

Valero Alamo Bowl: Oklahoma vs Oregon

Monday, December 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

Oklahoma Sooners
Coach Cale Gundy
Kennedy Brooks
Jeremiah Hall
Marvin Mims
Tyrese Robinson

Press Conference

CALE GUNDY: Practice has been going really well. Hospitality has been wonderful. The city is absolutely beautiful. Our players I believe have had a really good time. We're excited to be here. Looking forward to putting on a great show versus Oregon here in a couple nights.

I want to introduce, we've got running back here Kennedy Brooks, longtime player for us here, very good player; Marvin Mims, wide receiver; Tyrese Robinson; and Jeremiah Hall for the Sooner favorites that we have on our football team here.

Again, thank you very much.

Q. Can you talk to me a little bit about play calling for this game? And have you called plays before?

CALE GUNDY: I have not. I have not. I did a little bit with some practice stuff a long time ago when I was at UAB in Birmingham with Watson Brown but have not since. Very excited about the opportunity and having a chance to do this.

Q. Are we going to see a lot of similarities? It's probably too late to really install a lot of different things. How much did you learn from the past offense and how much do you incorporate that in what you do in terms of practice, game prep and actual game play?

CALE GUNDY: Well, you learn a lot, and obviously I've been here, I've been around several offensive coordinators and coaches who have called games.



We've got to do what's best and the strength of our football team, and that's what we're going to do. I'd love to be able to elaborate on that to you, but I just can't do that. You'll have to wait and see in a couple nights. But we're going to play to our strengths and whatever is best for our football team, that's a decision that myself and the other offensive coaches that came together have really helped me in this situation.

Q. Cale, what goes into being a first-time play caller? How do your duties change or how does your daily schedule change? How much are you going back and self-scouting and how much are you looking ahead? How does it change for you as a first-time play caller?

CALE GUNDY: It changes a lot. You now have a lot of responsibility that's put on you. The more you have, the more time you're going to spend and study and prepare. Like I mentioned a while ago, with the offensive coaches that we have that are still here and Coach Bedenbaugh, Coach Murray, Coach Finley, Coach Darlington, we've been working long hours every single day ever since we had a chance to come together as an offensive staff. So we've put a lot of time in.

But there is, there's a lot of preparing, and everything from the script, things can be different, maybe some things that I thought that maybe is going to help me better on the 29th to call plays is things that I've done for myself and may not be the way that they were done in the past, but I've got to do what's best for me and what's going to be best for our offense.

Q. Kennedy, now that you've had a year with DeMarco, how has he helped you either on the field or off the field?

KENNEDY BROOKS: Man, he's been a big help for me, just being a pro. He done it in college, he done it in the NFL. Man, just everything he says to me, I take it all in. He's improved my vision, my catching, what I need to do to make this cut, this read. Man, he's been helpful through everything, and man, he's a great coach. I love him.

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Q. Jeremiah, I wanted to ask, with the last couple weeks now that everything is kind of settled and you guys know who you have on the roster, the coaches, has it been kind of a relief to be able to focus on the upcoming game?

JEREMIAH HALL: Yeah, when we have as much going on around the program as we've had in years with Lincoln leaving and everything, getting a new head coach, once we've settled down, identified our target, our opponent, being Oregon, and just returning back to football has been fun. School is out. We're not really worried about that. No stress, just playing ball, and it's been fun.

Q. For Marvin, you've probably seen it, there's been a lot of speculation about your future, and I'm curious if you've made a decision about what you're going to do moving forward, and if you've had a chance to talk to Coach Venables, Coach Lebby?

MARVIN MIMS: Yeah, I've talked to Coach Venables and Coach Lebby that week while they were moving in. They had to move their families, all that stuff. But I definitely want to be here. I haven't made that much of a decision yet, but I still want to be here. I'm pretty sure that everyone playing in this bowl game still wants to be here, too. There have been some departures to go to other schools and stuff like that, but me being here, I definitely want to be in the crimson and cream next season.

Q. Cale, obviously when Bob retired middle of the summer, there wasn't really a last chapter on the field that you guys knew of ahead of time. You've been around Bob as much as anyone; have you guys kind of embraced that, that this can be a closing of the book for Bob as far as an on-field sendoff?

CALE GUNDY: I don't know if we've really talked about it. I've thought about it obviously because he's having a chance to come back and lead our program again. It's been very -- I've been close with Bob ever since. He lives less than a mile from me, so we've had an opportunity to spend a lot of time together away from football, still with my wife and his wife Carol. But it's been neat to have him around the office all day long.

It was a special week that I had the opportunity to fly around all over the country with him and go visit recruits and our commits and go into homes and go into schools with Coach Stoops. I was definitely -- I had a celebrity with me. I mean, it was unbelievable.

