

# Valero Alamo Bowl: Oklahoma vs Arizona

Tuesday, December 26, 2023

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

## Oklahoma vs Arizona Wildcats

**Brennan Carroll**

**Johnny Nansen**

**Mike Wiley**

**Martell Irby**

**Tanner McLachlan**

**Dalton Johnson**

**Jacob Cowing**

Press Conference



MIKE WILEY: For me, it's important because it's something I always wanted to do. I always dreamed of going to a bowl game, and luckily my last year I was blessed to get that opportunity, and so I always see that as another opportunity for me to go out there and show the world what I can do and to play with my brothers.

MARTELL IRBY: I would say we aren't typically coming together treating this like a bowl game. This is our championship game. We're not really riled up about sitting out. Nobody wants to be on the sideline during this game. We all want to take part in it because it means that much to us. We've been working since January to end this the right way, so we all want to take part in it. We all want to go have fun. We all want to go make memories with our brothers one last time.

**Q. Coach Nansen, why don't we start by you telling us the defensive players you brought with you today.**

JOHNNY NANSEN: Martell Irby, one of our linebackers here, and then obviously Stukes, our nickel, is down there, and then DJ, Mr. Texas, he's here. Those are our guys.

BRENNAN CARROLL: Jacob Cowing, wide receiver; Tanner McLachlan, and the old cagy veteran Mike Wiley running back is down there, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Nansen, as an alum Alamo player in '94 and a past coach, tell us about the week and about the game coming up.

JOHNNY NANSEN: It's been awesome. Appreciate you guys for taking the time. Our players are really enjoying the week. We're looking forward for this match-up. Obviously our players are looking forward to it. Spent 13 straight practices. I think they're ready to play. We're excited to be here.

Again, thank you for your support.

**Q. For the older players, in the day of opting out of bowl games and things like that, why is it important that you guys take the field one last time?**

**Q. For Michael, you had mentioned before we left for San Antonio that you were still looking for tickets for your family and your friends. Can we get an update if you got those 20 tickets?**

MIKE WILEY: Yeah, I think right now I've got around 23 people coming to the game. I've got around about 10 family members and the rest are like from high school. I'm super excited for this game to just basically put on a show for them.

**Q. Tanner, the team impact of Braxton, I know you had built a relationship with him a little bit, and he's out here in San Antonio for the Alamo Bowl. Could you talk a little bit about what he's meant to this team, what he's meant to you and to see him out here?**

TANNER McLACHLAN: Yeah, it's been awesome to see him out here. It's an inspiration to us. He comes with a smile on his face. He comes and plays around with us, we love having him around, and it's been super cool to see him out here.

**Q. Dalton, as a Texan, what does this moment mean for you?**

DALTON JOHNSON: I'm super excited. Like Mike, who's



struggled to get some tickets, I'm at about 30, 35 right now. But with all that being said, it's just exciting to be here with my brothers and be able to put on a show for my family.

**Q. And the 35 people, family, friends? Who are the people coming?**

DALTON JOHNSON: About 30 family members and then the other five are friends.

**Q. What's your favorite football memory playing in Texas?**

DALTON JOHNSON: I'd probably say my senior year of high school, our state championship game, playing at AT&T. That was super exciting. Was able to win that. Big win, too.

**Q. For Brennan, going up against Brent Venables' defense, what are some of the challenges against up against them?**

BRENNAN CARROLL: Yeah, it's a veteran group. A lot of those guys are going to play in this game. They're talented up front. The linebacker corps is star studded and their secondary is fantastic. They do a great job getting the ball and creating turnovers, and so that's kind of been one of their keys to success throughout the season, so we've got to protect the ball, and we've got a tough front to go against, but we're excited for the challenge.

**Q. Coach Nansen, talk about playing a quarterback making his first start in this game, and maybe that same question to the defensive players, as well, in Jackson Arnold.**

JOHNNY NANSEN: I think he's pretty special. Obviously he was a highly recruited kid coming out of high school. We got the chance to watch him a little bit because he played a little bit in the BYU game. He knows the offense. He's dangerous with his feet, so we've got to make sure we're accounted because the quarterback runs and things like that that they like to do. We're excited. We're excited to play, and I know our guys are excited to play.

