

Pop-Tarts Bowl: Miami vs Iowa State

Saturday, December 28, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Iowa State Cyclones

Matt Campbell

Rocco Becht

Jaylin Noel

Press Conference



ROCCO BECHT: I really like cinnamon rolls, so what I heard about the choices, that was my immediate go-to. It tasted better than I thought it was going to taste, to answer your question.

Q. Rocco, on that point, you guys are down with that drive, and you've had drives like that throughout the course of the season. What was the emotion? What was the focus going into that go-ahead drive?

ROCCO BECHT: I think you said it. We have been in those situations before. We practice it all the time. I think our team just has the poise and the calmness to just execute in the biggest moments, and that's what we did.

Q. Coach, obviously during the game, this was an exchange with a lot of offense and a big comeback at the end. You mentioned the events throughout the year being stuff you guys learned from. Was this the culmination of all those lessons?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, this team has faced a lot of adversity from some really tough injuries that we've had to deal with all year, and they have never flinched.

We have been in some really hard spots, and we have been in some tough situations, and our ability to just keep playing. It's easy to say those things, right, keep playing, and stay in it.

You only do that if the locker room demands it, and you only do it if the seniors and the guys that lead the football team show up every single day, since January, and they believe in that, and that's how they work and that's the standards that they set.

Here is this guy [Jaylin Noel] who may be one of the highest-drafted guys in the game and comes out and he has eight catches for 117 yards and a touchdown, and easily could have chose not to play, right. And the reality of it, you had Beau Freyler, one of the great leaders I've ever seen in our program, a two-time captain, and what that guy has meant to Iowa State Football. Who this guy is becoming and what is he's given to Iowa State Football.

Iowa State 42, Miami 41

MATT CAMPBELL: From our standpoint, obviously, first and foremost, let me just say, obviously, again what an awesome week it was. It's rewritten history every step of the way, and to put a great exclamation point on it tonight was really, really awesome.

Proud of our team, and think the world of Coach Cristobal and, obviously, that Miami team, but it was great opportunity for us to finish the season the right way.

Q. To get the first 11-win season in program history, how special is it to do it with this group?

MATT CAMPBELL: I think probably the reality of what that question is, what you said is this group.

Some of the greatest leadership that I've ever witnessed in my career to be quite honest with you, fortunate to play in some of these games, be a part of these games as a player and a program that won a lot. To watch great, unbelievable selfless leadership, it's hard to find that today in our culture, and try really hard to find it in our sport.

Our senior leadership, great junior leadership and sophomore leadership, it was leadership for the ages for us. You saw every step of the way, and you got a chance to witness it tonight, how our kids don't flinch and keep playing and give us an unbelievable opportunity to win, is because of the character of the leadership of this team.

Q. One of the coolest ceremonies for a Bowl game there is in the sport. Curious about your decision to pick Cinnamon Roll, and how did it actually taste?



When you have a great locker room and your players demand it every day, it's pretty easy for everybody else to fall in line. We are really fortunate, because in our locker room, our players demand greatness, every day since January, and really you've seen it in some really tough moments. We are really proud and grateful for our guys.

Q. Rocco, you are someone who has come from the West Coast of Florida. What does it mean to come back to Florida and end your season this way?

ROCCO BECHT: This is my first game back in Florida at the collegiate level. It was awesome. I had a bunch of my friends here for the first time to see me play. It was special to me to get this win tonight.

Q. Tough to see the way it ended for Beau. What's his legacy now that his career is over at Iowa State?

MATT CAMPBELL: I think any time there's an injury, that's tough. But as you guys that have covered us know that Beau [Goodwin] has fought through injury for the last every single game he's stepped on that field for the last three years. There's no greater warrior that has given everything -- his body, his heart, his mind, his sole -- to a program than that player has.

Obviously, it's devastating that it ends probably a half early for him. Beau is going to be so special in life. Somebody is going to gain somebody really, really special out there. I've coached a lot of players, and that doesn't demean any of our players, because we have got a lot of great ones. But man, what that guy has stood for, his selflessness, his ability to give more of himself, even his body to this program, it's nothing short of incredible.

He'll go down as one of the great leaders of all time in this football program, and he should be considered that forever.

Q. Has it hit you yet that it's over? And kind of go through maybe what was going through your mind, that decisive drive at the end and the big catch you had down the right sideline?

JAYLIN NOEL: We'll go with the drive, first. We've been in that position multiple times and I know Rocco trusted me and the team trusts in each other. Since January, we have put ourselves in those situations to be able to be ready for those moments, so when that time came, we were ready for it.

It has not hit me yet. I love this team so much. I love Coach for everything he's done for me. This team means the world to me, and there's no better way to go out than a champion.

Q. You said after the Big 12 title game that you were going to play in this game. What kind of rewarding experience did you get actually playing and the way it unfolded?

JAYLIN NOEL: It's meant the world to me. For me, to be able to be a leader on this team, and God's trust in me and listened to me. I had to play for them. Those guys come in every day and look up to me, and if I wasn't going to play, then that's just not what leaders do, I feel like.

To be able to play in this game and be able to go out there one last time with this team, it means everything to me.

