

# Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Pitt vs Michigan State

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Pitt Panthers

## Calijah Kancey

Press Conference



especially in the second half. Did you guys maybe play that game and play some of the games this year with a chip on your shoulder?

CALIJAH KANCEY: Yeah, I think every week we deal with like offense, offense, offense, or this guy is going to throw for this or run for this or put up this amount of points. I think as a defense that just fuels us up to go out there and just stop them.

**Q. Were you almost disappointed when Kenneth Walker said he wasn't going to play? Were you guys looking forward to the challenge of playing him?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: I think us as a defense, we were ready to face him. I think it was a great challenge for us, but, I mean, I'm pretty sure the guys after him is going to play as good as him.

**Q. For you personally this season, where do you think you've made the biggest improvement from this point last year to now?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: I think I've become a more vocal leader off the field. I think I've helped my team a lot.

**Q. Does becoming more of a vocal leader help you from the confidence standpoint on the field being a regular starter?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: Yes, I think that helped me mature off the field and then it also carried on the field. And I've got guys like SirVocea and Brandon Hill that pushes me to stay on top of myself.

**Q. Wanted to ask about the Western Michigan game. I know it was a long time ago. I asked Coach Bates about it a few minutes ago. He said to talk with you guys about it. When you look back at that experience, it was a long time ago, but what are some of the lessons that stuck with you and your defense after Western Michigan?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: I think that Western Michigan game just added fuel to our fire. We pretty much learned from that game and picked it up ever since.

**Q. All season long there was a lot of talk about the offense, offense, offense at Pitt. But in the ACC Championship game the defense sort of took over,**

**Q. Following up on that, do you feel like there's maybe more of a responsibility for the defense in a game like this where, not that Nick Patti can't do the job, where you don't have Kenny Pickett, you maybe don't have the sure thing on offense, is there more responsibility on the defense to make plays in a game like this?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: I think as a defense, that's our goal, to make plays, to make stops, big third-down stops. And everyone says defense wins championships. That's what we believe in.

**Q. What's it like playing next to Haba and knowing his journey coming from Italy, having a few scholarship offers to being an all-ACC defensive end?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: I think it's great playing next to Haba. I've learned a lot from Haba. He's a great teammate, off the field, on the field. He's very, very smart in the film room. He's helped me with a lot of things.

**Q. Did Haba teach you how to speak the Italian language?**

CALIJAH KANCEY: Haba didn't teach me how to speak the language, but in the locker room I'll ask him what the word is and he'll say it in Italian. But I have to make him repeat it.

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