

# TaxAct Texas Bowl: Kansas State vs LSU

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Houston, Texas, USA

NRG Stadium

## Kansas State Wildcats Coach Chris Klieman Press Conference

Kansas State - 42, LSU - 20

COACH KLIEMAN: What a dominant performance tonight. I felt the guys had great preparation, especially once we got down to Houston. They were focused and galvanized; they were wanting to make a statement. And we wanted to play.

You could tell that as the game started, did something we typically don't do; We won the toss and took the football. Because I wanted Skylar with the ball in his hands. And he made some plays in that first drive to give us the lead, we get a quick stop, get another quick score.

Give them credit. They did a nice job right before half to cut it to 21-7. But then We were able to get a stop right away in the second half.

And can't say enough about the resolve of our guys and the play of guys like Skylar, our offensive line, Deuce, our receivers and stuff. They just made plays against a really good pass rush, against a really talented defense.

And we came up with the stops when we had to on defense. And about December 15th, we got done with finals, we had our first team meeting after that. And we said, look, if you're in this first meeting and you practice right after this meeting, you're in, you're all in until January 4th. And all those guys stayed in.

And that was myself and the seniors saying you're all with us. There's no opting out. There's no bailing out. You're here with us. And that's a credit to those seniors, a credit to those leaders because that was -- this was a big game for us, and I think you guys know that as well, how big of a game this was for us and to come out and play like we did and beat a good LSU team pretty handily says an awful lot about the guys in our locker room.

**Q. How good was Skylar?**



COACH KLIEMAN: Phenomenal. And I think you could see he was healthy tonight. I think the extra week helped us playing this thing on January 4th. And for him to be on point like he was and know that people were coming after him and hanging in there and throwing some strikes, he was phenomenal.

**Q. You're just the second coach ever to win a bowl game at Kansas State. Any reaction to that?**

COACH KLIEMAN: I don't think about it like that. It's fun to win a bowl game. First time I've won a bowl game. Won a few national championships and been on the stage. But this was pretty special.

And my hat's off to K-State nation and the fan base for coming out. What an electric crowd. And our fans were in it from the start. Our guys really got energized by our fan base. And a credit goes to our fan base for how loud they were because I think they had fun watching our guys play.

**Q. (Indiscernible) running game got stoned at the outset, to be able to switch to the passing game?**

COACH KLIEMAN: We had plans on throwing the football. We knew they had some new guys in the back end. We were going to throw the football. We have some really good wideouts and really good tight ends. We lined up in a lot of different empty formations and motion some things, and did some creative things on offense.

And it was fun to watch those guys execute at a high level. And they were still coming after us. They've got a good pass rush, and Skylar hung in there. We knew we had to throw the ball.

**Q. What were your emotions lifting that trophy with Skylar who has been here with you since you've been here?**

COACH KLIEMAN: Known that kid since he was in high school. And when he got hurt last year I was obviously devastated and crushed for him. Knowing we had the COVID year, he and I, I think had a couple of



conversations that we weren't going to announce anything but he was going to come back and play.

But to see what he went through this year getting nicked up early in the season, fighting his way back and playing well on one leg really and then getting banged up late in the season, the kid just means the world to me. I love him. I love his family. He's been great to my kids and my wife. And to see him go out like that -- this game was huge for him too. He wanted to play well in this bowl game and he did.

**Q. How sweet was that moment to get him off the field, they chant his name and you hugged him for a while. What did you tell him?**

COACH KLIEMAN: I told him I loved him and I would do anything in the world for him. He told me he loved me and would always have my back. That's a sign of building relationships with kids. And that's something that's really important to me is building relationships with these guys and that kid is going to hold a special place in my heart forever.

**Q. (Inaudible) what did you think of his job in there?**

COACH KLIEMAN: It was great. Under a lot of tough circumstances, too. We were down a couple of offensive coaches. And some guys stepped up. And proud of Brian Lepak. Proud of Christian Ellsworth and Will Burnham and the rest of the offensive staff for rallying around Collin. That's BA and Riles as well for rallying around Collin.

