

# TransPerfect Music City Bowl: Missouri vs Iowa

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Nissan Stadium

## Iowa Hawkeyes

### Phil Parker

Defensive coordinator

### Tim Lester

Offensive coordinator

## Coaches Press Conference



Our last one was today. It looked like the kids were polished. Really happy for them.

We have a lot of seniors that -- we have seven seniors that are going out, and this is going to be their last time together to play. We're looking for a good outcome for this.

Obviously through the years, this year we had some up and downs during the season, and I like the way the guys responded. There was a point in the season there where it could have went the other way, and coming back and getting eight wins is very significant.

I think to win nine in college football nowadays with all the things that go on and how things are moving around in college football, but we're looking forward. It's going to be a tough matchup for us. They're a good football team. They're well-coached, and it's going to be a challenge for us. We have some guys out; we have some guys out.

Looking forward to any questions you guys might have.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You mentioned seven seniors. What have you seen from some of the younger guys as you prepare for this bowl game that have stepped up and your thoughts on some of their performances?**

PHIL PARKER: One thing about it is we have eight guys coming back, and a lot of these guys you've been seeing them, but it was a great opportunity to get a guy like Lutmer some reps and Koen to get some reps and see them grow as a guy that's the upcoming guy that's going to be on the field a lot next year.

Then the linebacker group, we have a lot of young guys in the linebacker group that was getting a lot of work. You go back for this whole month of how many reps you can take and then wait for spring ball to come and see their growth, which has really been important for us as a program that's a developing program.

We have to make sure that you keep your guys in our building and make sure they're all on the same page. I

THE MODERATOR: We have Defensive Coordinator Phil Parker and Offensive Coordinator Tim Lester. We'll start with Coach Lester.

TIM LESTER: I appreciate everyone being here. For me it's been an unbelievable first season to be with Coach Ferentz and the staff. When I got here in February, I threw a lot at these guys, a lot of new.

They've done a great job of coming together. This senior class has really led us. It's exciting for us to be at a bowl game. It will be our last time with these seniors. They've meant a lot to this program, meant a lot to me especially coming in and putting a lot of new stuff in. I'm excited for them and excited for their opportunity tomorrow.

The last thing would be, it's been a great month for us putting in a new offense and having a chance to really have some focused practices in the last month and watching our guys continue to get better, the young guys getting reps and getting better. It's been very valuable for us as a program, and we're excited to be here. We're excited for the game tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Parker.

PHIL PARKER: Thank you everybody for coming, and I appreciate it. I know some of you guys that had to travel here to cover us. I really appreciate you guys doing that. I heard a couple of stories already, but I would really like to thank the bowl committee here that selected us. It's nice to be down here in Nashville. It seems like I've been here many times over the years, whether it's a convention or whether it's a football game.

It's really been a good week. We just finished practice.



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think they're all working hard, and I think this is a good event to send these seniors out on a good game tomorrow, Monday.

**Q. Tim, it's been no secret. You guys went out and got Hank Brown. You have been exploring the possibility of adding another quarterback in the room. Brendan Sullivan, how has he looked just attacking, knowing that there are other quarterbacks that could potentially still be recruited? How has he looked since he got back from his injury? And what's it to say about him to say no matter what happens, I'm going to stay at Iowa and compete, and this is what college football is all about?**

TIM LESTER: He's an unbelievable young man. I think you get that when you meet him and you watch the way he plays the game with the passion that he plays with.

It's ironic because I brought him in here in the offseason to compete with Cade. No surprise that you want competition at the most important position on the field. He's ready for it.

It's been great to have him back. He's back. He's healthy. He tried to come back as fast as he could. It's hard when you are a mobile quarterback, and you're not mobile.

He's moving around great again, throwing the ball. His feet are getting better. He is more comfortable within the offense. He got here in July, late June/early July. It's not like he even had a spring ball. This month has been huge for him and really for everybody.

We talked about the young guys and how many reps they've gotten, but he's sharp right now. I'm glad that Jackson got the reps that he got late in the season too. We're who very fortunate that they had it. Now afterwards it's great to look back and see how many reps guys got and should help us moving forward.