**Q. How does this compare so far, just the experience for the previous time that you were able to be in a bowl game and have any of the teammates who haven't looked to you like what do we do, how does this whole process go?**

JACOB COWING: No, I wouldn't say none of the teammates are come up and asked me about the process, but out here in San Antonio there's a lot more events that we're able to do compared to the last one I was at, and just

like the atmosphere, just how everyone is together, how close the culture is within San Antonio, so it's been cool experience in San Antonio. I know last time I was out here I really did get to explore the city like that, so having the opportunity to go out there and see San Antonio like that a little bit has been really cool.

**Q. Yesterday we got news that Jayden de Laura was entering the portal. What has he meant to the development of the game?**

BRENNAN CARROLL: Jayden has been great for us. He's been a fantastic teammate, been a fantastic leader, and he's looking for an opportunity to go to see what's out there. But he's still with us, which is a testament to the kid, testament to the program, that he wants to hang out and finish his last game here with his teammates. He's been awesome all week, been awesome all year, and really excited that he's taking the opportunity to see what's out there.

**Q. Jacob, how would you reflect on your time at Arizona?**

JACOB COWING: Locking back when I first got here, I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else. Every day, day in and day out, I've cherished each and every moment ever since I've stepped foot on that campus. Coaching staff, the players, that family atmosphere. It's something I love doing each and every day, and I'm going to cherish those moments for the rest of my life.

**Q. Johnny, they also have a new offensive coordinator. How do you plan for that?**

JOHNNY NANSEN: Like I said before, obviously they're going to run their offense. Whatever they put on tape, that's what they're going to come out in. We're prepared for other things, knowing the history of the coordinator where he came from, so we're prepared in that way. Then obviously the quarterback is very talented, but he's got a lot of skill guys that are dangerous, too, so we're just going to prepare the way we prepare, and I think the guys are ready for it.

**Q. You look at North Texas film a little bit --**

JOHNNY NANSEN: A little bit, a little bit.

**Q. Do you go all the way back to Indiana?**

JOHNNY NANSEN: Yeah, we had time to do it. We have a lot of GAs so we had to put them to work to get our guys ready, and we take pride in preparing our guys.



**Q. Jacob, do you consider this kind of a full-circle moment given your history of the state of Texas?**

JACOB COWING: Yeah, you know, going out of high school, starting in Texas, went to Arizona, now back here in Texas, my last final college game here in Texas, so definitely a full circle moment. It's been a fun ride, a good college experience. I'm just cherishing the last few days here in San Antonio and sharing the moments with my teammates and coaching staff and just loving everything and just go out there and play some ball.

**Q. Brennan, where do things stand with the competition tore who's going to be the left tackle and the other spots for this game?**

BRENNAN CARROLL: Yeah, we had a great week of practice. The guys are all set to go out there and get lined up kind of like you see it on the depth chart, and we've had a great week. The guys are excited. New opportunities to get guys in there, play different spots, and we're able to move them around if we need to. We're in a great spot.

**Q. For defensive players at the podium plus Johnny after they had a chance to address this, do you guys buy into the idea that a first-year starting quarterback can be rattled or is that out the window today with college football?**

MARTELL IRBY: I would say that we typically approach games how we're going to approach it. We analyze the quarterback, his tendencies no matter what, no matter in it's first start or if it's 100 starts. We try not to get caught up in that and just watch the film, prepare how we're supposed to and go to war with our brothers.

DALTON JOHNSON: I'd say, yeah, we respect everybody going into it, prepare the same way. Of course we'd like to take advantage of it being it's his first start, but he's a good kid, good athlete, so yeah, we respect him. Fear no one, though.

