

Florida Blue Florida Classic: Bethune-Cookman Wildcats vs Florida A&M Rattlers

Saturday, November 23, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Florida A&M Rattlers

James Colzie

Daniel Richardson

Quan Lee

Press Conference

Florida A&M 41, Bethune Cookman 38

JAMES COLZIE: Excited about my first Florida Classic win. Anytime you can kind of go through an entire football game, we won it, we had a bunch of different situations going into this game. We won some, we lost some. Credit to Coach Woodie and his group and staff making this one of the best games all year.

For me, it was too damn close. I think we wanted to come into this week after making the play-calling change on Sunday, we wanted to come in and run the football. That was the motto. Been talking all year about our offensive line being one of the tops in the conference. We wanted to let them be the ones that were going to determine and dictate this football game.

I said out there on the field, I wish we had about six or seven different pieces of that MVP trophy because some of our offensive linemen should have received some of that, as well.

Credit to our team. We had a pretty tough week. Credit to my staff. Credit to Rattler Nation. I think we're going to have a much, much better week than we maybe had last week.

Excited about getting the win. Put the game to bed tomorrow, then we got to get ready for a very, very good Alabama A&M team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You said you feel like it will be a much, much better



week. Talk about coming out after two losses, all the talk, the social media talk, all the doubt, coming out and winning the most important game of the season.

JAMES COLZIE: I didn't have to do all the talking. Everybody else was.

For us, making our guys come in and work hard, having a clear plan of what we wanted to do, not shying away from it. We felt we had the ability to run the football with our backs. We thought Franklin, who has been one of the top backs for us all year, we thought he had the ability to do exactly what he did tonight.

Regardless of taking our foot off the gas or not, we knew we could run the football against them. We did not want to shy away from that. That is definitely what we were able to do tonight.

Q. Talk a little bit about what it feels like just being able to come and get a win in the Classic following what you've been through the last couple of weeks. What does it feel like at this point having one more game to play?

JAMES COLZIE: Well, we got a close group in there. To be honest with you, I don't know how much we've been through. You know what I mean? You lose games, people are going to be disappointed, right? This is Florida A&M Rattler football. We're a team off of championships, right? When you go out and lose games that people think you should win, there's going to be chatter.

For us as a group and as a staff, as a football team, we knew what we had to do this week. We had to eliminate as quick as we can what happened last weekend, again get ready for a rivalry football game where you never know, anything can happen. That was our talk throughout this week. We talked about finishing strong with our senior class. Obviously some things would be forgotten by winning this evening.

Hats off to our staff, our group, our seniors. Our guys executed the game plan to the best of their ability. We go out there and put 41 points on the board. I'm happy about

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it. We got to shore up some things on defense. Special teams-wise we got to make sure we stop giving short fields.

Hats off to our offensive line, the gentleman here to my left, and to our running backs and to the offensive staff. They did a great, great job this week.

Q. You guys are on the receiving end of a three-point loss last week. This week you won by three. Was there an emphasis on finishing the game this week? Will that message carry into the last game of the season?

DANIEL RICHARDSON: I mean, our motto this week was to dominate on all cylinders, especially in the running game. Coach preached that all week, that we could do some different things up front, being able to run the ball.

I thought we ran the ball great. Running backs played great. Offensive line. I also did a decent job of making throws when I need to make 'em. At the end of the day team football, we got the job done.

JAMES COLZIE: That's one of our mantras. We talk about finishing in everything we do. We talked about going through our adjustments, things we needed to make sure we executed. When we left the group, in the half, we went with one, two, three finish. That's what we knew we had to do.

Q. Talk a little bit about the venue, the stadium, the bowl-like atmosphere, almost 60,000 people in attendance. Talk a little bit about that.

DANIEL RICHARDSON: I mean, it's an amazing feeling when you see so many people like that. But we play at FAMU. We used to this. Going throughout the week, it's just another game. Like coach say, they just in our way.

At the end of the day you soak it up. The bowl atmosphere, stay at a nice hotel, you get nice gear and everything like that. The number one job is to get the job done and win on Saturday. At the end of the day the fans want to see us win. That's it. That's all they care about, winning.

JAMES COLZIE: Obviously making buildup throughout the week. Getting ready for a very, very good opponent, right? You have your lunch in yesterday where everyone is all in the same building.

It boils down to the game. Everything that led up to the game, then it was time to play the game. I think both sides saw a very, very good football game. I think both sides

were obviously excited about the scoring and things of that nature.

Hey, you want to be on the right side of this. The coaches that have the longer tenures in this series are the ones that are successful in this game. The list goes on for the people that have been successful here wearing the Rattler hat. If you want to be successful here, you have to make sure you're successful in this series.

It's great to be 1-0 in this thing as opposed to 0-1.

