

Valero Alamo Bowl: Texas vs Washington

Friday, December 30, 2022

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

Washington Huskies

Coach Kalen DeBoer

Michael Penix Jr.

Wayne Taulapapa

Bralen Trice

Press Conference

Washington 27, Texas 20

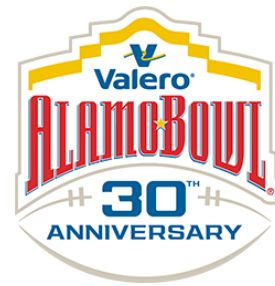
KALEN DeBOER: First of all, just another big night for the 2022 Huskies. Just can't say enough, and it starts with these guys up here. They all played huge, huge roles in what happened tonight. I think back to the highlights and all that. I'm so proud of our football team.

Tonight was a culmination I think of everything that we've worked on, the things that we've tried to improve, especially in the latter half of the season. You saw our physicality, I think, take that next step, and finding a way to win is something that I think we've really emphasized and told the guys last night, if it's a close game, we're going to find a way to win. Kind of that refuse-to-lose mantra has been a piece of what we've talked about, too.

Super proud of this team, super proud of these guys up here.

Q. With the 4th down attempts, three 4th down attempts, two for three conversions, but what does that say about your confidence in the offense and really wanting to keep them on the field?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think all season it's been one of those things where you pick and choose the right times, and you've got the ball in 9-Ball's hands here, you're going to win most of them. He did a great job executing along with the offense on the quarterback sneak, and then the 4th and 2, just shows what Mike is able to do because he's booting away from his left hand. It's more natural to boot to the left, and we had him booting to the right. He and Devin



Culp connected, and just big play in the game, just being able to stay on the field. We're right there where if we turned it over on downs, we're putting our defense in a tough spot.

I thought we played a great team game. The defense got the spots, especially in the first half there. Really kept us with that lead and that cushion.

I thought in the third quarter the offense did a great job going into the fourth quarter staying on the field and finding ways to convert and finish drives.

Q. Coach, another night that Mike was kept clean. How special is this offensive line, and Mike, what have they meant to you this season?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, just all season long, they've been an extension -- Mike understands just where our protection might be vulnerable. He's directing traffic first of all, and they're just entrusting him that what he sees they'll just pick it up.

He knows where to go with the football. The receivers get open quick when they need to. It takes the whole offense to keep Mike upright.

The offensive line has been just so solid. Coach Scott Huff and the offensive line, every day I think they just had this chip on their shoulder from last year and continued to build, and by mid-season I think we had this level of confidence and understanding of what we could be, and they kept -- just every week, working so hard, bringing it every day.

MICHAEL PENIX JR: Yeah, it's amazing. I said before, it's just the work those guys put in. When I first came here in the off-season, just seeing those guys always doing extra work, after hard workouts, it just showed how much they wanted it, how much they wanted to be successful. They feed off of each other's energy, and they always pushed each other. They have that mindset where it's like, my guys are going to get to Mike. Whenever I hear them talking about that, I'm like, hey, man, I love being back here. That just completely gives me time to continue to keep delivering passes.



With the receivers that we have, we're always going to make great plays. The running backs, as well, and the pass protection, as well, they've been doing an amazing job. Even out of the backfield, I know Wayne had a couple catches today, just being explosive out of the backfield in the run and the pass.

But obviously, yeah, it starts with the offensive line, and those guys have been working extremely hard from day one.

Q. Michael and Wayne, the third quarter and those long drives, what was working for you and the ability to sustain those long drives?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: Man, just continuing to believe and just continuing to believe in our preparation. I feel like we prepare the best out of everybody in the country. That starts with our offensive coordinator, Coach Grubb. He makes sure that we always know what the situation is, and every time we snap the ball, each and every guy, they know their assignment and they know what to do to be successful in that play. It starts with the preparation and just continuing to have an 1-0 mindset. Obviously early on it wasn't clean and we wished we did a lot better, but at the same time, we knew that this team and this offense wasn't going to stop. We were going to continue to keep swinging, and we knew that those punches we were throwing, they were going to end up landing real big.