Q. You talked a lot about how last year's Bowl game was a leaping point for this team. How can a similar mechanism take place for this year heading into 2025?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I think that's a great question. Obviously, we are going to have a lot of work to do, because it's a brand new team. You leave and you're losing leadership for the ages.

What you hope, and in real football programs, I don't know if you can still build them today, I hope you can. The reality of it is that the next group learn from the great leaders, and they have the ability when it's their turn to pick up and continue to lead what greatness looks like.

You heard this guy talk. Some NFL team is going to get one of the greatest draft picks in the NFL by drafting this guy. Doesn't matter if it's college or in the NFL. You want guys that demand and show up every day and be the best. We had a lot of those great seniors.

Now, we are fortunate, because you have got guys like Rocco and guys that got great experience this year. I think the fool's gold is, Oh, man, you have guys that played, but do you have guys that can lead like this every day? Do you have guys that show up in January and February and March and April and May and June and July when nobody is watching? That's where greatness lives. We'll see if we've got it.

The reality of it is, we learned some great lessons along the way, and we'll have a lot of work to do here in a couple weeks back at Ames, Iowa.

Q. What is Rocco's toughness and ability to keep plays alive mean to you?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I would just say what Rocco means to me is a great deal, because the position that he plays is, in my opinion, the hardest position in sport.

Everybody has a thought on what should happen with the ball on every play. Man, the ability to sit there and the game is in your hands on every single play that you play. When you have a guy that stands for what's right behind the behind the scenes, who he is, is far greater than what he does. Man, it's awesome that he's doing great things out there, and he's getting better every game.

What this guy stands for in the locker room, how our kids will fight for this guy every single day, it's been that way in the last two years. The first game he came in was in 2022 at TCU, and our entire sideline changed that day when he went into the football game.

From that point on, this guy has been on a mission to be great. And there's been good days and tough days, but his ability and his character to have great selflessness. He's the guy that's going to give everybody else the credit when it goes really good, and he's the first guy to stand up and take the blame when it goes bad. To me, that's real leadership. Hard to find it today. But man, I'd go to war with this guy any day, because what of he's about and what he stands for.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your thoughts on Miami making the quarterback change. Is that something you expected, and with your defense getting key stops at the end of the game, do you think that helped you guys build momentum to close it out?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I don't know. Obviously, shoot that's all speculation, obviously, what it is. I don't think we had any idea what it was or wasn't going to be.

The game obviously had to change a little bit. I thought the flow of the game changed, and they came right out in the first drive and got in some 12 personnel and really started attacking the running game.

Then I thought Coach Heacock and our defensive staff really did a great job adapting, because I think that's hard to be honest with you. Now all of a sudden, the flow of the game changes and you've got to be able to do some different things. We are able to move Domonique Orange in the fourth quarter to play a little bit of four and some five techniques. I thought Dom did a really great job, and I thought Coach's adjustments in the second half were tremendous.

So yeah, tricky situation for sure for all of us.

Q. The one thing I've noticed about you is you have a tremendous amount of humility, and I'm impressed with that; that you signed an extension to stay with

Iowa State. How important would it be for you to know that with all the changes going on in college football and that temptations will be there for the better jobs that you can build your own legacy and people will appreciate you in this type of environment where other coaches and players would be tempted to go elsewhere, and you have it all to yourself? How important is that type of thing for you?

MATT CAMPBELL: Yeah, I don't know. Honestly what's important to me is my family, is really important to me. The people that I work for and with is really important to me. Standing for something that's bigger than a win and a loss. Obviously, it's great we won, but the relationship that we have, the relationship in that locker room, man. This sport is a unique sport, and the reality of it is we are dealing with somebody's children. They are 18 to 22 years old and our job is still to -- we have all forgot it, but our job, our responsibility is take a young man to become a man.

And the fact that parents trust myself and our coaches to be able to do that, it's my responsibility. So, the fact that we get to do that, man, that means a lot to me. I don't take it lightly, and really just grateful to be able to do what I do every day and don't think about the rest of it. I appreciate the question.

Q. You guys started preseason picked sixth in the Big 12, and you won 11 games. What does that mean and what does it mean to continue to make history at Iowa State?

MATT CAMPBELL: It's been a really unique journey here. I've said this before with so many people -- when we took the job and we came to Iowa State, I think, said, man, you're going to the coaching graveyard. To be able to now nine years later, sit here and look what these young men stand for and what so many before them have done.

You know, 2017 and David Montgomery and Joel Lanning and Allen Lazard. Then Brock [Purdy] comes along and what he was able to do and elevate with Breece Hall and Charlie Kolar and Chase Allen and Will McDonald and some great players.

Now to be able to sit here today, and man, they are going to talk about Jaylin Noel forever, and they are going to talk about Beau forever, and they are going to talk about Rocco forever. That's just a lot of great value.

To be able to do that with great people, Coach Heacock, a great coaching staff, and to be able to do it with so many great leaders that believe in each other. Again, this is still a team sport. It's not tennis and it's not golf, and there's nothing wrong with those sports.



But this is about team, and getting everybody to believe in something bigger than yourself. It's one of the great rewards and we are fortunate to be able to do it here at Iowa State.

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