Q. James, you said on Wednesday about your running backs, you find the hot hand, and you found that in Thad.

JAMES COLZIE: I think they all had hot hands, right? Again, TJ Lee, Jalen Goss, Ashton Grable, Cesar Reyes, Chris Davis, Ricky Taylor. All these guys y'all don't know, but that's our offensive line.

Coach, just run the ball. We made a play-calling duty change on Sunday. Man, I talked to the offensive line: Coach, just run the ball, we got to run the ball this week, just run the damn ball. That's what it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and tonight. Those were the sentiments. Don't go away from it. We had an opportunity to do some RPO stuff based off of our run game.

We did it. Hot hand in the first, second, third and fourth. I'm excited for them. I'm excited for Thad, excited for Beau, for Rattler Nation, because they got a chance to see what our offense can truly look like on a weekly basis.

Q. You mentioned special teams. When you look at the last two games, you can equate special teams giving up 30-some-odd points. What can you do to shore that up?

JAMES COLZIE: Some of the guys on our special teams are guys that are quality players on our offensive, defensive side.

We can't take plays off. We got to execute kicks. Once we do make our kicks, we got to get down the field. On the punt return, we want the ball to be towards the sidelines. He miss-hit it, our freshman punter miss-hit it, got the ball in the middle of field. We weren't getting down the field as much as we needed to.

You guys saw the game. We had a punt return for a touchdown. Had a couple kickoff returns where the offense got really short fields. When I discussed special teams with our guys today, we talked about hidden

yardage. I am looking at the hidden yardage today, and I think they had 200 return yards. Again, short fields leads to points. That's execution our end. All right? We got to be better. We got to continue to work on it.

We got one more week against Alabama A&M who is very good on special teams as well. I'm pretty sure they're going to try to exploit us as well.

What do you do to get better? Make changes as need be. Use the guys we have, make them understand how important execution is. D. Rich will tell you the first thing we work on, we don't work on offense, we don't work on defense.

What is the first thing we work on?

DANIEL RICHARDSON: Special teams.

JAMES COLZIE: Every morning. We give them 15 or 20 minutes of that, then another 10 or 15 minutes of practice. Maybe we give them a little bit more time. That's definitely been tough on us as far as the defensive aspect. Obviously Cameron Gillis does a great job of kicking field goals. He's about as automatic as we can get. We have to help ourselves with short fields with some of the returns we're giving up.

Q. Coach, this team's ability to overcome all the distractions this week, what does it say about this team's maturity? Heading into a game like this coming off the loss, never know where their heads are going to be.

DANIEL RICHARDSON: Just sticking together. We've been through a lot of adversity this year. At the end of the day, going into this week, coach is like this game means a lot to so many people, it's a history game, a rivalry game.

At the end of the day, coach said as long as we prepare, we able to dominate on all cylinders, get the dub. Today that's what happened.

JAMES COLZIE: I would say for the most part I asked our guys to eliminate the outside noise. Let me be the one to deal with it, let me be the one that had to go through all of that. That's part of the job, part of having this job. I think our guys did a very good job not just this week but throughout the season.

We had a few things happened to this football team, whether it's injuries, stuff internally. That's again the maturity of our football team, our guys rising to the occasion when need be.

Again, happy for them. I know the guys, they don't just want to win tonight, they want to make sure we finish strong on the next one, especially for us having Senior Day.

Again, you mentioned it, we're a very, very old group. Jalen Goss, who is about 47 years old, his ninth year at Florida A&M. We got some guys, really older guys working on double Masters right now. That's how old our guys are.

The maturity level of our football team is very, very high. It was extremely important for our preparation for this week's football game.

Q. When I was talking to guys during the week, certain guys said this win will help move the program forward for years to come. Talk about how this game specifically and finishing strong, getting that 7-5 record, will help the program, help you as a head coach also moving forward?

DANIEL RICHARDSON: I mean, coming here, throughout this whole week, we ain't even say the word Bethune. It meant so much to so many people. We had people talk to us just about the history of this game, what it means just for the program. Throughout the whole season, yeah, you want to have a great season, go to the celebration, win a national championship. Just to win the Florida Classic means so much.

Years to come, one day you want to be able to tell your kids the story that I played in the Florida Classic in 2024 and beat Bethune. That's how it is. You want to have a story to tell.

Q. (No microphone.)

JAMES COLZIE: We went in on a good note. Ultimately you're playing this game to win. You want to make sure as a senior you finish the season strong. Then obviously that builds on your foundation for the off-season.

You have the guys that will be leaving us after our last game next week. Those are very, very strong, proud, really good football players. So you don't want to leave on a sour note.

Obviously having to play the game because of it being postponed, you want to make sure you leave the program in good hands. The best way to leave a program like Florida A&M in good hands is by winning.

Q. Last week you mentioned somebody told you you win the homecoming, you win Classic. How does this game affect the confidence of the fan base and teams

going forward?

