

DIRECTV Holiday Bowl: Syracuse vs Washington State

Friday, December 27, 2024

San Diego, California, USA

Petco Park

Syracuse Orange

Fran Brown

Kyle McCord

Alijah Clark

Postgame Press Conference

Syracuse 52, Washington State 28

FRAN BROWN: First off, I want to make sure I thank God for the opportunity. I want to take my hat off to Washington State, their interim head coach. He did an amazing job, their staff, their players. They competed their butts off. I thought No. 2 was one of the better receivers we went against the entire year. He definitely was a problem. Just very thankful for them. I thought they played hard on both sides of the ball.

Happy we had an opportunity to go out and compete and to make a competitive Holiday Bowl.

Q. Kyle, tonight you were able to break the ACC record for most passing yards in a season. Can you put into words this season and what it means to end it doing something like that?

KYLE McCORD: Yeah, I think that just to be sitting here, and like you said, have that record now, it's crazy to see how everything comes full circle, and the first day I got in the program he was sitting in my living room telling me that's exactly how it would go. God continued to just watch over me this entire year and put me in a great situation around a lot of great people.

I think just given that environment, that's really what allowed me to succeed.

Q. Looking at this team and your coaching staff, everything you guys were going for going into this game, you wanted 10 wins, you wanted a double-digit winning season. You got it here, you've won all three of your games out west, Kyle set many records in his only season here at Syracuse. What can you say is



going through your mind and heart right now seeing everything that you've achieved in year one leading the Orange?

FRAN BROWN: I'm just very thankful to have the opportunity to be in the position that I'm in and to work with such fine men and young men. I think the coaching staff is amazing. Everything that's done, a lot of people always say Fran, Fran, Fran, but I think we have two really good offensive and defensive coordinator, assistant coaches, those guys do a really good job, and all our support staff, from our athletic training staff to the equipment staff to just everyone that has anything to do with the program, they all work. Our secretaries, Ms. Katie, Ms. Debbie.

It's a collective thing that's been going on through the entire building, and everybody is working; everyone is on the same page. No one is bigger than the S, and I think the way that we all continue to work that way helps us a lot, and just having the opportunity of having a great support system at home, my wife and my children just being there and always supporting what I'm trying to do and the things that are being done.

I'm just thankful for all of them. I'm happy that we're in the position that we're in, and we set a standard. I think the 10 wins show that we are becoming a successful program, and we have it continue to work, so this is just a standard that was set, and we want to go above and beyond because the Sinkhole and these guys did an amazing job and put us in position to where we are now, and I'm hoping that the younger guys can see what they did and go lead even better.

Q. In your evaluation, what makes Kyle McCord so special?

FRAN BROWN: He's not selfish at all. He cares about everyone else. He's very, very competitive. You've seen it from the first day when we came in, we were in the weight room, our weight room was -- we had an old vintage weight room, and they had push-ups that they were doing, and he was one of the last guys to go down. Everybody like stopped and he just kept going. From that moment I knew, oh, this dude is tough, and everybody else knew it was

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tough, and I knew that it was on me to just push and to keep making sure everyone knew who Kyle was and what he was about and keep reiterating it.

He kept showing that he was tough, that he was relentless. He exemplified the art. Everything that I would tell him, he pushed to the team and we just kind of worked together. This is my guy. I love this guy. I truly love him, I care about him, and he's just that dude for real.

Q. For everybody up there, eighth 10-win season in program history. A lot of guys, they stayed to get that 10th win. What does this 10th win tonight mean to the program?

ALIJAH CLARK: I would say it would mean coming from if we can go 6-0 second half in the season, we ain't winning a game in November, we can't win. We always felt like what is it, and it was we wasn't working hard enough. Coach Fran came in here, he laid a plan down. He actually had a blueprint for us and we just followed it. He's a great leader. We've got to be great followers, and one day we'll be great leaders, as well.

Q. Kyle, if you are fortunate enough that it's your choice to play a fifth year of college football, do you know that you'll come back to Syracuse, or would the NFL still be a consideration and you'd have to work through those plans?

KYLE McCORD: Yeah, I think both are great options, but to be honest, I really haven't been thinking about that too much. I've kind of been focused on the ballgame. Now that we've got some time off, and if I do get that extra year, we'll see. It would be definitely a tough decision to make either way.

Q. Kyle, was that back shoulder fade against press man, was that something you guys game planned or was it an in-game adjustment?

