

DIRECTV Holiday Bowl: Louisville vs USC

Wednesday, December 27, 2023

San Diego, California, USA

Petco Park

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Jeff Brohm

Quincy Riley

Jaylin Alderman

Jack Plummer

Postgame Press Conference



impact play calling at all for you in terms of if he could throw downfield or anything like that, have any impact at all, the injury?

JEFF BROHM: Well, talking to the doctors and Jack, he was able to go and play. We were running the ball with success. I think once they got the lead they started to really soft into coverage and keeping a lot of guys back, and we needed to run the ball.

Like I said, we had some chances there in the second half to convert and didn't make it work. But it just wasn't one of our better days, and I think as a team, defensively, offensively, special teams, we got beat in all three segments, and that's how you lose the game.

Q. You did get that punt blocked and you were having success running the ball. Did you have any consideration to maybe change and take more shots downfield after that chasing points or was it just stick to the game plan?

JEFF BROHM: Well, we took a shot the first play and didn't convert, and then the first play of the second drive we took another shot down the field. We fumbled, so you've got to be smart, and I just think that we had some drives going that we just needed to maybe do it a little bit faster, and obviously the touchdown at the end would have helped us to get right back in it and get a stop and then you've got a chance.

I think you've got to do what's working as much as you can and get points, and just wasn't -- all three segments didn't play the way they needed to play. That's not happening, then you're not going to win.

Q. Jeff, how far off do you feel like you are in terms of building the depth in the program that you'd like to have?

JEFF BROHM: Well, anytime you lose, you've got to look at things, and you don't want to overreact. These four guys sitting up here with me right now all played great for us all year long.

USC 42, Louisville 28

JEFF BROHM: Disappointing loss for our football team. Not the way you want to end the season, so I give credit to University of Southern California. They came ready to play. They made more plays than we did, and they won the football game.

I just think that it wasn't one of our better games on defense. I think some things were obvious. The secondary wasn't one of our better games, and we got exposed there, and that hurt us. We weren't able to put enough pressure on the quarterback, and when we did, he found ways a couple times to scramble and make plays, and we didn't get our head around on some balls that we need to. We work it every day, so I guess we've got to make sure we work it more.

Offensively we take the first drive down and then we fumble the next series unfortunately, very first play, and then we get a punt blocked I think the next series, and the momentum shifted quickly.

Our guys played hard until the end. We had a crossing route wide open for a walk-in touchdown to cut the game to seven there in the second quarter and didn't make it work.

It's disappointing, but that's football. So you've got to be able to learn from the mistakes we made as coaches and as players and figure out if we want to put in the work in the off-season to come back hungrier than ever knowing all the work that it takes to win.

Q. I saw Jack hit his hand early in the game. Did that



Was everything perfect all the time? No, but they gave great effort. They helped us win a lot of football games. They worked really hard. They were good leaders. So we appreciate all the work they put in.

Then really it's about the guys that are coming back, how bad do you really want to win and do you really understand what it takes to win at a high level against elite football teams, powerhouse football teams, brand football teams, and do it consistently.

It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of work from me, from our coaches, from all of our players. It has to be every player's goal individually to be the very best player at their position in the country, and that has to be their goal and their mindset, and they got to be willing to put the work in to get it done.

So whether they got bigger in the weight room, stronger, faster, studied more, catch more balls, work on your get-off, defend more balls, you've got to do it.

I just think sometimes when you lose, you can either use it to kick start you, to say I've got to get committed to this, or you don't. But I do think we have enough young players on the team that want to win and want to do well, and our coaches need to be committed to being there year-round, early, late, whatever it takes to help.

And we've got to put the best plan together, as well, and realize things that didn't work aren't always the players' faults, it's our fault. It just takes a lot of work.

We're sitting at 10-1, feeling pretty good about ourselves, and then we just let things slip at the end, and that's disappointing. But all three segments needed to play better for us to win, and we didn't get that done.

