

# Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Ole Miss vs Penn State

Saturday, December 30, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

**Ole Miss Rebels**

**Lane Kiffin**

**Caden Prieskorn**

**Jared Ivey**

Press Conference



**said there's more to come. What is that? What is in store for Ole Miss in the coming years?**

LANE KIFFIN: I think it's really a cool time right now at Ole Miss. To win the most games in the history of the school and to have so many pieces already announcing that they're coming back, which I made sure a couple of them are still doing that after their performances today.

But I think it's a really special time. I said that when I got hired, we didn't come here to be good and win some decent bowl games and some matches. We came here to be great, win New Year's Six bowls like this, be a top ten program.

So to not just have so many players coming back, but I think it's been well publicized so many players around the country already joining in for next year. I just thought it was obviously extremely important to cap this thing off right because I felt like the last couple weeks so much focus was on next year.

These guys announcing they're coming back, all these great players around the country kind of coming together. Some of these guys joked about it being the last dance. Next year, and I was concerned there was too much focus on that.

Obviously they did a great job showing up today. Like I said, a really cool game to see them really win situations in the fourth downs and critical plays in really critical situations and taking advantage of offsides and different things. Those are proud things as a coach when these guys do that.

**Q. You mentioned your guys dominating certain phases. You guys outscored Penn State for most of the second half, 18-0. What do you think it was that allowed your guys to create that separation in the third and fourth quarters?**

LANE KIFFIN: I don't know. First off, John, are there any jobs open right now? Make sure you don't put something out on Twitter and screw up our day today.

Ole Miss - 38, Penn State - 25

LANE KIFFIN: First off, that's credit to Penn State of a big-time opponent and very well-coached and very classy program that I have a lot of respect for.

I'm very excited about how our players showed up today. To come in here and have a chance to do something that's never been done before in the history of the school, to win 11 games against a big-time program, big-time opponent, just really proud of how they did.

Like I told you, it's one thing to win some games -- if you win a game in the last second, a field goal goes in or it doesn't, that's one thing, but to play a game and in a lot of the phases of the game, these guys played extremely well. Kind of dominated certain phases of the game against -- I know they were a little short with opt-outs, but the No. 1 defense in the country.

So really pleased with our players to play a really clean, kind of penalty free. Did a good job in situations, the 3 for 3 on fourth downs, those are very critical plays in the game.

Really, really happy that four years ago I got this opportunity to come here for Chancellor and Keith to give me that opportunity to put the staff and players together. It's been a really cool journey and one I'm really grateful for.

**Q. Lane, you mentioned taking this job four years ago, and you said you didn't come here to be good, but you came here to be great. Where would you measure this on the scale of greatness? Also, after the game you**



(Laughter).

That wasn't that funny.

(Laughter).

I really did think they did -- you said garbage. It's not garbage time. We need to close the game out better than we did. We didn't do a great job on four-minute offense there and then on defense. But that was really cool to come out in the second half like that, a game that we had the lead and really had a great, kind of dominant third quarter in a lot of phases of the game.

I don't have it in front of me, but I saw the drive chart up on the big screen before the end of the game there, the last couple series. There were a lot of touchdowns and scorers over here on our side in that third quarter and the first half of the fourth quarter and a lot of punts and then a blocked field goal on their side.

**Q. Obviously you mentioned it's history for Ole Miss that this is your first 11-win season, but this here was also your first New Year's Six bowl win. Do you see this as a milestone for your time at Ole Miss or more of a sign of things to come?**

LANE KIFFIN: Well, I said it out there. I really do believe we're just getting started. I think that we're doing something -- we're on our way to something really special.

This is really neat winning a New Year's Six bowl, and what an awesome bowl and week and Gary and the whole staff here putting together an amazing week for us, and that was awesome. But we really are. We're just getting started on something really special and a run here.

I normally say that's never been done before, but I guess we just did that, but to come back and do it even better and to continue to improve on what we've done so far.

