

Pop-Tarts Bowl: BYU Cougars vs Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Saturday, December 27, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

BYU Cougars

Kalani Sitake

Evan Johnson

Bear Bachmeier

Press Conference



Tech was really awesome. Just shows that bowl games matter.

I am proud of these guys, proud of the team for what they were able to accomplish in the bowl prep. I feel like we made a step towards becoming a better team, and I want to ride that momentum into 2026. Still a lot of work for us to do, but at this time we should be thankful and celebrate the win.

I am really proud of the way Bear played the entire game, obviously, not at 100 percent, but he made big time plays. He has always been consistent and always been poised under pressure. That is not anything that I did or the coaches, this is how he came. We can really do some wonderful things with him going into next year.

Proud of Shmev [Evan Johnson]. He has been a lockdown corner for us all year. That fourth down play, I know, was difficult. Credit to Georgia Tech, they made a play. I was just proud of how he reacted, made the tackle, and got us the win, made the play. Really proud of the way these guys carry on, how they play the game, and how they conduct themselves off the field too.

It is an honor for me to be their coach, honor for me to be here. What questions do you have for them, and what questions do you have for me?

Q. Kalani, first of all, congrats to you three on the big win. Kalani, 12th win for this program is something that's only been done five times, first time in 24 years. What does that say about the gravity of this just to get to that 12th win as a milestone for this team?

KALANI SITAKE: And I think the fact that we did it with a Big 12 schedule says that these guys are great athletes, great players, great talent, but there is a connection that they have and the leadership that they have been able to be leaders themselves, but also to connect with the leaders that we have that are upperclassmen.

It has been a nice thing for me to see in 10 years of being a head coach, and I am really excited about year 11 too. I

BYU - 25, Georgia Tech - 21

KALANI SITAKE: Well, great game and just really proud of the guys, proud of the leadership on our team, and proud of these two specifically from the plays that they made. Overall, it felt like we got ourselves in a rough spot, unfortunately, but we have been in that position before.

I think the goal is to not be there in '26. Try to find ways to get ahead or maybe play the same type of urgency from the beginning and carry it on for 60 minutes. I think if we can do that, we will be in a really good spot.

Really proud of the guys getting 12-2. Really proud of the coaches, staff and support staff. Really proud of the fans that showed up. We are really excited.

Before we take questions, I just want to just thank Georgia Tech for getting -- it required us to play at our best so we can -- because we knew how difficult they were, the matchup, seeing them on film, a difficult team. Like I said, they were ranked No. 7 in the country at one time. A great team. Fortunately, we were able to make the plays and came out with a victory.

Then, I want to thank FCS and Pop-Tarts Bowl just for the hospital that they showed us. We had so much fun here. I was worried about the timing, but then I realized we probably should have come a half a week earlier. That would have been great.

We had a lot of fun and were able to connect. Throughout all the festivities, I am glad that they gave us an opportunity to do some service, and for our guys to do it with Georgia



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want to celebrate what we have been able to accomplish. These guys should be really proud, and I think we are just barely starting.

Q. This question is for Evan. Walk us through the fourth down and then obviously the interception to seal the game.

EVAN JOHNSON: Yeah, just something didn't go right with technique, got beat. That happens at corner. But I was really just thinking about the next play after that. It came to me. Coach Hill gave a great call, and I got my opportunity to go make a play.

Had a play like that at Texas Tech that I didn't go get. So, my only thought in my mind at that moment was to go get that ball, and that is what I did.

Q. You mentioned coach here. What adjustments were made at halftime to shut them out?

EVAN JOHNSON: Really no adjustments were made. We came out with a lot more physicality, a lot more just want. Then, we knew the offense was hot, so getting them the ball was our plan and made that happen. Bear made plays and the rest of the offense, and the rest goes from there.

Q. Kalani, you guys had Georgia Tech facing a fourth and 15 late in the game. Haynes King throws that 66-yard bomb. What's going through your mind at that point when you guys are just trying to wrap up the game?

KALANI SITAKE: Obviously, we weren't excited about it, but Haynes King is a really good player. I felt like, okay, tough spot, but Evan made the tackle. It is hard to run away from this kid. So, he made the tackle, and we still had a chance.

I just knew that, if this defense can just bow up and find ways and just play fundamentally sound. We asked them to be more physical, asked them to -- we said it's going to hurt a little bit and it's going to require you guys getting to the point of exhaustion. You guys saw him limping in here. It wasn't like he was playing 100 percent. All it takes is that type of mindset.

I was really proud of the way these guys played and the way that Bear led the offense. It was really fun to watch.

