

San Diego County Credit Union Holiday Bowl: Oregon vs North Carolina

Wednesday, December 28, 2022

San Diego, California, USA

Petco Park

North Carolina Tar Heels Coach Mack Brown

Drake Maye

Press Conference

Oregon Ducks-28, North Carolina Tar Heels-27

MACK BROWN: It was an outstanding trip for our guys. They had a great time, new experiences. Most of our guys had never been to California, and the weather is great. The bowl was great. The volunteer red coats treated our guys with very high respect. It was organized it, and they had a good week. They prepared well. They practiced well during the week, unlike last year. We weren't as ready to play. We were ready to play tonight. Played our hearts out.

Very disappointed that we didn't win, but got to make a play here or there, and they're a great football team, and nobody gave us a chance in the game, and we had a chance with one second left. That's all we could ask for in this situation.

So proud of this team, winning 9. Could have won 11, 12. Most of them are coming back, so it bodes great for next year. I love these young guys. The saddest thing for me is that they played their hearts out, and they're one point away from being out there on the field and having a great time and feeling great about themselves.

That's one of the very difficult things about sports because there are actually two winners out there tonight because they played their guts out, and I'm really, really proud of the way they played.

Told them that. I said if we had stopped the fourth down play, I would be happier for them than it we won, happier for our fans, our administration that we won. I wouldn't feel any different about them. They gave every everything they had. We had a GA coaching offensive line. We had a guy calling plays that's never called plays before. We had guys



that weren't even here. We're starting two freshmen in the secondary.

I mean, there were so many -- we're playing freshmen wide receivers. We got Doc Chapman out there. He hadn't played any. Andre Greene got to play only because the NCAA gave him an extra game because freshmen that played in four could play in five because we were so thin. Poor Drake has new receivers running out there he hasn't even thrown to in the middle of the Holiday Bowl.

Disappointed in the loss, but thank the Holiday Bowl, and proud of our guys. Coaches, players, everybody came out here to win, and they gave it everything they had.

Questions.

Q. Can you talk about Drake Maye's performance today? He threw two touchdowns and kept you in the game.

MACK BROWN: Drake is an absolutely amazing person. He is better person than quarterback. He is one of the best quarterbacks in the country, and we had two of the best quarterbacks in the country tonight, and they showed that. They put on a show that everybody thought they would put on it.

And here's Drake without an offensive coordinator, and I thought Lonnie Galloway did an outstanding job of he and John Lilly putting an offense together because we have a good offense. We just need to tweak it some.

Again, here's Drake. He had an analyst coaching him for the last month. He looked real good to me.

Q. How do you juxtapose some of the positives you saw tonight with closing the season with four losses? Now you have to carry that for the next eight months.

MACK BROWN: What I see is that we close the season with nine wins, which is it only has happened only one other time since I left here, and I left here a long time ago. So this is one heck of a season for North Carolina.



Could have been 10. Could have been 11. Most of them are coming back, and that's what I'm looking forward to. Are second time in school history it we won the Coastal, and I don't care about anything else. There's one Coastal trophy, and it's in our trophy case, and these guys will be remembered for that for the rest of their life.

Last year I walked out of Charlotte not very proud of me as a coach and not very proud of the time that I put out there. I could not be prouder tonight. I said if it had been one point our way, I wouldn't be any prouder of the way they played. They played really hard.

Q. If I could follow up on that, is that the message? Is that what you are taking away more than anything else for the offseason because of the fight, and even some of the losses earlier (off microphone)?

MACK BROWN: Yes. We came down to the last drive in most of our games. Notre Dame beat us. Clemson beat us. We beat Pittsburgh. We beat Virginia Tech. All the others came down to the last drive of the game. Every one of them.

And that means that's a team that's fighting their guts out to try to win. We won seven of those that came down to the last play of the game. We lost a few. Oregon is the best team that we played that came down to the last play of the game, and we lost it with a chance to win.

So what I've asked our guys to do at all times is give me everything you've got, and they did that tonight. There's not one ounce of energy left in that locker room because they left everything on that field, and I sat out there talking with Drake with 6 seconds left, and we're fighting to get 2 seconds back on the clock because we know we can kick a 50-yard field goal, and then he throws a heck of a pass to Kobe on the sideline with 1 second left. We're fighting, and he slings one deep in the end zone, and I still believe we're going to have a chance to catch it and win the game. That's the message.

Q. Drake, what did you learn about yourself this season?

DRAKE MAYE: I think the main thing I learned is trust the process and all the hard work that goes in, it shows and turns out (inaudible) life lessons outside (inaudible) the relationships for the rest of my life with guys I love and playing with them out on the field, there's nothing I would trade in the world for that.