**Q. This is for Lane and Caden. Caden, big day today, 10 catches, 136, and 2 touchdowns. Anything specific Penn State was doing on defense?**

Lane, game planning for Caden, the biggest game of the year, just curious what went into that?

CADEN PRIESKORN: I've got to thank my coaches, Coach Weiss and Coach Kiffin, for trusting me. And just the whole O-line, just blocking. I've just got to thank my teammates for just trusting me.

LANE KIFFIN: I don't know what you actually said, he was in that decision going out for the draft. These guys

announced they're coming back. He said, Coach, I'll come back, but you've better make sure I get ten catches in the Peach Bowl. That's what we've got to do nowadays. We've got to game plan to make sure they stay.

**Q. For Caden and Jared, both of you came to Ole Miss through the transfer portal. Ole Miss is getting a lot of guys from the transfer portal this year. What does it say for you to be MVPs for your respective sides of the ball in a game like this? What does it tell other guys looking to find a new greener pasture in Ole Miss?**

JARED IVEY: I think it speaks to the culture the guys had already when we got here and how they took us in and kind of showed us how things were supposed to be and how the coaches wanted things aligned. Yeah, just very thankful for Coach Joyner and Coach Kiffin just showing us the ropes and making us feel at home day one.

CADEN PRIESKORN: Yeah, I just think with the people that they already had here, a lot of the older guys like on O-line and quarterback and some of the defensive players, they had a lot of structure and they kind of brought us in using the portal. I feel like we brought a lot of older guys that wanted to come in and just compete and just test how Power 5 football is like. Kind of just showed up throughout the season, and we came together as a whole.

**Q. Lane, what did you see in the first couple of series of your offensive series against Penn State's defense that affected how you approached the game after that? And was tempo a part of that, a part of trying to disrupt them?**

LANE KIFFIN: Well, a couple things there. Just in studying and game planning, didn't really feel in that conference they had played much tempo. Obviously that's part of what we do, and we were able to -- that only works when you make first downs.

So we made some plays, and we were able to get into some tempo situations where they weren't aligned, and took advantage of that. But early on there was a little struggle there. Those guys have really good players. That No. 11 is an elite player. I'm sure he would have gone to the draft if he could because that guy's a special player.

So they gave us some problems there early, and really -- I mean, really kind of made it basic and said, okay, we're going to throw the ball quick because they've got really good rush, especially when they're blitzing him.

We said, we've got matchups -- we told them before the game last night. This game will be won on offense in the one-on-one matchups at wide receiver and tight end. You

guys are going to have to win the game on offense, making plays in the passing game, and they did it.

**Q. If I could follow that up, then when you mixed -- Judkins is a really good back, but you really couldn't do too much with him earlier. Then it looked like in the third quarter you decided to mix him in when you had that air threat established; is that correct?**

LANE KIFFIN: Yeah, that's kind of how it works. Once you kind of start winning outside the one-on-one matchups, you know, they got really good coaches, so they adjust and play some more zone and put a safety over the top of Trey and didn't play much more man on third down. So that's part of it. Then we go back to running the ball.

I thought our players did some really good things in those situations, like those fourth downs. Then a big thing those guys do is they blitz everybody and play cover zero as aggressive as anybody in the country in certain situations.

The guys were able with two speed options to pass to Quinshon for a touchdown, and then whatever you want to call it, Philly Special, Atlanta Special, Oxford Special. You know, it was another cover zero blitz speeder that these guys executed.

**Q. Lane, so I promise not to ask you any Taylor Swift questions, but I wanted to ask you where does today's win like rank among your favorite moments from this season?**

LANE KIFFIN: Well, this would be my favorite moment from the season because it's the pinnacle of everything coming together. Previously it would have been that LSU ending and that game.

But to do it on this stage when both teams have a month to prepare and you don't have a home-field advantage. You're not playing at home, so there's none of that. You're playing in a neutral site. This would be the best part of the year.

