

TaxAct Texas Bowl: Oklahoma State vs Texas A&M

Thursday, December 28, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

NRG Stadium

Texas A&M Aggies Elijah Robinson Press Conference

Oklahoma State - 31, Texas A&M - 23

ELIJAH ROBINSON: Not the results we wanted. I'll tell you what, I'm proud of that team in the locker room. I'm proud of those guys who stuck it through.

A lot of people talk about the guys that aren't here this whole time we're preparing for the bowl game. We want to talk about the guys that were here. I'll tell you, that was a resilient group. They fought. For the team to go down 24-6, going to a transition the next day or so, got in the second half and fought their tails off.

It was good, though. I'm proud of that group. Man, it's been a great six years. I'm going to miss being here.

Q. Elijah, you touched on it. You were down 24-6 at halftime. What was it that enabled you guys to come back and maybe you have a shot at an upset and stay in this game?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: Early on, what happens with tempo, you've got to have urgency on the defensive line. We got these guys to third down plenty of times. Got to go upfield on third down.

Taking a look at the offensive side the first half, you get into the red zone well, but you've got to score touchdowns in the red zone. You have to score touchdowns in the red zone when you're playing against an explosive offense like Oklahoma State. The field goal is just not enough at times.

Came back in at halftime, and I told them, I said what we talked about was they will remember this group. Remember the guys in that locker room, remember the guys that stayed and fought it through. They didn't have a blink in their eye, but I told them we're going to come back out and we're going to keep playing hard every snap.



When we woke up, we were going to be in this game.

They had a chance. They had an opportunity. I think Marcel was running the ball really hard and was trying to make a play. Unfortunately, he got stripped and got the ball back to the 1 yard line. He gave himself opportunities, and if it happened, I think you're looking at a different game with a lot of time on the clock.

Coach Coley and Coach Durkin did a helluva job calling the game. Hate the fact we lost our quarterback on the first play of the game, but Marcel came in and responded. He came up big, and he'll be really good for the Aggies the next few years.

Q. Piggy-backing that, how would you rate what Marcel did? Was there a point in the game where you felt like he really settled in and was feeling it?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: He's a great competitor. You go back to recruiting, we went to go see him play basketball and watching him practice. Everything he does, he's a competitor. The biggest thing I thought that he could learn from this is he doesn't have to win the game in just one play. He can just stick to the process.

I think sometimes where he felt he had to make a play, and our guys did a great job talking to him on the sideline settling him down. So I thought he moved the ball well later in the game.

You've got to give that guy all the credit. He stepped right in and pretty much played this whole game.

Q. Elijah, Jahdae got hurt pretty early on, but he still came out and had a huge game. Can you talk about what you saw from him and the other two scholarship receivers?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: Yeah, resilience. He understood it was just him and two other guys that were on scholarship, and they had to play for us. Take nothing away from the other guys that's not on scholarship because they come out there every day and bust their tail to prepare just the same way.

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So we were ready to play any of those guys. It's next man up mentality. We knew we were going into the game with less guys on the roster. We didn't make that excuse. We just challenged the guys to be ready at any time to go into the game.

Q. Knowing that this is your final game of Texas A&M, what was the message going into today and especially at halftime just to remember what these players will remember in their time in College Station?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: I told them whatever you do in life is going to echo in eternity. That's the big thing we talked about. I told those guys the way they went about this season during the transition, the way they could have made decisions and say, you know what, I'm done, and they didn't do that.

The biggest thing, we talked brotherhood from the very beginning. No matter what anybody said outside that locker room, that locker room is about that. We did not get mad or blame a guy if he decided to do something else for their career and their future. That's a decision they had to make for them.

They showed up every day, and the guys that were in that locker room that was ready to learn and prepare for this game, they did it. I give a lot of credit to the coaches and those guys sticking around. They could have started looking for a job, but they made an oath to say we want to do what's best for these kids because these kids did everything we asked them to do.

Q. You touched on it a little bit earlier, but how tough was it for you game plan-wise when you lose your quarterback on the first play of the game?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: The great thing is that both of those guys are similar, so you can keep the game plan somewhat the same for those guys. I think the biggest thing you take away is the experience. Then I think the mental mindset for our guys, for our team to say what's next and then respond.

The quarterback, everybody wants to protect the quarterback. It was nothing anybody did wrong. Just had a good hit on the guy, and he got hurt. So the biggest thing for our guys is to respond. So we've got to be really good for No. 10 now. We've got to make his job easier. And I think those guys did everything possible to try to stay on schedule.

A few times, we had some negative plays, but for the most part, those guys rallied around 10 to try to make him feel

comfortable.

