

Valero Alamo Bowl: Texas vs Washington

Monday, December 26, 2022

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

Texas Longhorns

Coach Pete Kwiatkowski

Jaylan Ford

Jahdae Barron

Anthony Cook

Keondre Coburn

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Can you tell us who you brought today?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: We've got Jaylan Ford, Keondre Coburn, AC, Anthony Cook and Jahdae Barron.

Q. Pete, since we didn't really get to talk to you much this season, can you give us an overview how your defense played this season and the progress they've made this season?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, starting last winter, the emphasis on the fundamentals, obviously the scheme and all that was a big part of the learning curve from last year to this year.

Going back to just the fundamentals, the nuts and bolts of how you play defense, effort, running to the ball, tackling, blocking protection, all the technique and skill that these guys need to do to execute at a high level, started with that, and then as the season went on, we had success. Guys felt it, saw it, and I think as a whole, the confidence level grew and grew and grew.

By the end of the year, they were a lot more trust with everybody, and they played -- the whole season they played their tails off, played with great effort, physical, played fast, and executed at a pretty high level, and with that came the confidence.

I think that's where you saw the growth in the group as a



whole.

Q. I know you said that the confidence level kind of grew and grew. How important was that performance against Alabama to help with that confidence for them to be able to see what they could do against an elite team?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, very much so. Everybody knows what Alabama is all about, and I know going into it, everybody is excited to go out and play the best. They had a great week of preparation, and then they went out there and got it done, made the plays, stuck together when they had that long run, and just kept chipping away.

That's the key to the deal. It's a long game, and when the guys trust each other and execute what they're supposed to do and they do it with great effort and they're physical and flying around and playing with great energy, that's when you play really good team defense.

Q. What's this week going to be like for you coaching against the purple and gold team, and especially the passing offense that they also bring?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, I know a lot of those guys, recruited a lot of those guys, and obviously have a history with Washington. Their offense, it starts with that quarterback. Penix is an outstanding quarterback, very accurate. O-line does a good job of keeping him clean, and they have three really good wide receivers that he can distribute the ball to, and so we've got a huge challenge in front of us for sure.

I know the guys are excited about it, top-ranked offense in the nation, and that's why we go play. We'll have a great week of practice, preparation, and then go out there and cut it loose.

Q. I'd like to ask all of you, but I'll start with Jaylan and then Jahdae. What have you seen from Washington on film? What kind of problems do they present? Is this the marquee match-up of this game, y'all's defense against their offense?



JAYLAN FORD: I think as we watched film, we noticed that Washington has a lot of creativity. As Coach said, they've got a great quarterback, and I think they just do a great job of creating mismatches for their receivers or just getting even their running backs involved in the pass game. We noticed they run a lot of concepts, kind of man beaters and stuff like that.

Then I think the match-up I think will be pretty good for us. I think we had a great week of practice, and I think it's just something we can build on and another challenge for us to go out there and play and have fun and show how much work we've put in this year and just continue being strong.

JAHDAE BARRON: Just to hit on what Ford said, just with the connections and stuff in there, having a great quarterback. The quarterback trusts No. 1 and 2. He loves to get them the ball. They've both got a lot of receptions and stuff like that. They're trying to hit him on fades and big posts. They're trying to just expose us.

But it'll be a good battle on 50/50 balls at the end of the day. At the end of the day, our back end and our DBs, we're going to be ready to play, and it's going to be a great match-up.

Q. Jaylan, for you, obviously you had such a great season, outstanding season, and also you have options at this point. Where are you as far as returning to Texas for next season?

JAYLAN FORD: So I think right now, just really being focused on Washington and just enjoying this Alamo Bowl with my teammates, which I consider my brothers. All of us, we're spending Christmas together. This is really just my family.

Kind of just keeping my head where my feet are I think is my main focus right now, and then we'll just go from there.

Q. Coach, if you had to pinpoint one thing about Penix that he does well, what would you say it is about him game that he does well?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Well, he's poised, makes really good decisions. He's really accurate, extremely accurate. Puts the ball where the receivers can make plays on it. He's done it consistently every week.

Q. For Jaylan and Keondre, is there one team that Washington compares to that has a lot of likeness to that y'all have played this year, and what would you say their main strength is other than just a great quarterback?

KEONDRE COBURN: I could probably say right now, looking like probably Texas Tech because Texas Tech likes to throw the ball a lot, and they're going to play four-down plays. Not even on 3rd down, they're going to play on 4th down. We've seen a lot of that from Washington.

They've got some great athletes, receivers too, and they've got a great quarterback, and I just feel like they protect the quarterback well. You probably don't want to say that's strong, but I think it is, because the quarterback don't get sacked, he's comfortable. He's in there making plays; they can call the type of offense they want to call. When you protect your quarterback and he don't get hit, the offense is really moving smoothly, and then you can execute a lot of plays that you want to run and go against the defense for us.

I think they really do good at protecting the quarterback, really just doing plays to where the quarterback don't get hit, so I think they do good with that.

JAYLAN FORD: Kind of like what he said, I think watching film, they definitely resemble Tech in their style of offense. They definitely throw the ball a lot, and they work a lot in space with their receivers.

I think one thing that stands out is they're really good on being ahead of the sticks when it comes to like 3rd down, kind of like what he said. They have a lot of 3rd and shorts and manageable stuff, not too much where they're backed up or anything.

Obviously they have a good game plan going in, and just keep drives alive and get points.