KYLE McCORD: The one to Trevor, No. 2? It was really just a conversion, something that we work a ton in practice, and at this point you've got so many bang reps of that, I knew exactly what he was thinking on that. Anytime you get press man one-on-one I'm going to take that match-up and give him a chance to go up and get it. It's just all those reps in practice, I think, paying off.

Q. Coach Brown, a few times I've heard you say recently that one of your goals was to bring the top of the hill and the bottom of the hill together. How do you think having a first year like you did can contribute to that overall mission of bringing the community together?

FRAN BROWN: I think it's going to contribute a lot because we do a lot of community service on both sides. I think that it's my subculture, so my subculture where I'm from, where I was born and raised and where I'm at now, getting a chance to bring it together because I get a chance to make sure that people that are with high income, things of that nature, understand what it's like to not have it all and understand what it is and being able to go help and do community service, and then make sure the people that are living in poverty right now and the different things of that nature understand that all you have to do is work, faith and hard work, and not being selfish, just wanting to help others. That means everything to me.

Community service is -- it just means everything to me. I understand and I know it's just different people that I went and listened to and I seen people come back and reach back out and be able to help, that meant a lot to me, so when I get the opportunity to do it and I have a chance to have a bunch of great young men follow and want to do the same thing, there's nothing like it. It means everything as I'm seeing it now work. If you're watching Syracuse, everyone comes together. Everyone is excited about Syracuse football, just who we are as athletic department period overall, so I'm very thankful for that.

Q. Elijah, a lot was made of them not having a whole lot of their players, transfer portal hit pretty hard. When you're game planning for someone you don't know much about because you don't know who's going to be on the field, how difficult was that?

ALIJAH CLARK: To be honest, we just worry about ourselves. We go into practice, we practice to be the best version of ourselves, so that's what we did. We just came out here and executed. Those guys are definitely a great football team. Even with losing players they still have their players on their team. What we just preached is we're just going to work hard and hopefully we come out with the 10 wins, and that's what we did.

Q. Coach Brown, when your daughter is older and is able to look back on the first season that you had here, what would you hope that she's able to see that you accomplished?

FRAN BROWN: Just to start the program. That this is the beginning of afterwards when they started to win championships, and just seeing how her father is a part of it and she's a part of it, like it's something that we got to do together. It's special having a daughter. I had two sons, and I never thought having a daughter just means everything. Just got to do things the right way all the time. It's important you do it the right way all the time.

and I'll remember all that.

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I think having a daughter made me a better coach because I'm able to coach young men and show them what's needed to happen and what they need to do and not just all the stuff that goes on when you're a boy and you've got sons. You just worry about those, too, but then when you've got a daughter you've got to worry about all of them. The fathers know what I'm talking about. It's just being able to focus that way.

Q. Coach Brown, we saw Jalil Martin have a big play. How important is it for those young guys to get experience in this bowl game and kind of going forward toward next year?

FRAN BROWN: I think it's good. I think he did a good job. We had Devin Grant out and he stepped up and he was able to start and did a good job. Him and Evan rotated the entire night, being able to play like that.

We had a next-man-up mentality our entire year. That's just what we are, what we're about. The way we practice, there are so many reps that guys are getting a lot of reps, so when it's their time to go, they should be ready to play. Just got to be able to make some plays and have fun and just go out there like practice.

He sticks Trevor in practice a lot, so being able to stick Trevor in practice, we're comfortable with you going to stick other guys in the game. Just trust your training and everything will work itself out.

Q. Coach, I just want to ask you, you've spoken a lot about how 10 wins is a step in the right direction but not inevitably where you want to be. When you look back at this first season for yourself as a head coach, what is it that you'll remember the most, whether it's a moment or a game or just something more general?

FRAN BROWN: Just the players, practice. Like having fun with them, just the jokes, all the stuff that we do. Before the meetings, Dev praying and the guys cracking up about how Dev prays and us having our jokes and stuff together. The games are cool because everybody gets to see that, but it's just the stuff that we do all week together, me meeting with players every day, just sitting down and talking to them and just -- I just love being in the locker room, just hanging with the guys, just being one of the guys. Like that's what's really important to me and just us throwing our little jokes and having fun and everybody messing with each other and getting on guys and no matter who goes in and plays, we always say as long as we got 6 in the house he's going to get the ball around the guys.

I'll just miss that really. I'll just really miss the locker room