Q. You started the 12th man, and he had an interception for you. Could you speak to how Sam did and also how the secondary improved as the game wore on as well.

ELIJAH ROBINSON: Sam, that kid shows up every day, busts his tail waiting for his opportunity. Good things happen to good people. Sam has never complained. Sam's a guy that's been injured, got right back in the game. Got injured, never missed a day of practice. Tried to pull him and say, hey, rest yourself. He won't do it.

That's why you enjoy coaching when you get kids like that. He represents something really special, 12th man, and it's hard to be that scorer in that jersey, but I think we picked the right guy to wear it.

Q. I know you're missing a lot of guys, but Le'Veon Moss in particular, why did he miss the game?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: He had personal reasons. We continue to pray for him and his family. Let's hope he makes it back soon and finish what he started here.

Q. Related back to the question with Sam, Oklahoma State had so many yards in the air in the first half. What were you guys able to do to adjust in the second to really kind of slow down and those guys getting beat on those one-on-one matchups early?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: They adjusted at the halftime really well, just changed up the coverage for those guys. Just extending the round to change the looks up to not give the guys free access. Again, we asked the young guys to go out there and compete. I thought they fought their tails off. Those guys make some really good passes and catches out there.

Tough day for those guys, but again they fought and they fought. Without them, we wouldn't have had any corners.

Q. When you kind of think about this program and the future it's headed toward with Mike Elko, kind of big picture, where do you think this program is, and what kind of program is he inheriting?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: This program is going to the top. When I first came here six years ago, I knew the potential this program had. Coach Elko is a great man, has a great family. He's a great coach. He's going to put the right people in place to make sure our guys are successful here.

I'm looking forward to watching him. I'm excited for Mike.

I'm excited for this program. I tell the players, stick around and give him a chance because he's going to help you guys be successful.

Q. With some of the guys on the defensive line specifically that you've worked with all year and some of those young guys who were able to get a shot tonight, maybe more than they have over the course of the season, what were you excited to see out there and what they were able to do today?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: When opportunity comes, sometimes guys get a little relaxed when they understand that guys are in front of them. Sometimes they don't see the opportunity to go out and have to perform. Sometimes they relax and they're excited they don't have to go out and perform. Again, they've got performance anxiety.

What happened with some of these guys playing up front, guys like Dindy, Hicks, those guys thought it's my time. I've got to go play. I'm on national TV. And you saw the change in preparation in those guys. You saw the change in urgency for them. Those guys played well, and for the most part, they did some good things.

A lot of things to clean up, but they showed up and fought. Loved their eyes on the sideline. For a young guy to have failure early in the game, being down 24-6, they just kept playing. So I'm excited to see those guys. Excited for Albert Regis to show his leadership, being a guy who played a lot of ball for us.

Q. Coach, with what you've kind of gone on in your journey here at A&M with these players, what did these last moments of getting to coach them at this school mean to you?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: It came too fast, to be honest with you. It's never easy leaving a group of people who's treated you well. It's never easy leaving a bunch of young men that you sat in their living rooms, you built relationships with them and their families, you helped them plan their future and what their goals are. It's never easy leaving those guys. That's just the team.

With the coaching staff, it's great friendships that are built in those meeting rooms. At home, my kids never had a bad day as far as living in College Station. My wife loves it here. I love it here. Probably the best place I've lived for the past six years. I really enjoyed it. I'm going to miss it.

I thank Coach Fisher for the opportunity he gave me. I thank Coach Elko for the time I spent under him as the defensive coordinator. I have nothing bad to say about this program. This program is first class, and they're going to

take it to the top.

Q. Elijah, you talked about this at the beginning, but the resiliency and the heart of this team, because they didn't have all of their buddies with them that they started the season with or that they ended the season with, but they still kind of pulled together. Can you talk to that again?

ELIJAH ROBINSON: Everybody had a decision to make, whether it's that stay or go. Our biggest message was who was here. We're going to focus on the guys in that locker room, the guys that showed up every day.

Last night at the team meeting, I think everybody I talked to said, what about the guys that aren't there? I said, you guys keep asking questions about those guys. They're not here. They're not coming back, whatever the case may be. Start talking and asking me about the guys who are here. Those are guys that fought every day.

Nothing against the guys that didn't play in this game. I love them to death. But there were a group of guys that showed up every day to prepare for this bowl game, for each other, for Texas A&M, for their families, for themselves, they showed up every day. I focus on those guys every day.

I told the guys these are the guys that are here. Next man up mentality. And that's how we're going to play in this game. Take a few plays which we can get back because I'd love for that locker room to have smiles instead of tears right now because they fought their tails off.

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