Q. One piece that did work was Isaac. Can you talk about his performance tonight? He was getting banged up every time he touched the ball but still kept pushing for big runs.

JEFF BROHM: Isaac did a great job. I think when Jawhar got hurt midway through the season we were able to play him more, and he really took off. He runs physical. He runs downhill. He's got good hands. When he gets in the open field, he's got good speed. Did a great job today for us.

I just think that he's extremely talented, and he really flourished in our offense, and was a big component to helping us score points and do some good things. He put in a lot of hard work. That's one person that has put in the work. Even though he wasn't getting the reps early on, he

stayed working, and he definitely did his part.

Q. You mentioned the match-ups there with the secondary. Do you feel like you guys were just a step behind? What were those match-ups like with the DBs and the wide receivers?

JEFF BROHM: Well, you know what, our secondary has played well all year long for the most part. They had a couple match-ups of fast players on our safeties, and it just wasn't one of our better days. A lot of those guys have played well all year long; today wasn't their best day.

But I'm still proud of the effort they gave us all year. It just was one of those days that they made plays.

I just think that there's a lot to learn from it. How can we as coaches help put them in a better position needs to be researched and watched because it was disappointing that we gave up that many big plays.

That was not like our defense all year, and while I give USC a lot of credit, there were a lot of little things I think we could have done better that could have helped us.

Q. Quincy and Jaylin, what did you guys see that maybe you were having problems in terms of coverage with their receivers, either getting behind or some of the big plays that happened tonight?

QUINCY RILEY: I just feel like we were in a great position as defenders, but their receivers made great plays.

JAYLIN ALDERMAN: As far as us making plays, I just feel like they made more one-on-one plays than we did. That's just the bottom line of it.

Q. Isaac, I guess how much as Coach Brohm mentioned, how much is the way the season ended fuel for a lot of guys coming back to try to build on this and try not to let this sour taste in your mouths happen next year?

ISAAC GUERENDO: Obviously when you end these last few games like that, you're going to automatically gain fuel going into next season. But it's really about using it but still keeping your heads up. We've got to -- we still played a heck of a season.

If you would have told us that we were going to have a 10-win season at the beginning of the season, I'm sure a lot of guys would have been pretty happy with that. But obviously use this as fuel and make sure we're continuing to prepare and then use this off-season to get better.

Q. Jack, I was just wondering how much you were affected. How did that pinky injury affect your ability to throw.

JACK PLUMMER: Definitely my pinky got dislocated and I had to get it popped back into place and then had to tape it up so it wouldn't pop out again. Honestly, it felt pretty good throwing the ball. Didn't affect me a ton. It just was kind of battling through a little bit of pain, but as far as throwing the ball, I don't think it affected my accuracy or spirals or distance or anything, so it felt pretty good.

Q. That's more touchdown passes than anybody put on you guys all year. What were they doing that you guys were having so much trouble defending?

JAYLIN ALDERMAN: They wasn't doing nothing special. They just caught the ball for real. They just beat us one-on-one. Each time they had a chance they made the play and we didn't.

Q. Jack, how do you guys try to process this season when you're 10-1, a lot of people think you overachieved winning 10 games and then lose three straight to end it? How tough is it to balance that?

JACK PLUMMER: You know, I haven't really thought about it a ton. Just try to go out and do my job every day and put in the work every single day to help the team win the next game.

We did go 10-1 and had an opportunity to beat our rival at home and we didn't do that; then had an opportunity to be ACC champs and came up short then. I think we definitely could have won this game, as well.

It's definitely a tough way to end the season, a tough way for a lot of our seniors to go out, playing their last couple games.

But it is what it is, and we can't change it, can't go back and time travel. We're going to have to learn to deal with it, and for the guys coming back, it's going to have to fuel them to get better in the off-season and motivate them, and for the guys moving on, they're going to have to learn how to cope with that.

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