JOHNNY NANSEN: In the past we've faced a lot of good quarterbacks. We know who we're going to face, a very talented kid. Like I said, he was very highly recruited, so we're prepared for every situation. That's the thing about the goal games. We're not going to invent any new things. We're just going to prepare the way we prepare and be ready for whoever the quarterback is. It's just the way we approach things, and our guys, the one thing we preach about is our preparation is going to set us free, so our kids are prepared for anything that comes their way, and they're excited. They're excited to play this game, so we're fired up to be here.

**Q. Tonight's event is the first time you'll get to interact with fans since being in San Antonio since the rally. What do you think of that being able to see a whole lot of red and blue here in San Antonio?**

TANNER McLACHLAN: It's special to us because we've had such great fan support all year. Back in Arizona, back in Tucson. So to see the red and blue out here coming out to support us is awesome to us. Super excited; this whole week has been cool to us but to get everyone coming out there to do it with us is even better.

**Q. For all the offensive players, when someone comes up to you and asks what kind of quarterback and person Noah Fifita is, what do you tell them?**

MIKE WILEY: What kind of quarterback, like in the NFL, who I compare him to?

**Q. Or just the kind of quarterback he is, what stands out to you about how he's able to play the game and how he's so poised?**

MIKE WILEY: His professionalism and his just cerebralness. He's just a professional out there. Everything he does, detailed. He's a great listener, great leader. So far I've just been impressed with him the whole season.

TANNER McLACHLAN: Yeah, he's just collected. We all trust him. We all trust him to get the job done. When he speaks, we all listen, and we know he's going to go out there and do his thing, so it's easy for us. We're just watching him do his work.

JACOB COWING: Yeah, he's just a calm, cool, collected kind of guy. He goes about his work like a professional each and every day. The way he just attacks film study, the weight room, practice. You like to see those kind of guys on your team that know how to be a professional and kind of follow his lead, him also being a younger guy, and it's almost like he's been doing this for years and years and years.

I appreciate the way Noah goes about his business.

**Q. For Johnny, what's your evaluation of receiver Drake Stoops, and for both coordinators, do you have any relationships or connections with the Stoops family?**

JOHNNY NANSEN: No.

BRENNAN CARROLL: Do not.



**Q. What's your evaluation of Drake Stoops as a receiver?**

JOHNNY NANSEN: Really special player. I mean, talented to be able to play in this level and being productive. He's really a special day and he's a special player, so exciting.

**Q. A couple of you in the audience have been on the football beat since 2004. I wonder if you could recount what you remember about that game, what your role was that night in Miami?**

BRENNAN CARROLL: Yeah, that's taking it back a little bit. Yeah, I was coaching tight ends back then, and we had a pretty good team coming into it and faced a really good team. We were able to get up early and withhold the lead. But the atmosphere going into that game, I'm glad that these guys have got a chance to experience a big-time bowl game like this and get a feel for it because it's a special memory, something I'll always cherish, and I know these guys will with this game, as well.

It's a great program we're going against. They've had a lot of success throughout the years. We're trying to get to that level.

**Q. I'm sure you've told this story a million times but maybe not to Oklahoma media. Some of the lessons that you've learned from your dad over the years?**

BRENNAN CARROLL: Just really consistency and balance. The guys were talking about Noah being a consistent leader like he is, something we try to be really consistent as a staff. We want to keep the message the same, keep the preparation the same, just be the same guy, the same coach day in and day out so these guys can form a trust, for a reliance on what we're telling them, what we're teaching them, and these guys are a big reason why we're here today. It's a fantastic group of guys, not just the guys on this stage, although I do like you guys. You guys are pretty cool.

We've got a great group of guys. Really lucky to take this team into this game, and can't wait for the challenge.

**Q. Martell, given where you were a year and a half ago, to be on this stage in front of these microphones, what's that journey been like?**

MARTELL IRBY: It's very hard to describe with words. I'm thankful beyond measures. I try to operate and carry myself as such, just with gratitude, understanding that this is something that I don't want to take for granted. It could

be here today, gone tomorrow, I've been without football. I'm just extremely grateful for not only these people up here but everybody that's a part of Arizona, football, the university, and just for allowing me to find a home. I'm just trying to enjoy it and embrace every single moment.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