Sometimes we take things for granted how special somebody is and things that they've accomplished, but everywhere I took him, I mean, it was definitely -- the

cameras were out and everybody was wanting to take pictures of him, and it was a neat deal.

But it's good to have him back out there. Again, once you're a coach, it's always a coach. It's like riding a bike; it's not too hard. You have your certain ways that you believe, and you don't ever change those things.

Q. I was hoping that Jeremiah could start and then Marvin. Obviously Jeremiah you were referencing just the upheaval of the last month or so and you guys obviously felt it more than anybody. But the fan base -- it extends to a lot of people. How do you guys feel like what you guys do on Wednesday night could have an impact just on sort of making everybody in the Sooner fan base internally, externally, how they feel about this program moving forward?

JEREMIAH HALL: You know, adversity makes you stronger in more ways than one. Like you said, when you have a departure, and like I said, adversity, on the field, emotionally, decisions have to be made, like Marvin said. When guys are leaving, they're not just making that decision on their own. They're asking teammates, teammates are asking them to stay, and we have a lot more conversations with one another.

Between that and having to come together on the field, like I said, just makes us stronger, and so I'm hoping that through everything that we've faced here recently that we can go out on this game and have one last hoorah together and go out with a bang.

MARVIN MIMS: Being one of the younger guys on the team, being recruited by Coach Riley and then the rest of the staff, it's definitely an eye-opening thing whenever they leave, being one of the freshly recruited people, because you have conversations with these people all the time, expecting them to be here your entire college career. But things happen, things change.

When you're a younger guy, your head starts going everywhere. What am I going to do? You see older guys leaving, you see other people doing this.

But this game Wednesday night, I'm excited for the guys that we still have here, my class and the class below me, and I feel like depending on how we perform on Wednesday, the way we've been practicing, it's definitely going to play into the decision that they do next season. But I feel like with the guys we have here right now, they definitely want to be here, and it's definitely going to give them a huge confidence boost going into the off-season period.

Q. Marvin, Cale just talked about the differences of his role now versus the season; how have you seen him change here leading into this bowl game, and what stands out to you about Cale Gundy?

MARVIN MIMS: I mean, if there's any coach on like the whole offensive staff that's just detail oriented, it's definitely him. Moving from Coach Simmons' room last year to Coach Gundy's room this year, he really picks at the little small things, and probably ever since he's gotten the job as the OC for this game, the biggest difference definitely has been all the receivers being in our room and all the different things he has to communicate because there's a lot of different moments within meetings where he's not really talking to where I'm playing at, and it's just different because when we go through meetings, when Coach Riley was here and throughout the season, we have two designated rooms. You could definitely tell with him calling the plays and all that stuff, he knows everything, of course, but like how detailed he is and some players aren't used to being coached by him the way that he's coaching them now, and it's just changed for everybody.

At the end of the day it's going to make everyone in that room a better player and it's going to make us play in unison on Wednesday night.

Q. Cale, I know the focus is on the Alamo Bowl, but I'm curious, we haven't had a chance to talk to you, what you thought about Brent coming back as the head coach and about yourself remaining on the staff.

CALE GUNDY: I'm very excited. You know, it was a difficult time there for a few weeks. It really was. The one thing I've learned through all this is there's not a perfect way for this to go down. There's not a perfect way for somebody to take a job and to leave a program or assistants to have to leave. There just really isn't.

It's a part of coaching career that we have to go through that's like life or losing a family member or something. It's difficult; it's a challenge. It's how it continues to help you build and to grow and to learn. I've never had a chance or an opportunity to be a part of anything like this, and I've learned a lot. I've really, really learned a lot of things.

Very thankful for all the guys that we had on our staff that are no longer with us. Everybody that was a part of our staff, they poured everything into the University of Oklahoma. They worked their butt off.

But it's been different now, but again, these men like to play football, and the best thing they want to do is get out there on that field and play football. It is our job to make sure and continue to lead them and point them in the right

direction.

Our team has really responded well, but having Brent back is going to be very special. Having the opportunity to be here for many years, when Bob moves on, the first thing that goes through your mind, oh, no, what's going to happen to the University of Oklahoma. Well, the University of Oklahoma was winning a lot of games when Bob was there and it was winning a lot of games before Bob was there and probably going to continue to win a lot of games after. Lincoln took over and that's what we did, we won a lot of football games.

I'm going to make this comment now: We're going to win a bunch of damn football games with Brent Venables.

The University of Oklahoma football is bigger than just one person. It really is. It is truly one of the most special football programs ever in college football, and being around Brent and everybody knows if you don't know Brent, what you see on the sidelines in games, that's how he is as a person. He has passion like that 24 hours a day. He has passion for his players. He has passion for his coaches. He has passion for his coaches' families, and he's going to pour everything in. That's how he is.

