like that.

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, it was crazy. We had a lot of presentations. Our staff did an excellent job presenting things throughout bowl camp, and we talked about plus two, and Coach Morgan brought up being plus two, and I think in that time we were plus three. They're going, we're plus three right now; we've got a chance to win this game. We're going to go win this game now.

The coolest part of that was it started to rain, and the boys went crazy. It was like a party. I was like, what's going on. They love stuff like that. They love adverse environments that people don't expect, but they enjoy that.

But it was awesome to watch our guys -- we talked about being plus two, and to get plus three right there was huge for us.

Q. When Warren went down with the injury and you went with Alex Orji, the offense kind of sputtered in the passing game. Was there any thought of bringing Jadyn Davis in?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, Orji practiced really well throughout the bowl prep, and I thought the best chance to win was having him in the game, the threat of his legs, so that's what we did at the time.

Q. With your evaluation of Andrew Sprague (indiscernible)?

SHERRONE MOORE: Well, when you rush for over 100 yards against Alabama, it's good, but I haven't watched -- I saw some of it and felt like in protection, because those are things that you can see the most without the detail, they did pretty good. As far as the run game, there's things we've always got to clean up, but it felt like we were getting the movement necessary to get the runs going.

When you have those type of drives when you're leaning on people and you're getting five-minute drives, it means those guys up front are doing a good job. Felt like they were in a good place.

Q. Even though you didn't score in the third quarter, how important was it to possess the ball, and then on top of it, for your team to come out there, was this a statement game to college football that the Big Ten can play with the big boys of the SEC?

SHERRONE MOORE: I don't think that's -- we don't look at it as trying to make a statement or doing anything to prove anybody wrong. It's all about us getting better and proving ourselves right. We don't care about the opinions of other people and all that.

But I think it's shown that throughout the years, last year and this year, that the Big Ten is as competitive of a conference in college football as any. I don't think there's a question about the Big Ten, SEC -- two great conferences. They're two great conferences. I'll leave it at that.

Q. How fitting was it for your defense to set the tone with three quick turnovers, you get the lead (indiscernible) and how fitting is it to start with your defense and end with your defense?

SHERRONE MOORE: It was awesome. Again, just a lot of shout-outs to all those guys, the staff, the players. It was a team effort. So many guys made plays. I gave game balls to everybody on the team. But the defensive front started it all, and then it just permeated through

everybody else, and those guys all just played phenomenal.

Q. You mentioned the players getting excited about the rain. You've been at Michigan for a while. How have you seen that grow or what do you think is the key to a team embracing the adverse weather like that?

SHERRONE MOORE: When you live in Michigan, you go through every season, so snow, rain, sleet. It can happen in one day. Our guys just don't get bothered by anything. We just keep going. So it could be rain, it could be snow, could be sleet, could be whatever it is, sunshine, could be super hot. Our guys don't really care about the weather or the conditions. We just adjust to whatever it is, and just really proud of them.

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