JAMES COLZIE: You get to breathe this week. You get to breathe this week. You get to read how good you guys may have been.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, I think these two guys sitting next to me right now know we still have some work to do. If you win homecoming, you beat Bethune, you're in a good spot.

We've had some losses this year. I think the Rattlers want to win them all, they want to win homecoming and Bethune, but they want to win them all. I think we understand that.

But as we conclude the end of the season, we got to start a new streak. That will be up to us come Friday. As Dan and Rich leaving, the other guys I listed that are going to be leaving, you want to make sure you leave the program in great hands. That's ultimately about winning.

Q. The score that you had that was called back, did you just feel at that point you had to make a play for the team?

QUAN LEE: Yes, sir, I did. I just knew it's a big opportunity to make a play to change the game. I just tried to take advantage of every opportunity I got.

Q. Quan, you played at UCF, had some time there. Could you speak to coming back and having a resurgence in a city where you may have different feels. Daniel, could you speak to what you tell the next generation.

QUAN LEE: Me personally, this game I've been growing up coming to this game. I actually attended UCF, I came to this game. Just playing it is a dream come true.

Man, it's unbelievable. We win, we get to celebrate, finish the season strong and on top.

DANIEL RICHARDSON: Basically, just being blessed in this position, just to play at a prestigious university. When you get your opportunity, you run with it. I preach to young guys be disciplined, listen to your coaches. At the end of the day they here to help us, not just on the field but off the field.

At the end of the day it's bigger than football. This program, we have a great program, and school. At the end of the day when you come to FAMU, come here to be a winner.

Q. Quan, a lot of the question going into the season is who is going to step up in positions where you had a lot of guys leave. On defense it was Nay/Ron Jenkins. Being that you both graduated from the same high school, what does it mean to come together on either side of the ball?

QUAN LEE: Something being a starter from high school, just play for your brothers. Show up when your name's called. Stepping up.

We got our chance this year to step up and make some plays when we were called on. We took advantage of the opportunity. That was a big thing for us, so...

Q. Talk about Senior Day, the emotions. You want the new streak to start this Friday coming up.

DANIEL RICHARDSON: Basically we just want to leave on a good note, especially senior class, guys that I transferred in with, guys that are seniors now. Start a new streak at Bragg. I just want to leave on a good note that I was a great leader on this team, a great person overall throughout this whole university. I want everybody to know that.

Q. Coach, coming up to the end of the season, you transition from being a head coach to being an assistant and back to a head coach. Speak to when you look back at this season, what is your big takeaway? What are you looking forward to going into next season?

JAMES COLZIE: That's a damn good question.

The season not over yet. I think for us, for me personally, making sure we put this game to bed properly, right? We've had some changes, right, internally. We put the game away, put the game to bed, we've done it a certain way.

Now possibly we have some new guys that are doing some different jobs. I want to just make sure, because we got a short week, right? Everything that we poured into this game, all the corrections we need to make, we need to address them just because of some of the internal change we have. I want to make sure we do it the right way.

Thanksgiving, we got to make sure we take care of these guys. We play on Friday. Just a little bit of a different week for our guys. Just make sure we get them past tonight, but getting them ready for this big-time football game that we have this upcoming Friday.

We got a great group of guys that need to end this thing

properly. They put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into this, a lot of years into this. Championship, rings. It's just important to me, it's important to them, that their final moment in Bragg Stadium is a win.

Ask me that question that you asked me, ask me that after Friday, then I can probably give you a better answer. My main goal right now is getting these guys properly ready for Friday. I think that's going to be extremely important, but also them understanding Thanksgiving, make sure they eat, get all the things they need to get done throughout this week.

Give me till next week so I can answer that question totally for you.

Q. You had a new play-caller today. Almost 500 yards of offense. What was your thought in terms of how the offense flowed today, the production? Was there anything specifically that was different?

DANIEL RICHARDSON: No. We didn't change any. It was just how the plays were called. At the end of the day guys stepped up to the plate, we was able to run the ball. Coach put us in positions to make plays. That's what we did.

JAMES COLZIE: Yeah, the conversation that I had on Sunday when we made the change, then just speaking throughout the week about what we wanted to do.

I think that we wanted to hang it up on our offensive line. For the most part I thought we've had the best offensive line throughout the year. I know at times it might not have shown, but we got a very, very good group of guys up front. Senior group, guys that took a lot of pride into this.

As our conversation throughout the week was, Make sure we run the football. Even tonight, there was some maybe inkling we might get away from it. No. On the headset, Keep running the football, keep running the football. It also opened up our passing game.

Again, a little better rhythm up-field. I think it was 305 on the ground. D. Rich is going to be mad at me because we only threw for 180. You're close, it's 485. You get 485, you score 41 points, you should have a pretty good opportunity to win the football game.

Again, I think I mentioned it earlier, we have one trophy for the MVP, but I think our offensive line should be chipping off some pieces, getting some of that themselves.

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