

Cheez-It Citrus Bowl: Michigan vs Texas

Sunday, December 28, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Michigan Wolverines

Wink Martindale

Jimmy Rolder

Press Conference



WINK MARTINDALE: How is everybody doing? Hope you had good holidays and continue to have them. Happy New Year. We have been preparing for this for a while now and it is all coming together. We are excited about playing this game.

With that, I will open it up for questions.

Q. I know you guys had the opportunity to meet Kyle Whittingham last night. Curious what the conversations were like and what you learned from him?

JIMMY ROLDER: It was more of a brief introduction, the conversations you are looking for are coming down the road, but for now, that is all it was.

Q. What's one thing you want fans to know about this team?

WINK MARTINDALE: I can't speak for the team but -- I guess I can. (Laughter).

Defensively, we take great pride in how hard we play, and to show the joy of the game. I think that that is why this game will be entertaining to watch. You have some really good players on the field, both sides.

Our guys love to compete, and they have been doing it all during Bowl prep. It is nothing new to us. We don't have to ramp up because it is a game, and that is just how we are and how we do it.

Q. I don't believe any of your defensive captains from the beginning of the season are active in this game. Who stepped up? Jimmy is one. Can you speak to the leadership you've seen from different players stepping

up?

WINK MARTINDALE: I think a bunch of different guys, Ray, Benny, Jimmy, which I knew that. I called that shot two years ago.

Just each position group has somebody stepping up. I mean, Dom Nichols, young guy that is really prepared and has gotten better the last two weeks, even. Excited to see him play.

The secondary, Shug, Jyaire Hill, he is a natural leader. TJ Metcalf.

Q. For both of you, what have you seen from the Texas offense? What stands out?

WINK MARTINDALE: You want me to go first? I mean, obviously, you look at the quarterback. I mean, he is a very talented young man. Respect to that entire family for -- with his two uncles and his dad, which they said Coop was the better athlete out of all three of them.

Their offense is explosive. It is one of those things, though. It is like -- remember -- well, maybe -- well, yeah, there's some people my age (Laughter) -- when you had that box of cereal and you didn't know what the surprise was? It is the same thing going against that offense. You are not sure who is going to be there, but they are going to be very talented.

It is going to be a great challenge for us. Jim put it the best way you could. There is talent in each position group. There are playmakers. Respect to the quarterback and what they have, because they are a great team. We respect them. That is pretty much it.

THE MODERATOR: You've got a defensive coordinator who spent the better part of two decades in the NFL. How much value does that add to you as a player, learning from someone with so much NFL experience?

JIMMY ROLDER: Obviously learning so much just in terms of football, but, honestly, it is more just life advice



that I get from him, just how to navigate different things that happen.

Wink will always keep it real with you. It is just nice having someone be honest and give it to you straight, and help you navigate through life, and that is what he has done so far.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, I will throw that to you, too. You've seen a lot of NFL talent. How does Jimmy stack up?

WINK MARTINDALE: He is going to be a draft choice, a high draft choice. He is an excellent football player.

Q. How many starters will you be missing because of NFL opt-outs? And does that show how Michigan feels about any football game, whether it's a playoff or not?

WINK MARTINDALE: Well, I mean, that is a good analogy to it, about how the kids love playing football. That is a great analogy to it.

But every year is different. I think we are going to be missing three guys off the defense, and other guys have stepped right up. Guys that everybody has seen, the Michigan people here that have seen us play all year. That is one thing is that we have played a lot of different individuals.

It's going to be fun to watch.

Q. Players describe you as someone who does tell it like it is often. How have you handled the last three weeks in terms of becoming a leader on a team without a head coach?

WINK MARTINDALE: Well, I don't know if you handle it is the right word. It is a tough situation. It is a tough situation. First of all, I know what we signed up for, in coaching, in the profession itself.

Moving -- my wife has moved enough. It is hard because of not only the relationships we have. We have become family, because we spend more time -- the coaches themselves, the assistants -- together than we do with our families. I am to the point where I want to look out for them. I want to get them a job. However, whatever else comes from it -- but they are professionals. They prepared the same way for this game as they have every other game.

But it is, like I was talking to Jimmy about it, with Twitter and everything else, it is entertainment for people to see all this. I am getting emotional talking about it. It is real life. There are little ones that have to be uprooted from school

and things like that. So, it sucks.

But you can see how I handled it (Laughter).

Q. If you'd elaborate on that, just how you see college football now, where it is, is it sustainable?

WINK MARTINDALE: I have no idea if it's sustainable or not. You look at it as a fan and you say, Oh, there really was money there, you know what I mean? It has become so transactional now. The transactional part, everybody understands -- when I say everybody, the parents and the kids, they understand it.

But they still have their -- I don't want to say high school mentality but younger mentality -- now, there are kids getting NIL deals in high school, too. It's crazy.

It is going to be a challenge, it really is. It is going to be a challenge. I think it is good for the game. I do think it is good for the game.

I think one of the challenges are that the kids that sign these NIL deals, they are going to be treated like pros. I mean, before long, you will see their NIL deals in the paper. You will see all the details -- just like the NFL.

I think they have to have a salary cap at some time, at one point, they have to do it. They have to cap it, I would think. We will have to see, to follow it.

I know it is a great game, the game of football, and I reflect back now instead of looking forward. I love this game, and I hope that it keeps trending in the right direction. You are worried about the money part of it.

Q. I know we've seen Cam Brandt and Dom Nichols all season but can you speak to the edge position? You'll be missing a couple starters.

WINK MARTINDALE: You have TJ. Lou has come on, don't you think?

JIMMY ROLDER: Mm-hmm.

WINK MARTINDALE: There are other young guys that we are going to get to see live in action, and I am looking forward to it. But the edge, they are going to be -- we missed J-Stew last year, but it is a fun group to watch.

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