**Q. Tim, for seeing Hank Brown, what that has stood out to you about him since he got here I think last Friday, and also kind of what you saw on film when you were evaluating him in the portal?**

TIM LESTER: I think the biggest thing with quarterbacks, you know, when they come to practice for bowls, I mean, they are spinning, right? Coach does a great job. We talk about being a development program. So we were able to get him and Jimmy, our two new quarterbacks. They can't play in the game, but at the end of practice we always do a devo period, a development period. I just threw them in, both of them. They had literally been there 24, 48 hours, and I got them running the show.

Those are invaluable, for the next month before they actually show up where they're at now compared to where they were six days ago, such a huge opportunity for them. I'm excited for both of them. They both had ups and downs in their six days here, but they've definitely showed some promise.

Smart, good feet. Hopefully just trying to build that room to have a bunch of competition in the room. It's always the most important room to have good competition in, and I think we're going to have that.

**Q. As you're building the room, kind of how do you evaluate your level of need moving forward still in the portal?**

TIM LESTER: We're always hoping. The world is changing, right? So we're always looking to see what opportunities we have to continue to build the room. We still don't have enough in there. I would like to have five to six. I think we're at four or five right now. If the right person comes along that we think fits our culture and Iowa, then we'll definitely go after them.

I'm looking forward. I'm excited about the guys that are in there. I'm excited about the competition that's going to come.

**Q. Tim, you talked so much about the Shanahan offense, how it's predicated on timing. How much was this month good for your passing piece of the offense and just how much growth did you see there? Does it give you more confidence to call passes on Monday?**

TIM LESTER: Well, really this whole month you try to work on the things you need to work on, right? We're definitely going to be a different team.

Kaleb had an unbelievable season. It was so much fun to watch him play. So we'll be without him. The offense is going to change to a point, but that's really what we worked on.

Tried to get better with the pass game, get better at our timing. I really think receivers are starting to understand the timing of the whole thing along with the quarterbacks. The only way to do that is to practice it, right? Time on task is a real thing, and we've taken a lot of time over the last month to work on those things. So, yeah, our timing has gotten better.

We have to find a way to be explosive, right? This year sometimes handing inside zone to number two was our most explosive play. That's my job as the offensive

coordinator to find a way to be explosive in every game, no matter how that has to happen. We have on to find a way again tomorrow.

**Q. Tim, regarding receivers in particular and talking about the young guys that you have seen emerge over this time, any of those guys -- because, I mean, it's a young group, right?**

TIM LESTER: Yeah. The ones playing are young.

**Q. Any guys that have continued to grow in particular over this month?**

TIM LESTER: Yeah, I think a lot of them. Getting Reece back, he's a true freshman and played quarterback in high school. He was just kind of hitting his stride as a receiver and then got hurt and was out I think six weeks.

He kind of had to reteach himself. He's been coming along. Really all the young guys. KJ Parker is a guy who redshirted who had has a ton of reps, which I was excited to watch him out there. He's been out with Phil. It's been fun to have him out there. Dayton Howard has gotten better. They really all have.

When you are at the Green Bay Packers and bring in all the rookie wide outs, it's about how fast can they learn it because they stop thinking and start playing, and you started seeing that with some of the young guys. It's obviously harder when the lights are on tomorrow at 1:30, but we've seen a lot of growth from the receivers.

The tight ends as well. There are some young guys there that we think got a lot better in the last month. Hopefully it shows tomorrow, but I've been really encouraged by the last month and watching the whole unit, the passing unit get better.

**Q. Phil, I wanted to ask you about Nick Jackson. So much is made about the transfer portal these days, and this guy comes into your program and seems to really fit right in and gives you two years of a strong production. Can you talk about maybe the impact that he's had on your program and maybe somebody with similar qualities you would like to maybe bring in in the portal sometime soon?**

PHIL PARKER: Well, right now, I tell you, Nick, when we first recruited him and going down and visited with him, which was kind of awkward going to visit guys that are at a different school, but it was a unique situation, and he was just the right fit for us.

He matched our guys. He came in and blended in with our

guys. He learned a lot of football, and he became a good leader in that aspect of it. Jay helped him along the whole way.

I think Coach Wallace does a good job with those guys, and they're really like coaches on the field. So it's really excellent.

But, you know, right now I don't know if we're going to go out there and experiment in the portal to try to bring in another linebacker. I think we have a good group of guys right now that we're working with. You have to be very careful that you bring in the right guy into your program and don't want to disturb the locker room.

I think that's the most important thing right now in college football. As you can see, it's definitely different. I think it changes, and you can see the quality sometimes might be slipping a little bit just for the lack of guys being together.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you both.

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