I've been around him. I spent that one week traveling with him, and we were flying around all over the place, as well.

I'm very excited for the future, very fortunate to have the opportunity to continue to be a coach for the Oklahoma Sooners.

Q. Cale, if it isn't hard enough to use this game as your breakout game in play calling, you're playing someone that you don't really know a whole lot about. Who knows if they're going to be running the same schemes. I'm wondering how you factor that in and possible COVID -- rosters can change up until game time. How do you factor all that in?

CALE GUNDY: You know, we just kind of worry about ourselves. Again, I'm more concerned about our offense and how our players play. Again, what can we do the best. I just can't really be too concerned about and speculate what's going to be out there Wednesday night.

If we execute and do the things that we're supposed to do, everything will work out fine. I believe that 100 percent.

Q. Kind of following with that, you certainly know ahead of time entering this game that they're going to be without several of their top players. You don't have to prepare for Kayvon Thibodeaux or Mykael Wright. But getting down here the last two days we've learned

they're without five or six additional players on the two-deep on defense. How do you go about preparing as a coach and your players for just knowing who the numbers are. Forget about scheme or throwing in a new wrinkle.

CALE GUNDY: They're going to have 11 guys out there, and that's all we're worried about. We can't spend a lot of time because you can go back and watch film and try to speculate who you think may be out there, and if there's not a lot of film like certain guys playing corner or linebacker or defensive line, then you really don't know. Again, it comes down to us.

Their players are at the University of Oregon because they're good football players. They would not be there if they were not good football players, whether they're a freshman scholarship or sophomore or junior or senior or whether they're a walk on. They're only allowed a certain number of players just like we are, and we try to bring in the best football players we can bring in, but like I said, we're more concerned about what we've got to do to play Wednesday night.

Q. Tyrese, you committed under Bob Stoops. What's it been like to actually have him coach you? And then obviously you have the option because of the COVID year to come back. Have you made a decision at all what you're going to do?

TYRESE ROBINSON: I mean, like you said, the first time I came here, KB and Jeremiah was with me, we got the news that Bob Stoops was retiring. But Coach Riley came in, he was still in the program, so we just followed him and everything went well.

I've been looking forward to this opportunity to play under Bob Stoops. I'm excited. He's a great guy, a great coach obviously, and I'm more excited about this game and having him as a head coach for this game.

And just me focusing on next year, I'm not sure what I want to do yet, but I'm just really focused on this next game, and however that goes I'll make my decision.

Q. Cale, you've obviously been involved with more Oklahoma football games than anybody ever. I'm curious with that perspective in mind, what has impressed you most about the way Caleb has handled moving into the starting role and just all the things that come with being the quarterback at Oklahoma?

CALE GUNDY: Well, obviously being a quarterback, a lot comes with it, and even more so nowadays with just the world in sports and society and social media. You know,

it's a challenge. There's no doubt. I don't think none of us really truly know what Caleb has to go through or any starting quarterback at a college football program or NFL or wherever. We can think we know or speculate how somebody feels, but there's a lot on that young man's shoulders.

But I also do believe that quarterbacks are built a little different, and they're kind of prepared for that a little bit. They expect to have that -- to be able to feel that pressure and to be able to lead and to step out in front of the team and be that guy.

Just to see how Caleb has continued to get better through this year, I mean, it's really -- the better days -- he's still got so much room to grow as a football player and as a person. He's so very, very talented, but there's still so much to learn being out there as a young guy that every day that goes by and the more reps and the more practices you get, you're going to get better. He's heading in that direction.

Q. You've been around Oklahoma football pretty much since the early '90s. Seeing what transpired and now seeing that the majority of the offensive staff kind of stayed put, what did that mean to you, not just for yourself but just for DeMarco and Bedenbaugh and Joe Jon and all those guys that have meant a lot to the program for a long period of time to also get to stay back?

CALE GUNDY: Well, I think it could have went different ways. Nobody knows. Obviously it has a lot to do with the head coach who's hired. Is he a head coach from another program? Does he have 10 other assistants with him coming from another place? Or is he an offensive coordinator coming here who feels very comfortable with his offensive staff, or on the flipside of it, a defensive guy coming here who's looking for an offensive guy.

The offensive coordinator we hired I recruited and signed at Oklahoma. I don't think people know that. He's from Andrews, Texas. I recruited him, and I don't know if that had much to do with it, but it helps. It helps in that situation.

Again, all these coaches that are here, that have stayed here, we've got tremendous respect for all of them. We love them. We love their families. Like I said, they poured everything into this program, even the ones that aren't here with us anymore. While they were here, they were 100 percent locked in to being the best Oklahoma football coach they could be, and just excited for the future, obviously, to move on and see what's going to happen.

