

Valero Alamo Bowl: USC vs TCU

Sunday, December 28, 2025

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome

USC Trojans

Coach D'Anton Lynn

DeCarlos Nicholson

Christian Pierce

Jide Abasiri

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the USC defensive press conference. It's a pleasure to introduce defensive coordinator D'Anton Lynn. Coach, could you introduce who you've brought.

D'ANTON LYNN: Here on stage with me we've got D-Nich. D-Nich is a starting corner for us. He's been a tremendous leader on and off the field, and he's been one of our most improved players from week 1 to now, so I think he has an extremely bright future.

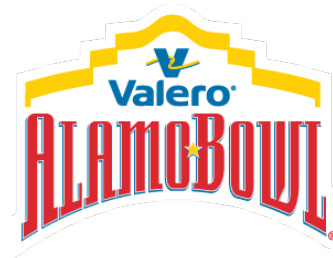
Next to him is Christian Pierce, starting safety. He brings a lot of edge to our defense. He wears the green dot. He's done a great job being the quarterback on the back end making sure everyone is on the same page.

Next to him is Jide. Jide is one of our more versatile guys we have up front. On Tuesday you might see him playing defensive tackle. You might see him playing defensive end. He might drop in coverage at times. He can kind of do it all.

We're super excited to be here, and we appreciate everyone here.

Q. Coach, you've overseen one of the best defenses USC has had in several years. I want to ask, what explains that in your eyes?

D'ANTON LYNN: The players. At some point in time, the players have to take the keys and they have to take ownership of the defense, and I feel like two years in a row at some point in time you've kind of seen the players take



control of the defense and make it theirs.

Q. Can you speak on the challenges that Eric with TCU brings and what you've seen from him this season?

D'ANTON LYNN: You know, they do a really good job of using the entire field, so they're going to give you wide formations. They're going to stretch you vertically. You have RPOs, you have screens. You really have to defend every part of the field against them. We have to make sure we're on point with communication on the back end because they generate a lot of explosive plays that way.

Q. Coach, you joined the team December of '23. What have you thought during your two years here? What was the goal when you came to USC and what have you thought?

D'ANTON LYNN: The goal was just to put our head down and work and just be better than we were the year before, and by doing that, just be better today than you were yesterday. It's really been the same thing two years in a row. We felt like we made a big stride year one. Year two it's been a completely different team, but we went into it with the exact same mindset.

Q. Can you talk about how you're approaching this game? I know D-Nich, you won't be here next year, but how are you approaching this game looking forward to 2026?

D'ANTON LYNN: I feel like bowl games are a big momentum going into the off-season. It's been fun to see a lot of guys that you haven't seen get a lot of reps in the fall, you've been able to get them a lot of reps in practice. You're going to see some guys play that haven't played quite as much in the fall. It's really kind of setting the foundation for next year.

DeCARLOS NICHOLSON: Yeah, I would say kind of the same thing. Just putting on a show and not putting any bad product on the field and just ending this thing the right way with our brothers, and just like Coach said, that momentum going into the off-season, and for me leaving it



better than I found it and showing the young guys how things are supposed to be done and the way to finish off.

CHRISTIAN PIERCE: I agree it's a big momentum boost for us. I feel like it's going to be big for the guys to come back and to really just look back on this game and see what they've got to improve on, myself, any players that are coming back, and be really able to attack that in the off-season and really be able to develop from that aspect.

JIDE ABASIRI: For me it's the same goals. Just the same mindset going into every game; it's just to win. For me, it has nothing to do with 2026. I'm just focused on the now.

Q. Christian, you re-signed on the same day that your brother announced that he was transferring to USC. That had to be coordinated, right?

CHRISTIAN PIERCE: It wasn't really coordinated, but I guess just a coincidence.

Q. How excited are you to play with him?

CHRISTIAN PIERCE: I'm just excited for everything he's went through and excited for what's to come in the upcoming year.

Q. Jide, how did playing time as a true freshman in 2024 kind of help you this season?

JIDE ABASIRI: I think it was a good first experience to get my feet wet and get adjusted to college football. It was a big jump from Minnesota high school football, obviously, so just getting those first few snaps was very beneficial.

Q. D- Nich, on the other side of the ball, TCU has a pretty explosive receiver in Eric McAlister. How do you personally prepare when you're playing big-time receivers, and as a defense as a whole, what do you do to limit his opportunities?

DeCARLOS NICHOLSON: I any it comes from excellent communication and playing together, all 11 people out there, especially on the back end. Then just having that mindset to winning every rep going into the game.

Q. D-Nich, your son has become pretty popular around your team, De'Mauri, or "Lil' D" as he's become known. What's it like to see how your coaches and teammates have embraced him, and is he excited to watch you here in Alamo Bowl?

DeCARLOS NICHOLSON: Yeah, he's having a great time out here. For me, it's really awesome, especially coming from a small town like I come from, and then just seeing his

childhood up close, seeing how awesome it is for him at a prestigious place like USC and knowing the genuine relationships he's built with all these people and all his uncles, whether it's coaches or players or staff, uncles, aunties, everybody loves him the same, and everybody has welcomed him with open arms, and I think that's pretty cool.

Q. 10 days ago you made the decision to go pro. A lot of guys would be like, okay, that's the end of my time with USC but it was really important for you to be in this game. Talk about why it was important for you to be here.

DeCARLOS NICHOLSON: For me, there's a multitude of reasons, but the job is not finished here. I mean, I just want to go out there with my brothers one more time and do this thing the right way and then also a point to prove. Like he said, they've got a good guy over there, so just go out and prove that I can play with anybody.

Q. Coach mentioned about your versatility being able to line up at the D-tackle or the D-end. You recently made Bruce Feldman's Freaks list. Can you talk about how that versatility has helped you have success this year, and what you personally feel when people call you a freak, in the best way possible?

JIDE ABASIRI: Yeah, it's been fun just being able to play all over the line. It's super important to this team because I feel like when guys go down, I'm able to fill that spot, and we don't have too much to worry about, or if someone goes down at nose or end, I can switch in between. It's really fun to get to learn each position and get to do all those things.

Q. Coach, the red zone defense has been a particular area of strength. What do you think specifically has allowed your team to be so good in those clutch moments?

D'ANTON LYNN: Yeah, I think down there, elite communication. That's the biggest thing down there. Things happen so fast. A lot of offenses, they're going to give you unbalanced. They're going to give you stuff to catch your eyes. It's about just being on the same page and not giving up anything, making them earn every single yard.

Q. Coach, you grew up in this game, and your dad is a fantastic coach, as well. What is the importance of the bowl games? More and more we're seeing college football become more like pro football. The importance for you guys to be here.

D'ANTON LYNN: I think the first thing is just the development of the team, like the practices we had leading into this. There's guys that, again, they got a lot of reps in spring, they got a lot of reps in camp, and then in the fall they're doing scout team, they're going back and forth. You're able to pour in reps to all those guys, and in that short span you see guys get a lot better.

Again, I think that just is momentum going into next season, and it's fun to see the guys grow in such a short span.

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