

# Valero Alamo Bowl: Colorado vs BYU

Sunday, December 29, 2024

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

**BYU Cougars**

**Kalani Sitake**

**Connor Pay**

**Isaiah Glasker**

**Tyler Batty**

**LJ Martin**

Press Conference



him. His football IQ is special, and I think he's going to have a great career in the NFL. Same thing with Travis Hunter, and they have a lot of guys that will move on to the next level and probably be teammates with this guy in the future.

Just looking forward to the momentum that we can gain from this. Obviously just really happy, want to celebrate with the seniors, but I think this is a really good step for us, and I'm glad that we were able to get this done.

What questions do you guys have for me?

**Q. Kalani, how motivated was this team? How motivated were you to make a statement in this game?**

KALANI SITAKE: Well, it wasn't anything against Colorado. It was just that we knew what we were going against. I think there's a lot of coaches and a lot of people that have said this is a very talented roster on Colorado's side. They've had a lot of success, and you see the things they were able to do especially on the offensive side. I think sometimes you forget that they play a complete game, defense, and they create some turnovers. They did tonight.

We just had a plan. We just wanted to execute it and wanted to stay aggressive. I know we made some mistakes, like I said before, but I just liked our style of executing in all three phases. I think people forget about special teams. It's a big part of our success, and Coach K-Pop, Coach A-Rod and obviously Coach Hill, those guys have done an amazing job. It's pretty easy for me; I just decide if we go for it or not on 4th down and stuff like that. But I'm lucky to work with wonderful men that are great mentors to me and to the players, and more than anything I'm lucky enough to be around these guys.

I said before at the banquet that they make me a better person, so I love hanging out with them.

**Q. Kalani, you've talked all season about wanting to get that four quarters and see what this team could do. I know you made a couple miscues but that's as close as you've gotten this season. How nice was it to see**

BYU 36, Colorado 14

KALANI SITAKE: Happy we got the win. Proud of our boys. We knew going into this game it was going to take -- that we were going to have to function at a high level because you could see the talent that is on that team, so I have to give a lot of credit to Colorado for getting us to this point.

I think we found something in ourselves knowing that we had to prepare for them. I think there's some great talent on that team. I think we have some great talent, too. But have to give a lot of credit to Deion, Coach Prime and his staff and they're talented team.

I think a lot of things just worked out in our favor in all three phases. We didn't play error free, but I liked the way our guys played, I liked the aggressiveness, the physical part of the game. Yeah, just looking forward to -- we have a lot of young guys still, but I'm happy for our seniors, the things that they've been able to accomplish. I'm very fortunate to be their coach, and I'm lucky I get to coach this guy. Not bad for a wide out, in high school very talented wide out. Got some nice hands. Should have had two picks.

But I think Shedeur is a really, really good quarterback, an excellent quarterback. He's going to have a great career. We had to find different ways to confuse him and we had some extra time to get ready for him.

But you could see that he's got a great demeanor about



## that on the field this last game?

KALANI SITAKE: I liked the mindset of the entire team. When I say I liked the mindset of the entire team, it's not like I had to give a great speech or anything. The seniors took over. It's been them from the very beginning, from the end of last year when those seniors took over and then led us into the Big 12, although it didn't work out the way we wanted it to, we did some really good things. But these seniors are able to build on that, and they've got the system in place where now they're going to be able to pass it on to the young guys and next year's seniors.

It's a nice cycle of things that are happening. I don't mind it at all. Sometimes as a leader I've just got to step out of the way and let these guys do it.

**Q. Kalani, you stayed pretty quiet when you guys lost to Kansas since ASU had pretty much dropped out of the College Football Playoff picture. What would you like to say now about that appearance snubbing and did you belong in the College Football Playoff?**

KALANI SITAKE: I mean, guys, the system is better than it was when there was four and better than it was when there was two. It is the way that it is now.

I don't think that's anything that you can campaign for. But I do know that we know that errors that we made. We're going to own them. We're going to try to find ways to get better.

But I don't think you sit there and you complain -- for me and for our players, it doesn't help us. We've just got to learn from the mistakes that we made and control the stuff that we can control. But the system is way better than it was before. I'm excited to watch this next wave of games.

But it just ended up with a tiebreaker system that we weren't in it, and that's okay. Sometimes life is some disappointments, and you're only left with your reaction. So our reaction, we turned it into a positive, and I think you saw a lot of what we turned it into tonight.

There's a lot of really cool things that happened, and like I said, I got to sit here as these guys led the way. Connor especially was an amazing leader. You guys watched what he did when he was hurt and not playing. The guy was an amazing coach, and the way he complimented the work from our guys and from TJ Woods has been amazing. I'm honored and lucky to be around these young men.

**Q. Connor, as one of those seniors that Coach was just talking about, when he says the seniors took over, what does that mean from your perspective? How did**

## the senior class take over with this group?

CONNOR PAY: I appreciate you asking me the question. I know I'm the only one up here that doesn't have a trophy.

No, this was well worth it. But I think it started back in January, not playing in a approximate bowl game, bad taste in your mouth. You want to change that, and that brings a grit and a fire to our off-season. That's where it began.