I think there's going to be good things that are going to happen for OU.

Q. Cale, I'm curious if as a first-time play caller, maybe it's human nature to assess what other play callers do with certain talent, maybe Kennedy sitting next to you, maybe Marvin, and think, I would do something differently, I'm going to use him this way, I'm going to call these plays that utilize this strength. Is that kind of human nature or is that just not how play calling works?

CALE GUNDY: Trust me, I feel a lot better going into this football game with these guys here next to me. The better players that you've got surrounding you and your offense -- again, like I mentioned earlier, our coaches, all of us have done a tremendous job putting this game plan together. We just want to allow our guys to play fast and play very, very physical. That's what we want to do.

We're going to put them in the best position to be successful.

Q. Tyrese, you guys in the offensive line room, Bill Bedenbaugh staying, what was your reaction? Was it a relief from him to stay aboard and continue to work with you guys?

CALE GUNDY: Right. When the news broke out, he was kind of stressed out about it, not knowing if he was going to keep his job or not, but when the news came out that he was, he was very excited to stay here at Oklahoma. He didn't want to leave. His family, kids, they didn't want to leave, so he was very excited about staying here. He'll be good for us and the young guys. He's a great coach, and it would be a big piece to miss out on, and I'm just excited and glad he stayed here.

Q. We talked to Brian Odom yesterday and he talked about talking to other people he knows that have called defensive plays in preparation for this. How much of that did you do in preparation for this game, and specifically did you talk to your brother, and what advice did he give you about calling plays if so?

CALE GUNDY: I did not. I did not. We talked a little bit about family and Christmas and some stuff on his ranch. That's about it.

You know, again, I think I answered it earlier; I've had the opportunity to be around a lot of great offensive minds here since I've been at Oklahoma. I've seen and studied a lot of coaches, how they've called plays and how they've ran their offense, and we've had a lot of success here, so I've learned a lot from those guys.

Again, I just wanted to make it -- whatever is the most comfortable for me. I'm not going to sit here and try to create a whole new offense. We're just going to play to our strengths and make it as smooth as possible for us.

Q. Jeremiah, first of all, there's a lot of people wondering about Caleb's future with the program. I want to ask, you in 2016 when you committed to Oklahoma, what was your thoughts when Baker announced he was going to come back and knowing you were going to be on the same roster with Baker. Secondly, Kennedy has run for three 1000-yard seasons. What's Kennedy's legacy here at Oklahoma?

JEREMIAH HALL: Well, I got kind of lucky because we got Kyler Murray, so I wasn't really worried about who the quarterback was going to be. But I mean, I've been kind of spoiled here at Oklahoma in terms of quarterbacks, so I've never really been worried whether they've been the starter or the No. 2 guy to be honest with you.

But in terms of Kennedy reaching three 1000-yards, I'd say his legacy would be a smart running back that knows how to follow his fullback.

Q. What about follow Tyrese?

JEREMIAH HALL: Oh, yeah, Tyrese.

CALE GUNDY: Just to add something about that, I recruited Kennedy back in the day from his high school, and I started recruiting him ever since he was a freshman. He was very, very good. He came from a great offensive system that they handed the ball off to him about 40, 45 times a game. He was -- I think what J-Hall was mentioning about being a smart runner and following the fullback, Kennedy is one of these guys who's had a lot of reps. He's had a lot of reps, and that's what makes you better in life, when you have opportunities to do something over and over and over, and Kennedy has been a special player for us here.

Obviously everybody knows there's a long line of great running backs here at the University of Oklahoma, but Kennedy is going to fall right in line with them.

Q. Coach Gundy, you've been up in the pressbox for the last couple years. Do you plan on staying up there as you call plays?

CALE GUNDY: I'll stay up there. I'll stay up there. It's quieter up there.

Q. Cale, you've done in-home visits for years and

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years. You talk to recruits and their parents. They credit you big time during the last couple months with everything that's happened. Did this set of visits you made in the last month, did it feel different compared to years past?

CALE GUNDY: Well, it gave me the opportunity to really develop and strengthen some relationships with our incoming players that were coming in. You know, again, I played here, I've been here a long time. This is home to me. I want the very best for the University of Oklahoma no matter what. I was going to do whatever I needed to do and to help recruit and to get on the phone with many of our players, the incoming players and the recruits and the commits, and as much as possible to keep this program going in the right direction.

It was challenging, trust me. It was a tough period for everybody. It didn't matter the changes in coaches, the players. It was tough for them. They're still trying to go through finals. They're finishing up a tremendous season, another 10-win season for the University of Oklahoma. But this program is in great, great, great shape. This is not a program that's been going 3-7, 4-8, 5-6. That's not who we are here. This program is at the top of the college football chain, and it's going to continue to stay there.

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