

Kinder's Texas Bowl: Houston vs LSU

Sunday, December 28, 2025

Houston, Texas, USA

NRG Stadium

Houston Cougars

Tanner Koziol

Postgame Press Conference

Houston - 38, LSU - 35

Q. Tanner, can you talk about what it was like when that game went final and you guys were celebrating, what was going through your mind seeing that you guys had won the Texas Bowl?

TANNER KOZIOL: It's every player's dream to just end in victory formation. Like I texted Dean before last night, I was, like, one play you get to call tomorrow, what's the play you want to get called, the play you want to score on. He was, like, victory formation. That's a phenomenal answer.

Q. I know you've been asked about playing in a bowl game, you know, with your future football career, but just how big was it, one, for you to come out and play, but also just to win it, this being your last college game?

TANNER KOZIOL: It's a dream. I played four years and this was my first bowl game. Every year -- my freshman year we lost a heartbreaker at the end of the season for a bowl game. People talk about the bowl games all the time. They talk about them for the rest of their lives, like how fun the bowl week was. And they talk about it a lot more when you win. That's just the cherry on top. It really is.

Q. After (indiscernible) I noticed you went up to a couple of the younger guys, you were giving them advice about (indiscernible). What does it mean that you guys kind of set the foundation for what could be the norm now?

TANNER KOZIOL: It's so cool. It was our goal coming in. I remember getting recruited by Coach Fritz. He said we're turning this thing around this year. He said, I don't give a damn what everybody says; we don't have to listen to anybody. We're doing it this year and he did it. He's a man of his word. I'll die for Coach Fritz.



Q. So I asked your coach this question. He didn't have an answer for me. I feel like this is more appropriate for you, especially since you were senior and moving forward. As you end the season on a high note, closing a chapter here, as you turn the page what would you name this chapter in your career and why?

TANNER KOZIOL: That's a phenomenal question. That's a really good question. I think I would label this chapter just Family. I truly met a family here in Houston and I made a family here in Houston, and I'm just excited to come back here all the time.

And this place is a home and it forever will be. It changed my life, and I could not be more thankful for Houston for where I was a couple months ago. Like hitting the portal for another time, and Coach Fritz taking me in. Coach Nagle and Coach Stone, they poured into me. Everyone believed in me.

This whole team just had my back all the time. It was just a dream. I love football way too much, man. This year was, we created a family and we won like it. And with the portal it's hard to create a family, and Coach Fritz knows how to do it. And we did it. It was so much fun there.

Q. That drive at the end of the first half, starting with 1:27 left, how aggressive you guys were, did that get you excited and get you going? And did you know you were going to play this game aggressively? And how much did that drive propel you guys?

TANNER KOZIOL: It just means more. It really just meant more. We wanted it more. And that is, at the end of the day, that's what it was. They knew we were running it. We had to run it. We put it on the ground and wanted it more and got it. And that's football. That's what you've got to do.

Q. You mentioned Dean Connors earlier. You had the last drive when you took the knee. But the one before that when he scored the touchdown, how big was that for you all to be able to go ahead up 10?



TANNER KOZIOL: Dean Connors showed up every single time we needed him to. He makes big plays all the time. He's a dog on the field. And I'm just calling out East-West Shrine Bowl and Panini Bowl to get him over there. He deserves it.

He's the hardest worker on this team. First guy in, last guy Utah. He's always talking about football. We're sending film back and forth all the time. We're watching film on Facetime with our buddies.

He lives and breathe the game. And he loves it more than anyone else, and I love it about him.

Q. Take me through what your mind was thinking during that fourth-and-1 conversion? You're laying on the field, but you just made that convert, a huge conversion to the win?

TANNER KOZIOL: First down rocked. That was awesome. I knew I caught it. I was, like, all right, we got the first down. And I was feeling a little stingy. But we got back up. It was good. It fades away. It just shoots down your arm and then it goes away. So it was all good.

Q. What did you see out of Conner Weigman tonight? And how big has he been for you this season?

TANNER KOZIOL: Just grit. He has so many grit, running the ball, throwing the ball, commanding the offense, operating the offense, getting us into good looks. He has so much grit. He prepares like no one else and he puts in the work and he deserves it all. He deserves it all. He truly does.

Q. You had high praise for Coach Fritz a few seconds ago. He had high praise for you. He feels like you're going to be a high draft pick in the NFL Draft. Could you talk about, one, what it means to hear how highly he thinks of you? And could you talk a little bit about the relationship you've been able to build with him here with at your time in Houston?

TANNER KOZIOL: Coach Fritz showed me what it looks like to run a program and build it and how you have to treat kids, how you have to get on them and make sure they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, but you have to do it in a smart way.

He's done that with so many kids here. You see so much improvement from game one to game 13, like, throughout the whole season. So many kids have gotten so much better. And that's just something that we really take pride in is getting better every day and not making the same mistakes and just continuing to do that.

And he just harps on the right things. And he's so real. He's the realest coach ever. It's rare in college football. And he's awesome for it.

Q. Slade's game plan, to be that aggressive, drive at the end of the first half there, did you guys know you were going to be that aggressive in this game plan and did it get you going during the week? What did you see there?

TANNER KOZIOL: Yeah, it's really just the ball found me. The ball found the right people. Sometimes, like, we get the right look for the play and we make it happen. And that's what happened tonight, really.

Q. What would be your message to the returners to this program next year?

TANNER KOZIOL: Fight. Whenever there's a little voice in your head that's telling you you're a little tired or you can't do it, just fight that voice. Like, that's not the right voice. There's two voices in your head. There's one that can take you the right way and one that can take you the wrong way. And you have to shut those thoughts down and fight every second.

This is my last college football game. It feels like freshman year was a year ago. And every single year I met so many good people. And just really when you fight together, you just enjoy it so much more together. You enjoy the struggle. You enjoy it all. I would just say to fight all the time. Fight for what's good. Fight for the good cause.

Q. You mentioned that imprint and impact of this program and the city will have on you as you move on to the next chapter of your career. How much does it excite you to see what this program can become in the future, and just all along the returners and newcomers that will help sustain this?

TANNER KOZIOL: It's awesome. Houston is one of the best cities in the world. There's no reason you don't want to come here, and if you don't want to play for Coach Fritz I don't know what's wrong with you.

You come play for this guy you come visit he'll tell you the truth, what you're going to do here and what he needs you to do. And just listen to these coaches. Take hard coaching. Like, don't -- never put your head down, just take hard coaching, move on and fix it.

Don't put your head down. Grow every single day. Every single day they see improvement and you're going to be in the right spot eventually.



Q. Walk us through bowl week. Most teams have to travel. But here you are home base, home fans. What was this week like leading up to this phenomenal win?

TANNER KOZIOL: It's really cool. The Texas Bowl did a great job of just having cool things for us. We were racing go-carts. We were doing all the fun things being a kid again. I feel so young again. Like, I don't feel like a senior at all honestly.

But just having so much fun with the guys. I'm going to remember it for the rest of my life. That's what's so cool about a bowl game. You enjoy the last week with all the guys you built such a great relationship with. We had a ton of fun this week. I think we'll have some fun tonight.

Q. Did you have a favorite moment in the celebration or in the locker room, something that's going to stick with you for the a while?

TANNER KOZIOL: Just seeing my guys right after victory formation, when they come off the sideline, game's over and we're up on the scoreboard. That was the best thing for sure.

Just looking around at my guys, giving them all hugs. Just being so happy together. Celebrating together. It's what you dream of, ending the season on a high note.

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