I think what this senior class brought in particular was a discipline and a resilience because all it is is you've got to go and do things at a high level every day. You've got to do the ordinary better than everybody else. That's the real challenge. Everyone is going to show up to workouts. Everyone is going to do the same things across the whole country. Everyone has an off-season program.

But who's going to make the most of every single day and not just go through the motions? Who's going to do that little bit extra. That's what we really tried to push the team to do, and they made it really easy. They responded really well.

We were able to carry that through spring ball, through summer workouts and into our season up until now.

**Q. Connor, how nice was it for you and for this senior class to see that product today capping all of that work here in the Alamo Bowl with that performance?**

CONNOR PAY: It was awesome. It was awesome. The sweetest part was for, like you said, the other seniors, knowing that we could send each other out on a high note, and I can't remember the number of 11-win teams in BYU history, but -- there's 13, and most of the seniors have been on two of those 13 11-win teams, and one of them with a Power Five schedule, the first time in school history to have 11 wins with a Power Five schedule. That's something we can take pride in. We're proud of that.

We felt like we needed to make a statement. There was a third of the amount of people in here right now for the pregame press conference, but football is played on the field, not up on this stage right here, and we wanted to show that because Colorado is a good team. Especially the defensive front, their nose guard 97 who I went up against most of the game is a good player. He got me a couple times and I got him.

It was just good, again, to go and get a win against a quality opponent, too.

**Q. Isaiah and maybe Tyler, can you describe how you**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**basically confused their quarterback so much? It looked like he didn't know where a pressure was coming from. What was the game plan to confuse him so much?**

ISAIAH GLASKER: Honestly, Jay Hill, he came up with a great game plan. We've been game planning for three weeks, and I don't know, the big thing for him is we like to bring the pressure, and playing all these different quarterbacks, I feel like you hit him one time and then he's going to, oh, who's coming this time, who's coming that time.

I feel like we just got to him early, and he was just kind of superstitious about who was going to come.

TYLER BATTY: Yeah, I would say the same thing. Coach Jay Hill did an excellent job prepping us for these guys, kind of learning how they operate and then coming up with a really good game plan to execute. When you've got guys over there like Glasker balling out, and like he said, we had guys flying in from every angle putting pressure on the quarterback, and I don't necessarily envy Shedeur in that situation, not knowing where the blitz is coming from.

I think a lot of credit to Jay Hill and just really proud of our defense.

**Q. Going off of that for Isaiah and Tyler, I think Gary Anderson said you brought something like 17 different looks to them in the first half. Is this as extensive or as much variety as you've had in a game plan all year with the amount of time you've had to prepare?**

TYLER BATTY: Yeah, I would say so. I think looking at our game plans this season, I think this was one of the ones where we definitely were top loaded, especially in a lot of pressures. Trying to get him to move. I think our secondary also did a great job kind of disguising what we were doing. We did have a lot. We did have a lot installed, and again, the dudes did a great job of executing everything that we had in.

ISAIAH GLASKER: Yeah, I feel like we had a lot installed. Coming into this game we knew Colorado was a big pass game. Jay Hill did a great job and especially the boys up front just to be able to get to him, and then it just kind of makes everybody's life a little bit easier. But I give a huge shout out to the boys in the secondary just flying around making plays and stuff. Our game plan, Jay Hill got us ready for this game especially.

KALANI SITAKE: It's not anything new. It's just stuff that we've been running. It's a lot easier when you have guys that understand the game. These guys do a great job --

we can just basically overwhelm them with scheme because these guys will make it work. We can go anywhere in the playbook with these young men, and I'm glad that we have a staff with Coach Hill and the rest of the defensive staff that can put that together. It takes all the front, the backers and the DBs to make it work.

**Q. Kalani, what do you want the legacy of this particular team to be?**

KALANI SITAKE: I don't know. I'm looking around, I don't think -- I'm not the kind of guy that gives yourself a nickname like a Seinfeld episode. I think people will determine it for us and define it for us. I don't think it's my place to make that statement.

I just love coaching these kids, these young men that are becoming adults, and these seniors, I'm so proud of them. I'm just going to keep going back to that. These are the best young men in college football, and I get to coach them.

**Q. For Tyler and Connor, how do you want your senior class to be remembered going out with an 11-win season?**

TYLER BATTY: You know, I think -- I hope our teammates just remember how much we at least tried to invest in this program. I think for me, that's really what it comes down to is do the same thing that we've done. We stand on the shoulders of giants that came before us. I've had an opportunity to play with some incredible teammates during my time at BYU that have helped shape and form me and have helped shape and form the culture. I just want to be remembered as one of those guys that helped push BYU to be great.

CONNOR PAY: I think I've been asked this question a lot over the last few weeks because it's coming to an end, but I think us as captains and as a leadership council, all we were trying to do is be extensions of Kalani and his culture.

When you have a team that's willing to buy into that, it makes being leaders a lot easier because we've seen both sides of it where we tried to push the same things in the past and it wasn't received very well by the team versus this season where guys believed and they bought into the culture.

