

Valero Alamo Bowl: Texas vs Washington

Friday, December 30, 2022

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

Texas Longhorns

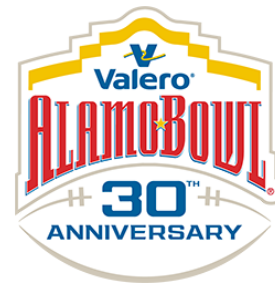
Coach Steve Sarkisian

Quinn Ewers

Keondre Coburn

Anthony Cook

Press Conference



Washington 27, Texas 20

STEVE SARKISIAN: A couple things I'd like to hit on. One, thank the Alamo Bowl. You guys did a great job with this game all week. I thought it was an awesome atmosphere. Really appreciate our fans, the support. A lot of love for them and what they gave us tonight. I appreciate that.

I want to recognize our senior class and the guys that aren't -- that are moving on, for what they've done for our program. I greatly appreciate it, and very thankful for what they've done for me, the staff and this program, changing the culture here.

I'm proud of our team and what they've done from year one to year two. I think we're making really good progress, and the key for us now is to take the next step going into year three. All of us have to improve individually so we can improve collectively, but without these guys, especially these guys here at the end of the table, what they gave to us and this program will never go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.

A lot of credit to University of Washington. They've got a good football team, played well.

I think at the end of the day, missed opportunities for us. We had some really makeable 3rd downs early in the game, 3rd and short, 4th and short that we don't convert on where I think we could have capitalized and extended some drives. I thought they did a nice job of extending drives. I think they had three straight drives of 16, 13 and

14 plays that resulted in 17 points.

But in the end, I was proud of our guys. They continued to battle, continued to compete, gave us a chance at the end. Just didn't make enough plays. We've got work to do to get over the hump, and to beat good teams, you have to play good football, and we didn't play good enough tonight.

Q. Quinn, you really seemed to get into a rhythm in the second half. Can you talk about what changed and how comfortable you felt in that second half?

QUINN EWERS: Yeah, good question. You know, after that first drive, we kind of got it rolling. It's always good to have that first touchdown, and it's awesome to have a first drive coming out of the locker room to score.

You know, with our offense, once we get rolling, it's hard to stop us. I give a lot of credit to those guys. Yeah.

Q. Quinn, how frustrating was it to not be able to connect with X on those plays, especially those 2nd and 3rd down deep shots?

QUINN EWERS: Yeah, you know, it's tough, but I didn't lose any confidence in him and I know he didn't lose any confidence in himself. Stuff like that happens every now and then. But it sucks to see it happen in crucial situations like it was.

But then again, we didn't lose any confidence, and we have a lot to build on, and I'm excited for the future.

Q. Steve, can you talk about the game plan coming in; didn't seem like you were able to establish the run very well, and obviously you had opportunities in the passing game. What was the thought process with the running game?

STEVE SARKISIAN: Yeah, obviously when you don't have your two top runners, we had to shift a little bit of focus. We knew we were going to throw the ball a little bit more tonight. Had more than enough confidence in Quinn, the receivers and the offensive line, tight ends that we could do that.



I felt like there were runs there early. We just didn't -- if it wasn't one thing, it was another. It was just spotty in the run game early on. Then when we got a couple runs, it felt pretty good, and then we end up getting a hold on another one. We just didn't quite get the rhythm.

On a different night, maybe a month ago, we're running the ball a lot more and we're going to maybe run ourselves into rhythm in the run game. But the plan tonight was we knew we were going to throw the ball more than we had kind of throughout the season. We felt like that gave us the best chance, and it did. I thought the pass game was effective.

I would have liked for us to run the ball better than we did, no question. Just didn't quite execute the way we wanted to.

Q. Steve, besides the obvious improvement in wins, what about this season gives you confidence that you can take it a step further next year?

STEVE SARKISIAN: Yeah, I think, one, our culture. I know I've been harping on this, but I mean that. I think we have a team that is full of competitors. I think we have a team that really is fighting to win and they're fighting to win together.

I think we can still make improvements there, of just making sure that we're really poised and composed in critical moments of the game.

But I also look at just the improvement we made defensively. That offense is a high-flying offense, and they've shredded a lot of people. To make them earn it the way that we did tonight, again, we would have loved to have gotten off the field on 3rd down better, and I think that that's something that we need to address in the off-season is our own ability to convert 3rd downs. I think that needs to improve, and our ability to get off the field on defense on 3rd down needs to improve.

There's a lot of factors in that that go into it.

There's a lot for me as a coach to be proud of these guys and what they were able to do from year one to year two, but a sign of a good program is continued growth and improvement, and I think that our developmental program has got to come right back into effect in January and our off-season conditioning program and our football development, and then get ourselves ready for spring ball so we can continue to grow and then implement these young players that are showing up here mid-year.

Q. Coach, did you have in your game plan a scenario

where you were going to test out Maalik Murphy under center?

STEVE SARKISIAN: No.

Q. Sark, for you and Keondre, the pressure was there; Penix was throwing a lot of balls with hands in his face or guys barreling down on him. It just didn't get home. How frustrating was it to see that you were able to generate pressure but it just didn't get home in resulted in some of those negative plays that you needed at critical times?

KEONDRE COBURN: I mean, the game plan was getting after him. You saw it today. We did. We got a lot of QB hits, a lot of QB pressures. He was a good quarterback for a reason. He made plays.

He knew that -- I think he knew that effectively how good our D-line was, especially interior, that he knew he didn't have that much time to throw the ball or hold the ball like he wanted to, so it was just quick throws, quick passes and stuff like that which they were doing, and they executed it the right way. You seen it, we were in there literally. I thought I got it, but it's football, and they had a great game plan.

