

# TransPerfect Music City Bowl: Iowa vs Kentucky

Saturday, December 31, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Nissan Stadium

Iowa Hawkeyes

Xavier Nwankpa

Press Conference



Iowa-21, Kentucky-0

**Q. You enjoyed it?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: Yeah, for sure.

**Q. Who did you see on the pick-6?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: I saw the ball in the air and a chance to go get it. I really blacked out after that and just ran in the end zone. Celebrated with my teammates. It was a special moment.

**Q. (Inaudible) I saw you kind of play the deep middle.**

XAVIER NWANKPA: Yeah, we rolled back to cover-three at that point.

**Q. Just an overthrow, and you were in the right spot?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: Right place, right time.

**Q. How would you grade your own performance?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: I would probably give myself a B. There were a couple of mistakes I made, and always room for improvement, so just focusing in on getting back after the new year.

**Q. What was the moment like when you found out that you were going to be starting?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: It was pretty crazy. Leading up I was repping with the ones once Kaevon announced he was going to the draft. I was getting repps, getting used to everything, getting used to the speed, so helped me play to this moment now.

**Q. Phil Parker pointed to you specifically about making big strides over the last few weeks in bowl**

**prep. How would you assess your growth, especially over the past couple of weeks?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: That was really my focus, I was trying to get better every day. Working out two positions. I really played free throughout the year. So playing strong and just learning from the people around me. Especially Kaevon. He just helped me, helped guide me up there.

**Q. What did it mean to you to make that type of play?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: It really meant a lot. The team has been pushing me, helping me grow, so really making that play helped show what they've done for me and helped me grow.

**Q. How does that kind of help give you a positive feeling out of your freshman year at Iowa? You didn't play a ton of regular snaps, but this game had to mean a lot for you going forward.**

XAVIER NWANKPA: Oh, for sure. Definitely it set the bar for me where I have to go, where I have to improve from, so just keep making plays, having fun throughout the spring and getting ready for next fall.

**Q. In the game you were down hitting in the box. You weren't exactly standing back letting everybody do things. Then I think there was one situation where they head-butted you out on the sideline and did no-call or whatever. What was kind of going through your mind? Hey, I'm going to make you pay for that?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: For sure. Really, like, it was a little chippy at times. It's whatever. It's football. Go out there and have fun, make plays. Really that wasn't really my focus. I was just focused on going to the next play making a play and trying to win the game.

**Q. Were you excited about the secondary you have coming back next year? You think about Cooper and Jermari and Sebastian?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: For sure. We really have a chance. We really have a chance to keep making an impact, keep



the "doughboy" tradition alive and just go out there and make plays and have fun.

**Q. This is the first Big Ten defense to sport a shut-out in a bowl game since 1999. Other than Tory, I don't know if any of you guys were born then. I guess what do you think of the accomplishment of getting the shut-out? Was that something that maybe by halftime you were -- and the third quarter were you guys building towards, hey, we want to keep this going?**

XAVIER NWANKPA: Yeah, for sure. Our plan is to not let anyone score any game, but through the third quarter we were really, like, focused on keeping that shut-out. Hopefully Coach Parker or someone will bring some doughnuts for the plane ride home tomorrow.

Thank you.

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