We had great dialogue throughout the game and was excited about continuing -- I kept telling him, keep putting pressure on them, keep applying pressure. Don't take the foot off the gas. And he had a lot of things dialed up really well. But the preparation is what made us so successful, because we were prepared for a lot of the looks we saw.

**Q. [Question about overcoming at this point].**

COACH KLIEMAN: Our kids have never wavered or panicked. Our kids have great resolve. They trust each other. They love each other. And that's part of a season. And we lost a couple of games at the end that we were disappointed, but we didn't flinch. Guys, 8-5 is a good season. And we can build off of that. A hell of a lot better than 7-6. These guys were not going to be denied today.

**Q. Talked about the offense, but the defense came into this game not really knowing what to expect (indiscernible).**

COACH KLIEMAN: And I thought they got us off balance a

little bit because 13 was a really good runner, and we stuffed him a few times. And they did some really good things, ran some trick plays and stuff, which they had to do without having a real throwing quarterback.

But we were able to get a couple of big turnovers. We didn't tackle exceptionally well, but give them credit. They ran hard and they're big up front. We made the steps when we need to make them.

We were probably a little upset we gave up the touchdown at the first half gave them a little bit of life, but the big stop to start the third quarter.

**Q. The way you methodically drove the ball down the field, you have the longest drive in Texas Bowl history.**

COACH KLIEMAN: Well, it's preparation, and I thought Collin called a really good game. And I thought kids made plays. I thought we made some really good plays. I think we completed maybe one fourth-down conversion there, if not two.

And I've got a lot of trust in what Skylar can do on fourth down. And we knew we were going to go for some of those on fourth and short. And saw the looks we liked and he made some checks and made some big plays.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

COACH KLIEMAN: Third down was critical. Fourth down was critical. I put it in 7's hands. And he was seeing the field really well. He was making some great checks at the line of scrimmage. And I thought our offensive line played really well. He was able to stay in there, hang in there and made big time throws.

**Q. What does Deuce Vaughn mean to your team?**

COACH KLIEMAN: He's the best player in college football, in my opinion. And he's, for a reason, a consensus first-team All-American. Most humble kid I've been around. But he's a workhorse. And our players love him.

And he loves K-State. And he's big time. And I love the kid and I love his heart and his resolve and the fact that he wants the football.

**Q. (Indiscernible) making that big catch, how frustrating was it to see Landry go down?**

COACH KLIEMAN: It was frustrating. Landry has been a guy, steady player for us, had a really good year. Affected us on special teams; is one of the best special teams players we have. I felt awful for him. Made a big-time

play. It's going to happen unfortunately in this game.

**Q. Malik Knowles, what were you seeing?**

COACH KLIEMAN: He played really well. He was ready to go. And we're going to spread the ball around. With the wideouts we have and tight ends we have and obviously throw Deuce in there, Skylar has some guys to pitch it around to.

I thought he kept everybody involved and everybody was a viable option and the communication on the sideline, the communication on the field, those guys were on point in the passing game. That was fun to watch.

**Q. What would you say most excites you about next season?**

COACH KLIEMAN: Can I enjoy this one for a little bit? (Laughter).

I just think you can build on what we did to win this bowl game in January, gave us a little bit of time off. We've got a really lot of talented guys coming back. I think they have a lot of energy going into the offseason. But I'm going to try to cut it down and relax for a little bit.

**Q. Kind of sort of about next season but seeing the offense, how it formed and (indiscernible) Collin should get the job, how much does this factor in?**

COACH KLIEMAN: It was a body of work. I'll visit after he gets a little break because he needs a break as well. But I loved his preparation. He had a great body of work. The guys love Collin, and they're going to play their tails off for Collin. And they should. He's K-State, in my mind.

Sky is, too. You play quarterback here, you're the face of the program. And we got one that's just leaving us in Sky and one that's here with us in Collin and it's so fun to see those guys because they bleed purple.

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