Q. Pete, going back to the previous question, you talked about how your defense played this year, but to add on to that, what kind of defense do you have? How would you characterize these young men?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Tough, physical, relentless, and then really good, hard workers. We emphasize and talk a lot about how we go about our business during the course of the week and our preparation and how that carries over to a game.

One of the sayings we use that is practice execution become a game reality. The guys have really bought into it, and they've seen the success that they've had when we execute at a high level, and it's because of how we prepare and practice, taking it from the meetings, the film study, and then going out into practice and doing it in practice.

Their mentality as far as how they attack their preparation

and then going out and playing with great effort and being physical and populating the ball, all the things that really good defenses do when they're playing good team defense.

Q. Pete, how would you describe the year Jaylan has had for you in terms of his importance at inside backer? I know the Big 12 coaches voted how they voted. Did you feel like he should have been the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, Jaylan had an unbelievable year. It started last off-season. You saw the change in his focus and his consistency and his attention to detail when it came to diet, workouts, just all the stuff that goes on behind the scenes that he does with Coach Becton and the strength staff, and then his level of understanding the defense grew, his communication grew. With that, the confidence grows, and then he goes out and makes plays. Again, it's a credit to these guys and how they go about their business week in and week out, preparing for the next opponent.

His ability to create turnovers, make turnovers, get the ball on the ground, get guys lined up, setting the front, making the checks, there's a lot that goes into it other than just the physical stuff you see, and his growth has been awesome. That's why as a coach, Coach Choate, myself, all our coaches, when guys do that, that's the satisfaction that we're doing something right.

And the guys' buy-in, all these guys' buy-in, it starts with that. They trust in us, we trust in them, they trust each other, and then the guys that make plays, like Jaylan, like all these guys, you go out on Saturday, whatever day that is, game day, and cut it loose, and let's go.

Q. Anthony and Keondre, what's the motivation? A lot of times bowl games come down to which team wants to be there the most. What's the motivation for Texas?

ANTHONY COOK: I mean, for me, I just feel like J-Ford was touching on it, we're family. We spend Christmas together, battle with these guys in the summer, looking at their face when they doing their runs, they're looking at mine, we're pushing each other. So it's much bigger than just the game. Like we build relationship, bonds, so I feel like I owe it to them to finish the season strong, and I feel like they feel the same.

KEONDRE COBURN: Same what Cook said. We're here. Why not? This is another opportunity to have competition and go get somebody else. I mean, Coach Davis preached to the D-line saying that in the NFL you play 17 weeks. We only play 12 weeks, so why not play another

week. What is it going to do to us just to go out there with my brothers and grind.

We dominated I feel like all year. I love these dudes up here. Just for Texas, just another opportunity for us to just showcase our skills against somebody else. It's a different conference, Pac-12, so why not just go play and have fun.

Q. Anthony, could you describe their main two receivers, McMillan and Odunze, what their skill set looks like?

ANTHONY COOK: Yeah, Jahdae touched on it, all their receivers, 11, 1, 2, all of them, they're good at what they do. They can make plays in space and they make contested catches. We're going to have a challenge on our hands, but like any challenge as far this season, we embrace it, so we're looking forward to it.

Q. Pete, a little off topic, you guys just had a really good signing class for the 2023 recruits. Can you maybe speak on the recruiting of those guys and maybe speak on some of the individuals from that class that kind of stand out in your mind?

PETE KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, there's a lot of them, but you guys talk about the bond that they have and the relationships that they've built over the years, and that's what recruiting is. Coaches, you go out and you you're recruiting these guys and you're trying to build those relationships with them, and at the end of the day, I think that's what we did, and that was the difference between us getting them.

Anthony Hill obviously is a really good linebacker. He's still a kid, but if you've watched him, he's fast, physical. He loves football. A lot of these guys, all these guys, that's one of their traits that we're trying to identify, the guys that love football, are into football, like to grind more so than the recruiting part of it. We get it; the recruiting part is the recruiting part. It's fun. It's exciting.

But at the end of the day, we're trying to find those guys that really, really like to compete and love the grind and the preparation part of going out -- you only get a guaranteed 12 opportunities every year, and these guys are working their tails off 365 days a year for those 12 opportunities.

That's one of the traits that we try and identify in these guys, so Anthony has got that, Derion Gullette. The linebacker class is outstanding. I think Sydir Mitchell, he's a big guy, big body guy that's going to come in and we think is going to be able to contribute. We'll see.

But the other thing about all these guys, I can't remember



the exact number, but there's like close to half a class that's going to be here in the spring and be able to get in the winter workouts, get adapted and acclimated, and then the guys that we've got coming back, build that bond with them, and these guys can show them the ropes.

Q. Anthony or Keondre, you touched on this beforehand, but as seniors, why did you decide to play in this game and not opt out and get a head start on your NFL Draft prep?

KEONDRE COBURN: Again, why not just put out some more film out there. We're going against the No. 12 team in the nation; why not go out there and go get some good competition.

Then plus, I ground with these dudes from the start. Why not finish with them? I'm not harping on anybody else; I just felt like in my position I felt like I needed to do this, and plus it just shows the NFL that I can consistently play weeks and weeks and just showcase some more skills.

Plus I love them. I love Texas. Why not finish with a bang? I don't want to be 30 or 40 going, I should have played in that game, so I'm playing in it now.

ANTHONY COOK: Pretty much what Coburn said.

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