

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

Monday, December 30, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Arizona State Sun Devils

Sam Leavitt

Press Conference

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. I mean that's your entire life. So I don't know if you can really put it into words. It's every single thing that you worked for since day one, every decision you make in your life; you know, am I going to go do this or do something to make me better with football.

It's every single decision that goes into everything, what food I'm going to eat, what am I going to do tonight? Am I going to hang out with my friends or am I going to go stretch and get an extra workout in or watch more film or everything like that? I don't know if you can really put it into words, but you get glimpses of just really understanding what this moment means to you, and when those come and hit, it hits pretty powerful.

Q. The support from fans has been almost overwhelming, obviously crowds showing up outside the stadium. Obviously last night little children and fans waiting to like 10, 11:00 at night to get autographs from you guys. What does it mean to embrace not only this moment and this experience but to embrace how far you guys can go?

SAM LEAVITT: It's one of my favorite parts is just seeing the kids being happy and stuff like that because I remember when I was at that age and how hyped I would have been to go see Cameron Skattebo or a quarterback or something like that. It's super cool to see that we can activate the valley and really change this thing. And Coach Dillingham is going to take this in a trajectory that's going to be a constant growth throughout the next years, and it's just going to continue to grow, and I'm just happy to be the catalyst for that.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. It's definitely a tricky way to go about things because you get so wrapped up in the moment. You gotta enjoy the fame and the glory for a little



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bit, just soak it all in and stuff like that, and then get back to work and just do your normal routine that you do every single week. Get your same hours of film in, same hours of stretching, whatever icing you do or recovery or massage or anything you do with that. So I have such a planned -- I've had the same process for the last 20 weeks.

So it's just finding different times to get that stuff in because the schedule is a little bit different, and you have a mandatory dinner at 7 and a movie at 3 and event here and there. So it's just being able to get everything that you need to do in.

Q. Do you (inaudible)?

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah, there are certain things, but some are mandatory so it's kind of just all on our schedule.

Q. You said the other day you were going to take this opportunity to prove why you're the best quarterback in this game and it picked up some traction. A lot of people put headlines on that. Are you surprised by how much that story got legs and took off?

SAM LEAVITT: I mean, I don't know. I don't really have any expectations going into the comment. I was just saying the comment to my fullest belief, and I hope that every player on the field feels that they're the best. That's how it should be. You put all this work in and get to do so stage, so why would you not believe that yourself?

Q. Are you getting notifications a lot about the stories once it blew up?

SAM LEAVITT: I turn off my notifications always. I don't really have them on during the season and stuff like that. But when I open up the app, yeah, I see it blew up a little, which is cool, get my name out on the stage a little bit more.

Q. So you were okay with that?

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah, I didn't mind it.

Q. Why?



SAM LEAVITT: I don't feel like publicity is bad, especially if you're not saying anything -- and just being able to put that on the stage. And Quinn Ewers is such a big- time name in college football, and now that's going to be a big talk on the show, and now you're going to go into the game and people are going to be watching for stuff like, so it's just an opportunity for me to go prove myself.

Q. Does that put more pressure on you since you already put it out there?

SAM LEAVITT: No, it doesn't change anything for me. I'm just going in to win the game. I don't care about what people think. I just like to say that I believe.

Q. (Inaudible)?

SAM LEAVITT: I understand it because you look at a season like last year, and the majority of predictions going into next season are predicated on that. I wasn't a big name going into this year, and Skatt blew up the majority of this year, and Coach Dillingham's second year, so it's not like people were projecting us to go crazy. So when we're constantly keep proving ourselves, it's not like they're just going to jump to the top and say, oh, they're one of the best in the nation. It's going to be like, wow, they just barely won this game. And then it just keeps progressing from there and there. So I understand it, but I do feel like we're getting overlooked always, but that's something that we carry as a chip on our shoulder as a team, and that's kind of our identity.

Q. What is it about the Texas defense that stands out to you?

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. They're where they're going to be. They're really smart players. They're aggressive, driving the ball in the secondary. Really big up front. And they're sound. They're not playing too many coverages, showing too many fronts and everything like that. We've seen some pretty exotic stuff this year. So it's going to be a game where we just gotta go do what we gotta do and just execute and take care of the ball.

Q. Obviously it's a little different this week to be on such a big stage. Just kind of walk me through, I guess, some of the differences in preparing for a game like this.

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. I keep getting that question a lot, and I don't know if there really are too many differences. You might watch an extra 30 minutes of film just because you want to be the most prepared you've ever been, because this is the biggest stage of your life. So you're

going to do the most you can.

But other than that, it's the same as every single other week. It's not like I'm going to stretch harder or do stuff like that or practice harder, because I already feel like I practice as hard as I can. So that's kind of the impression that I take always. And then nameless, faceless opponent is something that I live about. Why would I be scared or change that for someone else?

Q. What was it like with the sendoff?

SAM LEAVITT: It's incredible just to be able to activate this valley and have people show support. It's people you care about. It's not random people. And families and everything and people that have been rocking with you since spring ball before you guys really got popping and everything like that. So it's one of my favorite things to see just getting the valley activated, and I'm just really happy to do it for this team and this coaching staff.

SAM LEAVITT: Seemed like too good of an opportunity not to go take a visit. So I came on a visit, and we sat in a meeting for about five hours and just talked about everything, and I didn't leave with one question left.

It was pretty special to be able to sit there in that room and talk ball with them and understand philosophy, see what it takes to get to the next level. And after I left there, I knew it was the right decision.

Q. Did you all meet on campus?

SAM LEAVITT: Yes, sir.

Q. So five hours, what do you talk about for five hours?

SAM LEAVITT: Everything. Mechanics, protection, philosophy, scheme, people, training, you know, just connects and diet. I mean everything you can think of. I don't know if I left with one question left.