STEVE SARKISIAN: Yeah, I think to what Snacks' point is, they hadn't given up many sacks coming into the game, either, for a team that threw the ball. Not that we didn't think we would get home, but we knew the game plan had to be to affect him. We had to affect him with our coverages. We had to affect him with the pass rush to try to get him off the spot, to make the pocket dirty, and I thought we did that for the most part. I thought we did that, and when the ball came out quick, they got people out; when they took their shots, they max protected us.

That's not an excuse. We've got to keep finding ways to get home to try to create a few more negative plays, which we had a hard time doing tonight.

I felt like they stayed -- even when they threw a 1st down incompleteness, they got themselves after 2nd down into a makeable 3rd down scenario for him, and then he made some 3rd down throws. The throw there late, the kind of jump-ball play that the kid makes on our sideline was a huge play in the game just from a time perspective.

We've got to continue to find ways to, A, apply pressure on the quarterback, because I think we really improved in that this year. Now we've got to continue to find ways to get people on the ground when they're going to throw the ball that much.

Q. Quinn, Coach talked about taking the next step next year for this team. What's the next step for you to help this team out?

QUINN EWERS: For me, I think I need to fill more of a vocal role on this team, be more of a vocal leader instead of just leading by what I do on and off the field. I think that's the main thing for me, honestly. I need to maybe mature in that area a little bit more.

Q. Steve, two of arguably the biggest games of the year, TCU and this one, you had trouble offensively in the first half. Was there anything strategy or scheme-wise there, and did you think Washington was just more physical up front with your offensive line?

STEVE SARKISIAN: You know, I liked the scheme. I felt like we really harped on this week about winning on 1st down to put ourselves in position to win on 3rd down. Unfortunately in the first half, we had three 3rd and shorts that we don't convert on, which throughout the year we've been really effective in that area, and tonight we weren't.

I've got to look at the tape and find out exactly what happened, but the idea of getting ahead of the chains and putting ourselves, staying out of 3rd and long and trying to negate their ability to rush the passer, which was a strength of their team, to convert those 3rd downs and then ultimately the 4th down that we had that we didn't convert on.

To me, you make those plays and now we're across midfield and we're probably going to score.

I look back, and like I said, I always try to look at myself first and what I can do better. I've got to look at those play calls that I made and was that the best thing for us. I felt good about them; they didn't work.

Then ultimately when you can find that rhythm then you can start to do some of the other things that we wanted to do in the game. I felt like we had some opportunities for throw and catch, which we were able to do, but we just couldn't find the rhythm in the first half of crossing midfield and then getting in the red area and scoring points. We just weren't able to do it because we didn't extend our drives, and then they possessed the ball. They did a good job possessing the ball early in the game.

Q. Sark, when you called the time out right before the punt on that 4th down, I couldn't tell if they shifted into a fake, but did you or Coach Banks see something? Talk about that sequence there.

STEVE SARKISIAN: Yeah, we saw it. Obviously you don't

want to have to burn that time-out. Time-outs are precious late in the game. But I didn't love the call that we had on from a punt return perspective, and anticipated the fake coming, and then they shifted to it as I was calling the time-out, so I'm glad I did because I don't think we were in a great call to defend what they were about to go do.

Q. Keondre and Anthony, Coach was talking about how much you guys have meant to this program. Are you able to see the growth, and what specifically leads you to believe that the program is left in better hands now than kind of when you guys came in?

KEONDRE COBURN: I mean, just comparing like this season to last season, it's night and day. Whoever was watching, paying attention, they could obviously see that.

I'm just simply happy to be a part of this program, thankful for everything this program has given me. I'm just blessed.

ANTHONY COOK: Yeah, I mean, you could just tell from last year to this year we had a lot of games that we could compete in. We came into a lot of games confident that we knew we could dominate, and I felt like we dominated in a lot of games.

Do you wish you had certain things back? Yes, but that's football. But this program literally in year two made a huge change from what last year was. We played in a bowl game, where last year we wasn't.

All I see is success. I'm happy to be part of this program, happy to be part of this coaching staff, be coached by Sarkisian, Coach Davis and them. I love this team. I love this university, everything they have done for me, gave me so many opportunities for my future, and yeah, I feel like the program, it wasn't just off of us. Everybody came into the program and believed after last season, and I felt like I could just see nothing but growth keep going on from now, so yeah.

Q. From a play calling perspective, how disappointing were some of the dropped passes that occurred, but from a positive standpoint, can you talk about Casey Cain's performance?

STEVE SARKISIAN: Yeah, I'll start with Casey first. I'm really happy for Casey. Kind of felt like all year we were searching for a third wide out, and he made plays tonight and showed up, and I was happy for him. I was proud of him to do what he did, to make the plays that he did.

I think inevitably we're going to look back at the season when we come back as a staff and we'll evaluate every aspect of it, and I think we're seeing a lot of growth in



Quinn, and I was saying it all month long, just kind of his growth from where he was at and his ability to mentally persevere through some tough times, and that's part of it. To watch him rebound, to play the way that he played tonight -- I think ultimately passing game is about continuity, it's about confidence, it's about throwing, catching, it's about anticipation of him throwing the ball where receivers are going to be and receivers anticipating where balls will be thrown.

That's going to be a big point of emphasis of ours to go along with a lot of other things.

We definitely have to improve that area of our team from a consistency standpoint. It should be a strength of ours. This year it was hit and miss.

Tonight was kind of a microcosm of kind of how the season went for us. We've got to improve that area of our team, like a lot of areas, but that's going to be one in particular because that should be a real asset of ours. We should be a dynamic passing football team, and we're close to being one, but we just can't have the missed ops when they present themselves.

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