

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

Saturday, November 22, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Florida A&M Rattlers III James Colzie Jr. Thad Franklin

Press Conference

Bethune-Cookman Wildcats 38, Florida A&M Rattlers 34

JAMES COLZIE III: We've always made that stop defensively at the end. Get a chance to take it, just tough on the guys. These guys fought their tails off, put in a situation to win, did everything, I feel, possible to win, and then don't.

But, we got one more, one more game. Finish. Got to go to [Mississippi] Valley [State]. Excited to hopefully try to put this one behind us, but this may take a little longer to put behind than maybe some of the stuff that's happened in the past.

Q. Take us through that last scoring play. It almost looked like a broken play at some point, but then a receiver comes open.

JAMES COLZIE III: At fourth and eight, we went in our shell coverage. Guys over the top trying to keep it in front. Looked like maybe our corner bit on something we don't normally bite on. We were deep. We know the situation.

We know that -- keep it in front and based on what the iPad that I saw -- kind of looked like he was chasing a ghost, as opposed to being over the top like we work on every day. That's a day one coverage for us.

At the end of the day, we catch it, keep it in front. We should never let anybody get behind especially on the coverage recall. Want to get a chance to look at it and see where we may have failed but it was a call -- a day one call that we run quite a few times. So really wanted to see what happened and why it happened.

Q. I know you told me not to ask you about your



quarterback, but I have to ask the question. In the first half, RJ didn't have his best game, but it seems like the second half, something went off, a light went off, and he got hot. Was it play calling or was that just who he is as a person?

JAMES COLZIE III: I just think that we -- it's hard. If you look at the first half and you kind of go back to the stats. We are second down and 13, third down and long on a couple drives, right, and we weren't really able to get in the rhythm that we need to get into. And then big Thad is running the football, Jamal Hailey is running the football, and they have to account for the run, then we are to get the pass game going.

We had about two or three series in that first half, where we went second and 13, third and nine, off the field. We had two straight three-and-outs. It's easy to play quarterback when not everyone is trying to play the run, and then now you got some guys open behind.

So, I don't know if that's the kind of player he is. I mean, I think he rose to the occasion. I think it also plays into us having the ability to run the football. We weren't necessarily able to do it early. We were able to do it second half and that was something we didn't want to get out of our game plan.

We wanted to stick with what he were doing, because we thought the opportunity or should have the opportunity to run the football. Got hot. We had some second down and third down and long, which plays into the favor of the defense, and it showed in maybe two of those three drives in the first half.

Q. Coming into the week, we talked about how important this game is. This is hot your first rodeo. You've been at the Classic as an assistant and head coach. Couldn't pull out this one, but I know this is one you wanted to win for the fans and just in general. Can you talk about that?

JAMES COLZIE III: I feel for the guys, you know what I mean? These guys, been a little bit of an up-and-down season for us, as we know. Guys really put all they could

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into this game.

Even at halftime, it wasn't a session of yelling and screaming. It was just a session of making sure that we did the things that we needed to do, because for us, we always felt that it was going to be about us tonight and whether we allowed it to happen or didn't allow it to happen. Who was going to win, it was going to come down to what we did or didn't do.

Then you get yourself in a fourth and eight in a situation that we really, really like, and we make a call that we feel is really, really good. Then to have Bethune make a play at the end of the game.

I just think that you don't want to dwell, because you know you still have one more game to play.

It was a tough locker room right now, and I want to make sure we do right by our seniors and make sure we finish the way we need to finish. I'm not going to lie. It was a gut-wrenching defeat. That's the truth. We should have won that football game. Thought we did everything we needed to do to win that football game.

I feel for Thad. I feel for the seniors. They knew we had to have this one. They wanted to have this one. I think they did everything imaginable to win this football game. We just didn't do it at the end.

Q. Can you talk about Florida Classic, just the atmosphere, the game, the venue, Orlando, the rivalry, like this is a big-time episode of HBCU football?

JAMES COLZIE III: Electric. You saw that. It was a packed house. This is the second one we have had where the game had a Hail Mary at the end, and fortunately last year, we were the ones on defense, and unfortunately this year we were the ones on offense trying to get a Hail Mary.