Q. Coach, both teams had two turnovers and 49 yards lost on penalties each, but only you guys were able to capitalize on those turnovers and penalties. What's the mindset you instill in these guys to make sure that they go get those opportunities when they're given to

them due to penalties and turnovers?

KALANI SITAKE: The coach in me is frustrated about the turnovers, because we gave them the ball on the 5-yard line off of the kickoff. Then, we walked away with no points on the interception. We are still learning, and we are still getting better, but that is the game.

Football, it happens. I don't think you -- what I do like is how they responded. It is not like we are not going to throw the ball anymore, because Bear threw a pick. We have to keep doing it. It is not like we are not going to put Evan in man-to-man coverage. That is what we have to do. It is next play mentality. These guys have got to make plays.

I don't see these guys making back-to-back negative plays. I'm really excited. When we weren't playing that great, I felt like the offense was moving the ball. We just have to capitalize and put it in the end zone. First drive was stopped at the 1-yard line. They made a great play. It happens sometimes. We want to be aggressive, and we want to make plays. They were aggressive. They did that fake field goal, smooth swinging gate type of run. They made some plays.

It was time for us to be bold and try to find ways to make plays and be aggressive, too. Part of us being aggressive on the defensive side is guys making tackles when it comes their way. I think Georgia Tech was trying to challenge our DBs to make tackles. We just asked them, it might hurt a little bit, but you have to make some stops, and it's okay.

That is the game. I felt like it was such a back and forth, but if we can just minimize the mistakes, but the mistakes are part of the game. I just liked the reaction we had to the game overall. We weren't hanging our heads when we went down two scores. We were excited to play.

There is still plenty of time on the clock, and when you give these guys that much time, we are never out of it.

Q. Bear, what percent were you coming into the game, and then did you re-aggravate the injury? Like I think it was even on the first drive. Just take us through kind of your injury status as it were.

BEAR BACHMEIER: Yeah, I kind of was banged up. Then, it hurt a little more on the first drive. Yeah, ended up battling it out, and it was a good win.

Q. Bear, you haven't wanted to reveal much about your injury situation necessarily, but how tough has that been to overcome? How have you changed as a quarterback? Not a lot of run attempts today. How has



that progression been?

BEAR BACHMEIER: It is a testament to coach A-Rod [Aaron Roderick] and the guys around me and them making plays and doing their job. All I have to do is do my 1/11. So, yeah, it worked out.

Q. Kalani, I was hoping to get your thoughts on Kyle Whittingham taking the Michigan job and the potential of him looking at Jay as a defensive coordinator.

KALANI SITAKE: Yeah, I think I -- I made the statement it is hard to see Kyle not doing something with football, and there is the something. When that happened, he has a network he goes to for putting together staff, and that is how football works.

I feel really good about what we have going here, and with the players and the coaches, we will go with what we have. I feel good about this staff, how we established the foundation. Jay is a big part of what we were able to do defensively for the last three years, and A-Rod's been doing that for a number of years too.

We feel really good about where we are at overall as a team, and it is those guys that made it happen for us.

Q. I have two quick questions. First quick question. What are your thoughts on the jail break by Pumpin' Protein Strawberry? And second and more importantly, this has been a bit of an odd pre-bowl period. How have you guys kind of navigated that and kind of cleared your head and got into the mindset for today's game?

KALANI SITAKE: In terms of the Pop-Tarts stuff, it doesn't matter what you do with Pop-Tarts, I am going to eat it. I think a lot of us -- I probably had too many, but I could still eat some more.

In terms of the playoff committee and all that stuff, listen, they made the decision, we are fine. We have to move on and just keep playing football. I think what the committee did, it is a hard decision for them to go and put that together.

We love football. We are going to watch the playoffs. We are going to watch all the bowl games. I love that these guys want to play the game. We had everybody trying to play. The only ones that didn't play were the ones that were injured and we held out. Jack Kelly wanted to play, and we held him out, and LJ wanted to play, but he had that surgery.

These guys love football. We love football. It just so

happened that we are outside of it, and that is okay. I love the maturity from our players that we earned another chance to play a game, and these guys came here with a great attitude to be in here and had so much appreciation and gratitude for being invited to the Pop-Tarts Bowl. Then, their interaction with Georgia Tech and all the festivities, I was really proud of these guys.

That is how you do things in life. If it is not the way you want it to go, that is okay. Your reaction is going to be what everybody is going to define you with.

Q. Bear, we've talked a little bit about what you've had to battle through in this game. How important -- Coach, feel free to chime in where you'd like to as well -- how important was Carsen Ryan to help you get back and find a rhythm out there on the field?

BEAR BACHMEIER: Yeah, he is an integral part of our offense, and he is a quote, unquote, safety blanket when you need him. He balled out, and he's a dog.