Again, not the last play of the game, which we've had a lot of those. These guys have done a good job finishing those games off. But to really come out in that third quarter and kind of dominate a really good team in phases was really special. That's what you really appreciate as a coach to see versus a ref's call or the ball hits the upright or something and you win or lose based off of that.

**Q. Kind of a weird question, so I apologize, but there was a Twitter --**

LANE KIFFIN: That's okay. Not as weird as her Taylor

Swift question the other day, and I had more time to think. So I would have said Anti-hero or Castles Crumbling. Go ahead.

**Q. There's a Twitter account that you retweeted a couple of times this week that's believed to be maybe a troll account putting out fake Penn State player quotes. I don't know if you were aware of that or made aware of that at any point.**

LANE KIFFIN: I was made aware of that. I'm glad we won so you wouldn't be bringing that up in the press conference and they'd be saying that motivated them.

I thought it was pretty funny actually because they discovered that it was Fisher Ray, one of our assistants, one of our student assistants. So Fisher is now kind of famous. But I thought it was really cool last night when he showed it to me, he's like, these Penn State fans now, they're into this. They researched his password and e-mail and were able to figure out which guy it was that started it. It was all in good fun. I hope the fans had fun with it.

**Q. You were okay with him starting the account?**

LANE KIFFIN: I'm not going to start making social media rules on people.

**Q. Lane, obviously some considerable momentum with your program right now. What kind of role does that play in program building? And how does where you're at now feel compared to where you've been in your career previously trying to build something?**

LANE KIFFIN: Well, I've never been anywhere four years. First off, I feel safe.

No. We talked about it this whole press conference. We're in a really good place. We're starting something really special. I think today's another message, which obviously you saw all these great players around the country the last month sign up to come join these guys. Today is another message as you look at the MVPs up here and the guys that came in here to do something special.

Today's another message for a couple more pieces that may be out there. Come on, join up.

**Q. Jared, how cool is it for you to be playing in your home state and come out with not only a big win, but win the defensive player of the game award?**

JARED IVEY: It was really cool. I had maybe 20-30 people come to the game today. It was awesome to just make history with my guys, and then even more special to



do it at home. So it was great.

**Q. Coach, you kind of talked about in your opening statement about the opt-outs. With Penn State not having their two starting cornerbacks, how much does that change how you kind of call the game, and what do you think you guys were able to do more successfully because of that?**

LANE KIFFIN: Well, they pay us a lot of money as coaches. So I would think that we wouldn't have been really good coaches if we didn't realize that and obviously go in and attack where there were new players at. That's coaching 101.

Again, the players have got to make the plays. I get way too much credit on these fourth down plays like they're asking afterwards. Our assistant coaches, Charlie Weis, they did a great job today of having some really unique plays. Like we talk about the Philly Special or speed option or Q versus the zero down the pipe.

Those guys did a great job of game planning to beat a very aggressive defense in those situations and to take advantage of different players in there is what you're supposed to do.

**Q. Coach, with how last season started and then unfortunately finished for you and your team, just to be able to be here right now with your only two losses on the season being Alabama and Georgia, just what does that say about you, your team, and everybody else in that coaching room?**

LANE KIFFIN: I think that's good perspective. I just talked about that in there. One year ago where we were and having the memory of a really poor locker room feeling. Whatever that was, I think we'd lost four or five or something like that.

Just went back to work and kept trying to add players, trying to grow as coaches, made some difficult changes, and it paid off this year, players and coaches. So really proud of those guys.

**Q. Caden, Jaxson in there told me he kind of calls you the dad of the offense with the maturity and just experience you brought. How have you felt your role is with this offense, kind of not the Xs and Os, but just within the offense as a whole?**

CADEN PRIESKORN: I'm definitely an older guy that's played a lot of college football, so I feel like my teammates trust me, trust what I say and what I do. I felt like today it showed just on the field and helping guys getting set and

stuff like that. I'm just thankful that they believe in me as well.

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