WAYNE TAULAPAPA: Yeah, we talked about how every play has new life, so if we were to mess up one play, we knew we were going to come back and get it right the next time.

So it was just trusting each other, trusting the guy next to you that they was going to do their job, and you could see Mike throwing the ball, receivers catching it, O-line blocking, we all tried to work together just to make it successful, and we kept moving the ball, which is really good.

Again, at the end of the day, it's all about us and our preparation and our details and our hard work, and it really showed out.

Q. Kalen, on the 4th and 2 conversion, McCallister ran out there first and then Texas called a time-out. Was the plan to punt there and did you change your mind? What was the thought process as you eventually went for it?

KALEN DeBOER: We had kind of a -- I don't know how you word it. We had some situations that we could work

through, depending on what they were going to give us, and once they called the time out, then we really felt like we had a good play call, talking to Coach Grubb, and it gave us some more time to work through and gave me a chance to think about what the pros and cons were.

Again, putting the ball in Mike's hands, and I really liked the idea of moving the pocket and getting him outside where he could run and pass, and he did a nice job executing, Devin securing the catch and getting the 1st down.

Q. Mike, after the game you were out there with your whole family. Texas fans were asking you for pictures and stuff. What was that moment like to celebrate with your team and to kind of get a chance to soak everything in and enjoy what you guys accomplished this year?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: Yeah, it was amazing. A lot of people know that my immediate family, like my mom and dad and them, they weren't able to make their flights, but nothing was stopping them from coming to see me play. I love them so much. They've been that supportive all throughout my life, so each and every chance I get, I tell them I love them, try to give them hugs and stuff. But just having that support and going all the way to Seattle and just going there and just having that family feel, as well, it was just an amazing thing. I'm glad to be in this position. I'm glad to be a Dog. This definitely was an amazing experience.

Q. You guys have a seven-game win streak and you've beaten Oregon and Washington State and Texas. Do you feel like you want to go on and play another one? You've got so much momentum going on right now?

BRALEN TRICE: Sure, this momentum we've built up from all these wins and all this hard work we've put in, I don't know about you guys, but I feel like I could go out and play another game. Yeah, that's all I've got to say.

Q. Michael, when did you know the flea flicker was going to be the first call of the game? And can you talk about not only that play but some of the other deep balls and how it influenced plays down the road and really softened up the defense for the running game and the underneath stuff?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: Yeah, Wayne might get a little salty. Other players, if they see this, they might get a little salty. But coach Grubb, he actually told me yesterday. He was like, this is going to be the play; don't tell nobody. You're just going to go out there and execute it. Today in walk-throughs I almost told Wayne, and I was just like, no, I can't do it.

I told Wayne whenever we went out as captains, I was like, hey, we're going to break this down first, so I held it as long as I could.

Yeah, we knew we were going to do it, and we've practiced all week long, and we knew that the execution was going to be clean. Ja'Lynn Polk made an amazing catch on that one, taking the hit, as well. The offensive line giving me time to be able to throw the ball on that situation was amazing.

Obviously just starting the game off fast gave us a lot of momentum, but even on that drive, it didn't end right. I threw an interception. But just continued to stay 1-0, continuing to push each other and believe in each other. My teammates are always lifting me up and making sure that I wasn't soaking in on that one play, and just making sure next time we got the ball, we go and put points on the board.

Q. Kalen and Michael, I know Kalen, after the game you were asked about next season, and you said, first we're going to celebrate this one, but there's a whole lot of talent coming back. You guys are on this run, and I think a lot of people are really excited. When you look at what you guys are capable of, what do you see?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, you want to celebrate it because you've got guys like Wayne who poured so much into this and you really want them to be able to enjoy and celebrate with them what we've all accomplished.

But you can't help but just be fired up about what we have returning. I really still think that there's so much room and area for us to improve, and that's the scary thing.

