

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

Saturday, December 28, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Texas Longhorns

Gunnar Helm

Press Conference

Q. Not sure if you've been asked this before but we live in a college football world where if a freshman or sophomore is not playing immediately maybe they move on to the portal and find a different situation. Why did you choose to stay when you were not playing a ton early, and maybe you could have gone somewhere else early and played more immediately than you have at Texas?

GUNNAR HELM: My initial thought on that is when I committed to Texas I committed to the school.

Obviously I committed to the program but the tradition, the alumni network, the game day environment, the conference prestige, the plan for me individually, that was my goal. That was I didn't committed to Texas and just, you know, I was told on a daily basis, really to, just keep following the plan, keep following the plan, keep following the plan. And yeah, I'll admit it was pretty frustrating at times to keep following that plan.

But you know, look what it's done for me now, and I couldn't be more pleased to be coached by this amazing coaching staff and I couldn't be more pleased to be in the position I'm in.

Q. It's rare for a young guy to play a lot at Texas. What do you see from Trevor Goosby playing both tackles, mentally, what stands out about him when he's playing?

GUNNAR HELM: Well, immediately just his maturity to be plug-and-play. Young kid coming in and really shutting down some of the best edge rushers in the country and when we play Georgia and A&M and one other game he was in, obviously you don't turn an eye to him because you know that he has it locked down on the edge, and to speak so much on his maturity but the level of IQ that Trev has in his head is second-to-none. He's going to be a really good



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player when it comes down to it, and obviously he's a veteran already as it is.

Q. Gunnar, Steve Sarkisian was talking about how everyone needs to investigate in the four games in the College Football Playoff. How are you seeing that? How are the players encouraging each other to make sure that that elevation happens?

GUNNAR HELM: Yeah, I mean, as the deep season goes on, we're getting closer and closer as a team every day. We continue to get closer and we continue to have a great culture and we continue to build on our culture. I mean, long answer short, I guess, just buying back into each other and getting closer and playing for each other, playing as a team.

Q. I asked Kelvin and Jake this. You three guys will be in the league next year, and this is a great opportunity. There are 125 teams that would love to be where you are right now, in the Elite Eight. How much are you enjoying the process, enjoying this experience, and while you're trying to figure out how to get this done?

GUNNAR HELM: Yeah, it's really cool to be in the position we are in. You know, it doesn't really matter about the first round bye. All that is behind us now. We've been playing on a weekly basis now. We have not had much time off. We are kind of in our groove right now. I think that makes us pretty dangerous. As for the process of playing deep in the Playoff, the dream is the National Championship. Obviously give credit to all these teams that are playing in those Bowls all around the country. They have earned that.

Personally my dream is the National Championship and just to be in the position that we are in, and to come to work every day with the same attitude to get better and continue to get better as we wrap up the second round.

Q. There is already so much on Quinn already being the quarterback at Texas. How have you seen him manage and handle everything and how impressed are

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you with how he's taken this life of being in a fishbowl as the quarterback at Texas and putting the offense in a position to be successful every week?

GUNNAR HELM: What I love about Quinn is he's a pretty clear-minded guy. If he has something on his mind, gets it off his mind really quick, whether that's talking to someone about it, whether that's Coach Sark or Coach Milwee or someone like that. If it's out of the football building, then he talks to his family about it and gets it out of his mind right away.

He does his best every day to go in with a clear-headed mindset and he's all about football. That's one of the things that I respect most about him. He's completely tuned out to the outside world. He couldn't care less about what anybody else is saying about him, unless obviously it's the coaching staff. He's taking construction criticism and he's getting better every day.

Q. In your four years at Texas what has Jake Majors meant to the program and you individually?

GUNNAR HELM: He's meant everything. He's part of the group that established the culture here, going from a 5-7 team and being on the team before that, 5-7 team and then going 8-4 and then going to the College Football Playoff semifinal. The path and trajectory that we are on now speaks volumes to his maturity to stay and trust the process at the University of Texas and bring the University of Texas back to the what the standard should be.

Q. You talk about people telling you to follow the plan. I suspect at the beginning of the season, you had a plan for what you wanted to accomplish this season. Obviously the National Championship, but how have you done with what you wanted to accomplish here this season?

GUNNAR HELM: I mean, as for team goals, you said it best, National Championship game. It's the SEC Championship Game. It's helping all my teammates get the awards that they deserved, which comes with team success, as well as individual success.

Personally I checked off my personal goals which I thought at the time were pretty extreme: Being invited to the Senior Bowl, postseason get drafted, play for a National Championship game, win an SEC title game.

You know, I didn't even have it as a goal to break the single-season receptions record for a tight end. So that was pretty lofty in the bang of my mind. But just to be in that position speaks volumes to this coaching staff for getting me ready to play throughout the years and telling

me exactly what I needed to work on in order to put me in position to be where I am today.

But obviously playing for a National Championship, trumps all those, and hopefully we can get it done as a team.

Q. What does a healthy Isaiah Bond mean for this offense and from your vantage point how much does he change how this offense functions when he's out there?

GUNNAR HELM: He brings a type of leadership to the offense, just a veteran player that's been in these kind of situations before and been in them countless times. He brings a maturity to the offense and brings another aspect of explosiveness into the offense. Having him back is huge for us and we know that. We're really excited.

Q. On the conference call with Arizona State, they are fired up and feel disrespected. Is this a game where you have to tap in and match their mindset because they feel nobody gives them a chance to win?

GUNNAR HELM: Before playing us, they were a team that all year played hard to the whistle every play, especially on defense. That's the first thing you noticed when you turned on the tape is they are a veteran defense that plays extremely hard to the ball and they finish plays.

We saw their turnover margin and what they do to create turnovers on the defensive side. We knew that we really had to finish in the run game, finish in the passing game, make sure Quinn felt protected to make his throws downfield and run crisp routes. Because like I said they are a great defense and an extremely good football team otherwise they wouldn't be here in the first place.

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