

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Texas vs Arizona State

Friday, December 27, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Arizona State Sun Devils

Xavion Alford

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Our final player of the day is junior defensive back Xavion Alford.

Q. Obviously the discussion surrounding Shamari and obviously the targeting penalty and everything that's happened since then, he's made it very clear that he's excited about Montana Warren getting the chance to play. What has been your discussion, just as one of the leaders in this safety room outside of Shamari, what are the discussions you just had with him and him trying to understand he's not going to get to play in the first half a game that means so much to him, and also how important is it for people like you and Ghost to step up as leaders in the first half especially when everybody is going to be trying to crowd, especially in the passing game? What have the discussions been like in the DB room the past three weeks?

XAVION ALFORD: Shamari is a leader on our team as well. It's very unfortunate that he's not going to be with us in the first half in the game, but he'll still be there as a leader and as a teammate on the sidelines and things of that nature.

This whole year we've had the next man up mentality. You can look back in the past there were games that maybe we were missing one of our talented players on offense or the defensive side, and we were able to compensate for that.

It's just been, like I said, the next man up mentality. It's not really been too much of a change. The process has been the same all year for us. I'm excited for Montana as well. He's been here. He's like my little brother. I've seen him grow and grow and grow, and now he's finally letting him out just to go out and play and go have fun.

It will be exciting to be out on the field with those guys and just play the game of football.



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Q. You've really been the defensive leader all season or just kind of a team leader all season as well. Obviously this is kind of new to everybody, the CFP and doing all the media and whatnot. How have you tried to be a leader to other people on the team, whether it be offense or defense with all this media and everybody talking about you right now?

XAVION ALFORD: I would say that everybody on our team is pretty mature guys. We're not really focused on getting caught up in the media because, even though we're doing a lot of media, all of our media is not good for us at least. We've been the underdogs the whole year. So you might look at the media, and it might not be things you want to see.

We're really focused on just being ourselves, playing our game, focusing on the things we can control. We can't control what the media says or what anybody else thinks of us. We can just control what we think of each other and what we do each and every day to get better prepared for this game until January 1st comes.

I've been keeping everybody focused, things of that nature, just trying to stay focused on this game. We've been off for three weeks. Everybody is feeling refreshed, body is feeling refreshed, mind, so we're just ready to attack it again.

Q. Xavion, when you talk about other guys stepping up, unfortunately, like you said, it's been a disadvantage to deal with guys getting targeting calls and missing halves of the game. But overall as a defense when you're doing that, from a leadership standpoint, how do you feel that you guys have helped just the team respond? And like you kind of alluded to, but just kind of stay calm and play the game?

XAVION ALFORD: I think this year, this team, we just don't flinch no matter what happens -- getting down in games, losing a key player. Regardless of what it is, I just feel like we just have that next man or next thing mentality.

We've been dealing with adversity all year, and we've been

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able to overcome it in our own ways. Credit to the whole staff. All the way throughout the whole off-season, spring ball, fall camp, they put us in chaos situations so we know how to respond. Everything about the off-season was about responding and finishing, finishing games. It's not about how you start, it's about how you finish, and finish is a big word in our program.

As I've been saying, same process as it's been for us. Treat it like another game, just another game, no matter the location, no matter where we are, the time, just do what we do and focus on our core values, and we feel we should get the outcome we want.

Q. A quick followup to that too, with the linebackers, because you said questions coming in this season, people talked about the depth of the secondary that you guys had, what the defensive line was, the linebackers had to answer questions. To your point, you've seen it every day with your eyes in practice. How do you feel they've answered that? How do you feel this group has developed and helped the defense grow?

XAVION ALFORD: I would say tremendously, just us together as a defense, we all came together, and we created a brotherhood on defense. Obviously playing offense is good, but playing defense is different, it's a different mentality.

Throughout fall camp, we preached that we wanted to be one of the better defenses in the country and that it was going to take everybody. It's not just going to take the starters. It's not just going to take people that's not starters. It's going to take everybody that's a part of the defense, you know scout team and so forth.

So we feel like we've been prepared to keep on having that next man mentality through the season. Like I said, we're going to attack it the same way, same process, do what we've been doing, and see the outcome we get.

Q. I've got to ask you about playing your old team. I know you were only here for a year, but just seeing some of the guys you used to play with that are still on this Texas team?

XAVION ALFORD: It's going to be good. I'm very close to Jahdae Barron, one of the better players over there, Jaylon Guilbeau, really close to those two guys. Just being a kid from Texas, went to high school in Texas, it was a great opportunity, great experience. Now getting to play against them somewhere else, it's kind of like the best of both worlds. I played with them, and now I get to play against them.

It was great, my time there. I had to move on, better things for my future and things of that nature. It's going to be good seeing some familiar faces. Being a Texas kid playing against Texas.

Q. I'm sure people back home are excited for you regardless, but have the phone calls been a little bit more this week since you are playing Texas?

XAVION ALFORD: They have. It's been picking up definitely. You went there, you went there, that sort of thing.

Like I said, I just view it as another game. I went there, signed there, it is what it is. I knew there was a possibility we could play each other in CFP, and obviously here we are a couple days out, four, five days before the game, and it's here.

Not really focused on the outside factors, just focus on what I can control, focus on doing my job each and every day and getting prepared for the game.

Q. This is sort of new this year, so it's kind of speculating, but with the 12-team playoff, do you think the bye that you guys didn't play last week, is that an advantage to you guys getting that extra rest? Do you think a team playing, they've played since you guys have. How do you just view the bye as maybe who has an advantage there?

XAVION ALFORD: I think it varies. Everybody's situation is different. For us, a team that we've been playing hard all year, everybody's been playing games, we've been playing hard all year, going at it back to back to back.

We were hoping we could get a bye and just relax and refresh. We know what we're capable of. We wanted our bodies to feel fresh, even our minds. We've been in the building since January, going at it strong. It's December now, so just to have some time to self-scout and reflect on ourselves and work on ourselves and be able to dive back into it is really good, like I said.

For a team that's playing, sometimes that can be good or bad. You can kind of get in a groove, a routine, and be hot. Or you could kind of be banged up from the game before. So it really depends. I think it has its advantages and disadvantages depending on who you are.

Q. How did y'all prepare this past week not knowing if you were going to play Clemson or Texas? How did you prepare as a team not knowing who you were going to face?

XAVION ALFORD: In this program we're big on focusing on ourselves. We really used that time to focus on ourselves, find things that we can get better at each and every day throughout those times we were off.

We watched both teams obviously just to see what they could offer and what we might have to do against either one of those teams. Mainly the focus was on ourselves, refreshing our minds, refreshing our bodies to be able to go play this game full speed, 100 percent, as best as we can.

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