

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

Thursday, December 30, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Pitt Panthers

Phil Campbell III

Press Conference

Michigan State 31, Pittsburgh 21

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Phil Campbell. Questions, please.

Q. You had an incredible season, but not the way you wanted it to finish. Is it tough to feel that right now? What are the emotions?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: Yeah, I mean, it's tough. But, you know, we had a great season. We won the ACC championship. Really our goal. We would have liked to have finished it obviously much better.

I give them credit. They were a good team. We had some guys go down. It is what it is. Things like this happen. I wish we had another game to capitalize on it.

You got to look at the positive. This was my last game at Pitt. It's pretty emotional for me also. But, yeah, you just got to look at the positive. We had a great season.

Q. You've seen this defense go through so many changes. This was a game where you held them without a score for over 40 minutes of game time. Is there any thought for you as a senior that this is still something you can take honor of, not hanging your head after this game?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: You know, actually, when you put it that way, yeah, I mean, it is like impressive what we did. I feel like the defense stepped up in a lot of ways today.

We can't point fingers and we can't say they should have done this better, they could have ran this play. But all I can do is just look at what my responsibility was leading the defense.

I think the defense, we showed up. We made mistakes.



We had adversity. But I'm proud of everybody. I'm proud of all of our performance out there.

Q. Michigan State ran 25 plays in the fourth quarter. Did you feel yourselves getting tired a little bit, or is that something you don't even notice in the heat of the game?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: I don't think it was tired. I think it was probably just lack of focus in certain areas. We weren't more tired than they were. It's rough, you know. Things like that happen. Sometimes coverages get blown. Sometimes they attack our scheme really good.

I'm proud of everybody, even guys that had touchdowns scored on them. You can't look at that one play. You got to look at the body of work they did throughout the game and throughout the season.

I'm proud of all of them, honestly.

Q. Is that mental fatigue, then?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: Yeah, it's probably mental fatigue. Focus, a lot goes into it. It can be distractions. Like on the field, like you can not get the call right away, you can be trying to look for your assignment, your alignment. Things happen really fast during the game.

I don't think it was physical fatigue. I'm not sure if it was mental fatigue. I think it was just a lack of focus in certain areas. It could be just having bad eyes on the coverage or not playing through the hands. Little things like that, it all adds up. Little details add up a lot in a game.

Q. As a senior, what is your message to the younger guys coming back?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: I told all the younger guys just keep it going. This was my sixth season. It took a long time for us to get here, to get that ACC championship. I really just want it to keep going. That's my biggest thing, is I really want Pitt to keep going up.

I want them to be even better than we were.



Q. To see how the program went from when you came on campus to now, what are your emotions?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: Yeah, it's very emotional. I was emotional before the game even happened, just putting on my uniform, just taking it all in, just being around the guys.

It was really emotional. Once I started playing, I was just trying to have fun, taking it all in, enjoying every single play.

Even when I was tired I didn't want to come out because it's my last time playing for Pitt. Definitely hard. I wish we won the game, but I'm proud of my career, I'm proud of this team. I think I can walk away with my head high.

Q. You mentioned guys going down, Nick Patti being the big one there. When you realize he's not coming back in, what is the defensive mentality? As a unit, do you feel you have to step up and carry the team?

PHIL CAMPBELL III: Yeah, we said right after that happened, Yeah, we're going to have to score on defense, we're going to have to score on defense, we're going to have to stop them, we're going to have to win the game on defensive.

We said, If they don't score, we win the game.

Cam, he got the fumble and scored for a touchdown. Yeah, I mean, things turn around quickly in good ways and bad ways. It's just the game of football. It's a reflection on life also.

I'm just thankful right now at this point. I'm proud of Patti, I'm proud of Beville. I think they both stepped up. Beville, he was on scout team just a couple weeks ago. He hasn't really had any experience. For him to come in there and do certain things is pretty impressive also.

Patti, he was doing very well. As a defense, the last couple years, we've always had to be the unit to step up. We embraced it again today.

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