I think if there's one thing that this team has done throughout the whole season, it's believe, believe in each other and believe in our culture and what we can accomplish. That powered us through the off-season, and it's powered us through the season now.

Kind of like Kalani, I don't want to label it, but I just feel like his culture of love and learn and believing in each other is what this team embraced, and hopefully that's not something that's reserved to just the 2024 team. That's something that continues to grow and continues to build like when these guys take over next year and they push that culture.

That's how you build a program. It's not just how you have a good football team, it's how you build a program. Kalani is building that with his culture, and that's all we tried to do this year.

KALANI SITAKE: You guys, LJ is quiet and soft spoken but you can ask him a question, too. He is the offensive MVP. Right now he's getting away with it. He doesn't want to answer questions.

LJ MARTIN: I like it a lot.

**Q. LJ, I was curious, both you and Isaiah, what these trophies meant to you and being able to be recognized for what you guys did for the team tonight.**

LJ MARTIN: It's awesome just being able to see our hard work just being seen. It's also a credit to the 10 other guys that were on the field with me at different times. You know them. Without Connor blocking up front this doesn't happen, without the defense stopping them, giving us the ball back, this doesn't happen. It's credit to everyone else, everyone who got us ready and just helped us throughout the game.

**Q. LJ, you're the lone Texas native up there. What does it mean for you to put on a performance like that in your home state?**

ISAIAH GLASKER: I was just going to piggyback off what LJ said. This is cool, but in reality the main thing we came here for was just to win. I couldn't get this trophy without the other 10 guys on the field, especially the D-line helping bring pressure to where I can get interceptions. I don't know, us hitting gaps and stuff, freeing up so we can get sacks and stuff.

I give a huge shout-out to these boys. We worked hard through the summer, and I love our seniors, and just them being able to push us, I love these boys.

LJ MARTIN: It was awesome. Last time I came down here, I think I got hurt, so just to come out here and just be able to go out there and just play to the best of my ability, it was just really fun and was just everything I imagined it would be.

**Q. Isaiah and LJ, Kalani said earlier he felt you found something in yourselves preparing for Colorado. What did you find in this prep and how can you build on it going into the future?**

ISAIAH GLASKER: I honestly would just say coming into this game, I felt like we were comfortable. We weren't too stressed about anything, just because our game plan -- usually when you're preparing you're not nervous. I feel like going into this game, especially seeing Travis Hunter and Shedeur and these great players on Colorado, I feel like nobody on our team was nervous, we just was ready to play. We hadn't played in a while.

Being able to get back out there on the field, the boys just flying around, we were all excited before the game just to go out there and be able to play again.

LJ MARTIN: Yeah, just to piggyback off what he said, just going out there and competing, understanding that they have great players on the other side of the field, and you just don't want the stage set for us to go out there and try to show -- no one expected us to win or dominate like we did, so just to go out there and really just compete, that's all we were trying to do, and that's something I feel like we can carry into next year, just compete.

**Q. Tyler, you and Connor, both you guys chose to come back. How fun was it this year, and how much are you glad you made that decision 12 months ago?**

CONNOR PAY: Well, obviously it's been a good one. Felt like there was some unfinished business, and it's just -- when Tyler and I had never been a part of a losing team at BYU, and just the thought of that being our final time there and that being our legacy, that just didn't sit right.

And if we're being honest, when you lose games, your NFL stock goes down, so that was a factor, too. Obviously as some things were going on in my position room, it made it difficult.

Once Coach Woods was brought in and I sat down with Kalani and him and we went over the plan for this next season, I felt confident that it was the right move for me, and it's just been confirmation after confirmation all season long that this was the right move and that good things were going to happen all the way up until even last night when me and my boys beat Terminus on Zombies. I was like, we're going to go play good today. Coach, I finished all my film work beforehand, I promise, and I went to bed on time.

KALANI SITAKE: You've got to keep it balanced. I'm okay with it. That's all right.

CONNOR PAY: We were here for four days. I had to bring my Xbox.

KALANI SITAKE: It's okay to be balanced in life. It's okay. It's okay that you guys are gamers and stuff like that. I just don't understand it enough.

CONNOR PAY: No, confirmation after confirmation all season long that this was -- it was a hard decision, it really was, to either leave for the NFL or enter the portal and then decided to come back to BYU, but all year long it's been confirmations from my teammates, from my coaches, from God, that this was the right decision for me, and it's been everything I could have hoped.

TYLER BATTY: I'll follow up with that. I'm eternally grateful to Coach Kalani and Coach Tuiaki for the opportunity to come play at BYU. It's been the opportunity of a lifetime, and to end like this has been huge. To follow up with what Connor said, sitting here a year ago after losing our final game, there's a lot of unfinished business. There was that same sentiment of what's going to be your legacy at BYU, how do you want to go out, and having us saying it, being able to come back for another year was a huge blessing, having that extra year of eligibility.

Honestly, once I put everything out on the table, it was a fairly easy decision. We have unfinished business, and I wanted to make sure that we could display the ability of our team, and I feel like this year we have.

It's been an absolute success.

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