Every year is its own year, and when we have this chance to get back together here in January, we have to reset everything because there's going to be new leaders. There's going to be just different vibes and nothing that we did this year carries over; no points, no wins. It all starts over. We'll definitely address that, and I want to enjoy tonight. I want to enjoy this season.

We finished it the way we wanted to, but man, I'm fired up about what lies ahead and guys like Wayne and this senior class, they set out to really do something special and leave a legacy, and it's something that's treasured, and guys are going to be excited to carry that on in years to come.

Q. Michael, when I was looking at this game I kind of figured you were going to break a record about middle to late end of the second quarter, and you did. You

now have the season all-time passing yardage record. Could you talk about that?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: Yeah, it's amazing. Obviously I couldn't do it without the guys around me, starting with Coach Grubb making the play calls, offensive line blocking their tails off each and every play, giving me time in the pocket. I always say we've got receivers out there that's -- we've got takers out there that's going to go get the ball anytime it's in the air.

It makes it easy for me, just going out there and just treating it just like practice, just going out there, pitch and catch and continue to trust the process and continue to trust the play calling and everything and our preparation and stuff like that so that we can go out there and execute on game day. It wasn't really -- it was definitely a blessing that I was able to achieve that, but obviously I couldn't do it without the guys around me.

Q. Bralen, what was the mindset of the defense in the fourth quarter?

BRALEN TRICE: We just knew we had to keep playing and nonstop motor. We've got to put a cap on them and finish the game out.

I think personally going into every series, I'm just mentally telling myself I've just got to give everything I can and empty the tank every single time, and I know it kind of reflects on the rest of the defense because I know those guys can feel my energy.

That's pretty much the mindset going in.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

BRALEN TRICE: No, not at all. We're always ready. Me and my guys up front, we're always ready for a battle.

Q. Both Michael and Wayne, can you break down Wayne's 42-yard touchdown run? Was that the play call? Did you check down to that? What did you see? Can you break it down for us, Wayne?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: It was one of our simple zone plays. I have a run pass option on that, but just trying to feel out the game feeling how they adjusted and reacted to our pass option, I was like, okay, I'm going to hand it off this time, see how they adjust to it, and I knew handing it off to Wayne we had a good box and he'll make anything happen with the ball in his hands. Man, it was a hole and he took it, and that stiff one, I couldn't see it on the field really but I saw it on the replay, but man, he got somebody with a stiff arm, too, and put the burners on.

WAYNE TAULAPAPA: Yeah, so I got the ball and O-line just cleared up -- it opened up like the Red Sea which is perfect, but I think Mike in the passing game softened them up in the run game, so once we had this opportunity, just took it and score had no choice, and just glad Mike trusted me with the ball, and I know he's explosive but I try to do the same and just blessed to have a great O-line pushing up and opening everything up for me, so yeah, it worked out perfectly.

Q. You guys targeted Taj Davis a lot more tonight than any other game. Was that part of the game plan this week or did that open up as other things happened during the game?

MICHAEL PENIX JR: You know, Taj is a guy that comes to practice every day and works hard. He's a guy that a lot of people don't really hear too much about. You say that we don't really talk about him much, but he's a guy when he's out there on the field I have no doubt in my mind that he knows what to do, and he's going to make a big play. Yeah, early on in the game, yeah, we were targeting him, and throughout the game, but he just shows it every day in practice. His work ethic and everything he does in practice, it makes a difference. It shows on the game field, as well.

Also Ja'Lynn Polk, he was battling through some stuff, as well, so that got Taj on the field a lot more. Those guys are playing in the same position, but once we knew we had one guy down, we already knew that we have people that's going to step up, and Taj was able to step up and made a lot of good plays for us.

Q. Just curious, what happened to Cam Davis? Did he get hurt down here?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, he just got -- it's really unfortunate. He got dinged up a couple days ago. Just non-contact day for us really and just one guy zigs and one guy zags and you get dinged up just enough to where he wasn't able to go tonight. It's nothing serious. I feel bad for him because he works so hard every day, and he's been a good counter attack to Wayne and the way they've operated all season long.

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