KALANI SITAKE: His YAC yards were good. Carsen broke tackles and got some tough yards for us and helped us get the ball down the field. It's been awesome seeing him do that all year long.

Bear was great in decision-making. He didn't run as much as we have seen in the past, but Bear's proven that he can throw the ball. Threw for 325 yards, and like I said before, he is still a pup. He is still young. Look at that baby face. He has a lot of growth to do. I just know his effort and his approach to the game, he has a great intelligence in the game of football, and he is always willing to learn. When you have a guy that is willing to do that, it is going to be really fun for us.

On the other side, Evan's done a great job of preparing himself. Look at the development we had from him. He wants to remind everybody that he was a receiver in high school. That is what we recruited him to do. He has the speed, but he has done an amazing job and was able to get the play.

All these guys, this has been a work in progress, and I am glad their coaches put them in a position to make plays for us.

Q. Evan and Bear, and Kalani feel free to chime in if you like, what was that whole experience like, winning the game, and then watching the Sprinkles team win, sacrificing Pop-Tarts down the toaster and getting to eat some of it? What was that like? It was kind of a fun ending.

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EVAN JOHNSON: It is unreal. Just getting an opportunity to come down here in and play in a game, it is one of a kind. To get to eat those Pop-Tarts and hold up the Let's Eat sign, it is a lot of fun. We are super grateful for the Pop-Tarts Bowl for hosting us out there. They have been great to us, and Orlando's been a ball.

BEAR BACHMEIER: Pop-Tarts were good, so yeah, that makes it all better.

EVAN JOHNSON: I love Pop-Tarts, strawberry.

BEAR BACHMEIER: Cinnamon.

KALANI SITAKE: I like them all, so yeah. Listen, the bowl game was different than what we have ever known, and I like it a lot. These guys did, too. I don't think they should change anything. It was really cool. The energy from the Georgia Tech fans and from the BYU fans was amazing today. I am just really proud that we were a be part of that.

Q. Kalani, can you confirm then that it's Jay Hill going to Michigan to join Kyle Whittingham's staff?

KALANI SITAKE: I think Jay is going to make his own statements on what he is going to do. I am just acknowledging that Kyle is at Michigan and people have some decisions to make. Guys have decisions to make whether they're going to go to the NFL or come back.

It is not me. I am here to stay. Everyone else can speak for themself. The program is in a really good spot, because of a lot of people -- players, coaches, and the people that have gotten to where we are at right now. It would be awesome for me as a head coach and an honor for me to continue this thing going.

Q. Evan, they played Turbulence between the third and fourth quarter, something you guys are very used to. How did that maybe help you guys going into the fourth quarter? What led to that fourth quarter resurgence for you guys?

EVAN JOHNSON: I think just trust in our preparation. Coach Hill continues to prepare us through the week. When you trust in him and you have someone making those calls for you, it makes it easy to go out there and make plays. Also, I feel like the whole off-season, our team has really bought into the culture and the program and all the little things, so just executing those things at a high level has helped us be successful.

Then the Turbulence, it just made us feel at home, so we are ready to go. We don't lose at home.

Q. What did you make of Jovesa? He steps up in a big spot. He got going in the second, and obviously the game-winning touchdown for you guys.

KALANI SITAKE: Really proud of Jovesa. I think A-Rod mentioned it before. He said we're going to give him a chance. I was just showing Bear his seven runs for 48 yards and 19 was a long. He did some really good things, and I think Bear put him in a really good spot.

We talked about our depth at all the different positions that we have, and we were able to show it off a little bit. We didn't have LJ and Sione playing today. It was good to see Jovesa and Enoch representing and did a really good job. The playbook was still open. We were able to do everything that we practiced, that we would have done with LJ and with Sione. The future looks bright for us.

Q. Kalani, first 12-win for this program since 2001. What does it mean to do it with this group, Coach Roderick, Coach Hill, Bear, Evan, what does it mean for this group in particular?

KALANI SITAKE: Honestly, I am just really proud of everybody. It is not easy to do. To do it in the Big 12 and to do it while playing a great team like Georgia Tech in the bowl game, we should be really proud. We still have work to do.

Right now, we are going to celebrate and have fun, get some time off and let the guys, let their toe and their bruises heal up and stuff like that and get back to work.

These guys only know one way, and that is to go to work. I have never had to sit there and remind them to go to work. They have always been doing it. In fact, it has been nice as a head coach to have to tell guys to slow down a little bit when they are all in and ready to go.

They are great sons. They are great brothers. I get to coach that. With that, I want to do things within reason and know that this is a long process. We still have from here until August to get to where we want to be as a team. We are going to use all the time, and it is going to require us to really work.

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