In the first half after you go up 7-0, the most fun I've had the entire season out there tonight. With these guys, the energy on the sideline, all the smiles going in the locker

room. I'll remember that for the rest of my life, these guys. They poured their heart out tonight.

Like Coach said, certain things were against us. We had a new guy calling plays. We had freshmen receivers out there. We gave it all we got, and if it wasn't well enough for us to win tonight it (inaudible).

I love those guys. What a game.

Q. You said 50-yard field goal. Was that sort of the line of demarcation? In the end, did you have to get a little bit further to try?

MACK BROWN: We thought if we could get it to the 35, we had a chance, and that's why Drake tried to get it to the 35 on the out. And then when there was one second left, we knew we had to sling it in the end zone. That was our only chance. We put our it tallest guys, most athletic guys out there, and Drake got it up there with still a chance.

I think the other message, kind of to answer Andrew's question, as a head coach you want to know who you go in an alley with. If you think you're going to get jumped, who is going to fight for you? Those two. And a bunch of other guys on this team fighting their guts out to keep me upright, man. That's basically what it is when you are out there on the field.

I wouldn't trade them for anybody in the country. Not anybody in the country.

Q. This is for you too --

MACK BROWN: I'm sorry. I didn't answer your question, did I?

Q. I just didn't know how close you were it. I think it was a 50-yard field goal.

MACK BROWN: We couldn't do that. The two things that came up that were decisions were fourth and goal from the 2. We made 3 out of 3 fourth downs. Should we have gone for it? Probably should have because we made them all. I was a little hesitant because Drake was on his head, and they put it at the 3. I said no. Then they moved it to the 2.

If there's a second guessing on my part, you should kick the field goal, but I'm not sure in that situation as good as they are on offense it. If I could do it over, I would obviously go for it.

Q. What is it about Coach Brown (inaudible)?



MACK BROWN: I threaten them (laughing).

CEDRIC GRAY: I think one of the biggest things that I respect about Coach Brown is (inaudible) he is a Hall of Fame coach. He said it numerous times that he came back for us to help us out, and I think always having that makes us who we are).

DRAKE MAYE: Coach Brown, he mentions he wants us to have (inaudible) no matter age or whatever, it doesn't matter because we go out there for Coach Brown there with us (inaudible). Also, Coach Brown, you get recruited, a lot of times (inaudible). Coach Brown, he stayed the same throughout. He is so approachable, so personable, and cares about us, loves us like one of his own.

I think all throughout the locker room those guys feel the same way about Coach Brown.

Q. Drake, this is for you. I was curious what you felt like the differences were in the offense tonight given all of the changes, not having Josh, not having Antoine, not having Phil calling plays? Given all those changes, what do you feel like were the differences?

DRAKE MAYE: I think the main thing is we were all out there relaxed having fun. Nobody is uptight. Made a bunch of plays. Played our butts off. It was a little bit of a scramble drill sometimes getting in personnel and late in the shot clock, game clock, but that's the thing. You know, that's what made it fun tonight.

I think sometimes at points of the game Coach Galloway, Coach Lilly calling plays and left it up to the players to make plays. That's what you have to do. Let us pick the plays, and at the end of the day and that's a big part of it. Players make the play.

MACK BROWN: Gavin Blackwell pulled a hamstring, and he didn't play. We were looking at tight end and receivers. Doc Chapman hadn't played in any game that mattered. See him out there on third and goal, I mean, it's amazing, what these kids accomplished tonight.

Q. Coach, I know it's a tough loss for you, but can you speak of your veteran leadership on the players, how they performed for you tonight?

MACK BROWN: Yeah. The leadership on last year's team, I thought there were some good leaders. But it wasn't a player-led team. These guys lead the team. That's two of our captains. The biggest difference in this year's team and last year's team, even though people will say we didn't finish right, you know, we finished like we were all year. We finished fighting our guts out at the end

of the game, and you catch a ball, and you win it. You drop a ball, and you lose it. This is the way our team was.

But a lot of people like to swap their season for ours tonight. A lot of people would have liked to be in the Holiday Bowl playing a great team like Oregon, and I put these guys in a tough spot because we've got a chance to be so good next year, I wanted to play the best team that we could possibly play because that's who we've got to start beating to take our next step.

And the leadership on this team has been unbelievable. I don't say anything. If anything, if I have to pick them up, they're picking people up, and they're out there fighting their guts out. I told them, I don't want bad body language. I don't want you to get your head down. Just keep fighting because a football game is like life. It simulates life. You have good. You have bad -- (AUDIO FEED ENDED).

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