It was a big-time football game. I think both sides, the players, one of the reasons they chose Florida A&M was to play in this type of setting, to play in this type of game. They didn't choose to play in this type of game to lose. I think that's the biggest thing. Up-and-down game. I know the fans, excited and whatnot, but hell, we didn't win. That's how I feel. Would have loved the excitement of winning the game.

Great atmosphere. Great venue. Loved everything about it except the end result.

Q. The rush game was a little bit lacking in the first three quarters but exploded in the fourth with 146 yards. How can you improve consistency-wise in the

rush game in all four quarters?

JAMES COLZIE III: I just think you've got to stay with it. Again, I'll go back to the first half. We had first and 10, and then you had a second and 13 and then you had a third and nine. You can't run the ball, right. Then, we went same drive again, second and 12 I want to say and third and eight. I just -- got to stick with it. I think -- and that's what we did and you see Jamal and that had do the things that we know that they could do all year.

So, you can't go away from it, which I think we might have done in the past and then put us in even tougher situations where what the score was at the half. We felt we could still do some of the things we did. We did it. Hit one. Thad hit one. And now, the floodgates open a little bit as far as what we can do offensively. Credit to them. Credit the offensive line. Credit to Thad and Jamal doing things that we think they can do. Hopefully we can get that going earlier next week.

Q. To piggyback off of that point, last year you had a successful game rushing, this year again. Is there something about the Florida Classic where you just know you have to step up even furtherer?

THAD FRANKLIN, JR.: I don't know, I just play my game. Come every game, just try to play my game. But I know this is kind of big, so I wanted to try to go get my record again. But, hey...

Q. On that last touchdown, it just seemed like -- was it in your mentality that under no circumstances were you not going to score?

THAD FRANKLIN, JR.: I just have the mentality, don't let one man bring me down. I just seen grass...

Q. There was plenty of opportunities to win this game. Obviously, some mistakes down the line, but as a leader on this team, how can you keep your guys mentally sharp to finish the season on a high as possible?

THAD FRANKLIN, JR.: We have this 24-hour rule: 24 hours, we let it go. We move on to the next one. Just have a better game next week. We just got to finish.

Q. We noticed in the last couple of games, it's really been an offensive explosion for much of the season, but seems like the defense has been lacking at times. What are some of the things that we've seen that maybe have been some of the causes or have been some of the root issues with our defense giving up so many points, especially when we even got turnovers

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today.

JAMES COLZIE III: Just that mentality of finishing. I think that we stop here, first quarter, second quarter, third, whatever -- whatever it may be, and just the mentality of putting that -- keeping that foot on their neck. On two occasions, we took the lead and on two occasions we gave up the lead.

So in big plays, those are things -- those are disappointing things. Again, we go at it every day. Offense goes against defense, can defense goes against offense. Same days they win, and some days they don't.

But the big plays are the things that I am not necessarily accustomed to, especially, being here at Florida A&M, and it's just been something that's ongoing.

Biggest thing for us, finishing games is something that we take tried in. We didn't do that today. And that is something, again, we will talk about and discuss as a football team once we get ourselves back going again.

Q. Tonight's game, you guys didn't give up. What can you say about your team's ability to when it gets tough, just keep pushing and pushing?

JAMES COLZIE III: That's what they do. Again, finish is one of our core values. I just think that we have got a great group of seniors. We have some really, really good football players in that locker room.

It has been up and down, yeah, but these guys come to work every day. That is all we can ask of them. That is all I ask of those guys, and I am really, really disappointed for them. I am somber, sad, it is for them. It is because I know those guys put a lot into tonight. All year they are putting a lot into how we want to make sure we finish tonight.

The offense gave us two occasions to finish this football game, and we didn't do it.

I know it's a team game, but we normally, especially defense, especially at the end of games in this type of situation, we normally end it, and we weren't able to do that tonight.

Q. All season I said, next year at the Classic, you going to be the one getting the questions and now you're up here getting the questions again. Talk about -- kind of piggybacking off what Taylor asked just now, finishing strong, you want to finish strong for coach, the guy that signed you here, one of his first signees, finishing strong and playing for the brand and the name on the front of the jersey. How important is that

to y'all moving forward because next week you have Mississippi Valley, a team y'all would really like to beat on their home field? How important is it to finish strong for Coach Colzie?

THAD FRANKLIN, JR.: Man, it's important but I mean, we took a loss last year on our home field when we shouldn't. So I mean, we just got to go back and handle business. That's it.

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