Q. Sam, does Coach Dillingham ever lay into you guys? Does he ever get visibly upset?

SAM LEAVITT: Oh, yeah, all the time.

Q. What does that look like?

SAM LEAVITT: He just gets upset if we're not going full speed in practice, because I feel like one thing that we do so well is just play with such high motor and effort. So if we're not showing that in practice and everything and exerting that effort, then he gets a little frustrated. And

that's what we've played with since day one going back into early fall camp and everything like that. So we try to keep that up, and if it's not there, he's on our heads.

Q. As positive as he is, is it funny when he gets mad or is it like, okay, he's super serious, we need to lock in?

SAM LEAVITT: I wouldn't say it's funny. A lot of people have respect for him. I just say we really lock in and understand what he's saying and just get back to our main goal.

Q. Are you just happy to be here or are you trying to win this game?

SAM LEAVITT: Oh, I'm trying to win this game, but at the same token I'm happy to be here in this environment. Who wouldn't be? It's one of the biggest stages in college football at this level that I can play at, and I get to go showcase my abilities, and our whole team gets to go out there and prove what we do. And I'm just excited to be here with my guys and play at this stage.

Q. And being around you guys I've heard (inaudible).

SAM LEAVITT: I feel like it's just something that's in everyday talks. So when you're on the field and someone is slacking, you say, hey, they counting us out and stuff like that, we ain't good enough, stuff like that that gets people motivated. Might make them do extra work at home or extra recovery and everything like that. So I feel like it's just people chatting and talking to teammates and stuff like that.

Q. How good is Texas?

SAM LEAVITT: They're a really good team, really sound, fundamental. They can play coverage behind a four-man rush, and they're really strong in their gaps and everything like that. Backers flow well, safeties, corners drive on the ball, so it's going to be a really fun opportunity.

Q. What's the mindset that Coach Dillingham has put you all in in preparation for this game on Wednesday?

SAM LEAVITT: Just go play with that juice, you know, what we've done from the jump. So we're going to go play for one another. I feel like that's one thing that we've done so well this year is just play with that much juice and passion and love for the game. We finish to the whistle, and we've played now a full, complete game, special teams, offense, defense. So it's just going to be dialing in and doing the same thing this week.

Q. What's been one of the most memorable moments that you will take away from this season?

SAM LEAVITT: I would say probably like the field rushes. Just being able to embrace that moment with all the fans and look at the true joy on people's faces and just being that presence of that much energy and juice for all in one thing. So I feel like that's one of the most special experiences.

Why would you not? It's the biggest stage in college football as of right now, until you win the next one, and we're all here for one goal, and we're all here together, and we haven't had any nerves throughout the whole season, so why would it change now?

Q. What do you make of the fact that once again?

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. That's what we've lived from since day one. So it's just going to bring more fuel to the fire and more passion and everything like that. So it's what we've lived with. We were ranked last and everything like that. In every single game we were always the underdog. So it's just something that we've lived by and our motto. It's just going to help us play better.

Q. His mom is U of A all the way. He took a picture and said, you know what mom, I think we want to go to Arizona State.

SAM LEAVITT: There we go. Yeah, we're flipping people from the dark side. I like it.

Q. What do you make of the fact that the Valley has rallied behind you?

SAM LEAVITT: It's just super special being in this city. We have an opportunity to bring such a big fanbase in and be able to do this for Coach Dillingham and the staff and all the players and everything like that. So it's special to be able to be in this situation and bring everybody along with us.

Q. How do you make sure that the moment isn't bigger than the task?

SAM LEAVITT: That's tough. I feel like that's going to be one of the biggest things for our team going into this game. You gotta embrace the moment and enjoy it, because you don't know when this is going to happen again in your lifetime and everything like that. And then you gotta dial back in and play the game. Don't play the occasion, play the game.

Q. On that note, you're in the College Football Hall of



Fame. Are you in awe of that? Do you expect that your jersey will one day hang in these halls?

SAM LEAVITT: I gotta go check it out. I haven't seen all those yet, but it'll be pretty cool. Obviously that's a goal. I would love for my jersey and name to be in here and everything like that, but right now I'm not focused on that. I'm just focused on the game and playing for my boys.

Q. What does it mean to represent West Linn, Oregon?

SAM LEAVITT: Bands always ask me about West Linn. I got a lot of love for West Linn. It jumped my career and everything like that, so nothing but love for that.

Q. What's it going to take to beat Texas?

SAM LEAVITT: We gotta play good on all cylinders of the game, and we gotta put together a full complete game. Offensively what I gotta worry about, just taking care of the ball. It's going to be the biggest thing. They cause a lot of turnovers, staying out of negatives on first and second downs, staying manageable down distances. And then third downs I gotta extend plays and make plays when it happens. I gotta understand situational ball, which I've done really good throughout the whole year, and just play.

Q. (Inaudible), the magnitude of it I guess?

SAM LEAVITT: I guess not because I just woke up and headed over here. So not too much so far. But I'll walk around after this and really just soak it up.

Q. What was it like seeing not only the sendoff, but at the airport when you guys arrived, kids with balls, trying to get autographs.

SAM LEAVITT: Yeah. It's so cool to see our fanbase traveling and showing big support. I mean, that was a question going into the year, how much support are we going to get, and it's just continued to grow; and obviously that comes with success and everything like that. But now people that were hiding in the shadows, they said ASU was like a sleeping giant, so we've awoken the giant.

Q. What would it mean to win this game?

SAM LEAVITT: It would be the biggest win since Jake Plummer and all them. It would just be special for not only the fans, but you do it for the people in the facility. So being able to see their faces after the game and everything like that would be pretty special.

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