

TaxSlayer Gator Bowl: Clemson vs Kentucky

Friday, December 29, 2023

Jacksonville, Florida, USA

TIAA Bank Field

Clemson Tigers

Cade Klubnik

Press Conference

Clemson-38, Kentucky-35

THE MODERATOR: We're open for questions.

Q. How much do you guys feed off of the defense when they either do a takeaway or a stop or whatever? What does that do?

CADE KLUBNIK: It's huge. Obviously four turnovers in the fourth quarter was huge for us and the field position that we got. Just so proud of those guys for just coming up huge in the fourth quarter when we needed them.

Yeah, I mean, it's huge for us. Just to kind of get momentum going and starting great field position and take some of the ease off.

Q. Cade, Coach touched on it a good bit. It was just every single week, every single big game, big moment was just overcoming adversity from .500 to the big finish, backs against the wall and the 21-10. What was the conversation or what was kind of the mantra going on after that kick return for the offensive side with the coaches and players? What did you all just tell each other every single time you guys had to answer every single score by Kentucky?

CADE KLUBNIK: Yeah, I think the first thing that I said was, guys, we've been through so much this year. We've had to sit in that locker room 4-4. Why quit now? We've been through so much. We just won four straight. There's no reason to quit now. We're right here in this ball game. Let's go win it.

We did it, and just so proud of these guys. So proud of just the seniors on this team for leading us, the leaders on this team for just continually showing up every single week with a go-get attitude.

There's no way that we were going to leave this game with



any regrets. Sure as heck I wasn't, and anybody else on this team. We've been through so much this year. I mean, just what a way to end it. It's just so awesome. So awesome.

Q. That pace at the end on the last drive, how much fun is that for you, and is that something that could be applied more regularly in a conventional attack?

CADE KLUBNIK: Yeah, obviously we know that they're going to be playing a lot of three-high structure, so they're going to give us some throws here and there, but also two-minute drill, so we have to get rolling, got to get set fast.

We kind of knew that tempo was a problem for them coming into it, and I think that we probably gotten to a little bit of faster tempo at times throughout the game because I think they had some struggles with it, but just -- I like the pace of it, and I think that that was just kind of naturally something we did. It wasn't really something that we extra emphasized. It's just that mentality in two-minute drills, moving fast and getting the ball set.

I think one of the biggest plays was the fourth and short where everybody got set and we snapped the ball, and Phil went and got it, and the O-line opened it up for him, and he went and got it. That was one of the biggest plays of the game in my opinion.

If you just look at that drive, it's fourth down. It's that or nothing. So just so proud of him. I mean, it really started with the offensive line. I mean, they're conditioned and ready for any tempo that we need, and they rolled around and just so proud of them the way that they came out to play today.

Obviously we had a few more sacks than we wanted, and I think partially that's on me for holding the ball too long a couple of times, but I mean, other than that, they did a heck of a job today. Just so proud of them. Just starts with Will Putnam and just so proud of them.

I honestly felt like I had all day back there today. It just felt like I could sit back and just dissect and see things I

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needed to see. Just really proud of them.

Q. Can you reflect on the first year with Garrett Riley, and how you will take the next step into next year?

CADE KLUBNIK: People don't give him enough credit to have to come into a brand new place where he has never been, doesn't know a soul, doesn't even know the offensive staff. He had to come in and teach every single player the offense. Well, he also had to teach every single coach the offense. That's a lot on him.

I mean, I told him after the game, there's not another person that I would want right there with me. I mean, just so thankful for him. We're sitting there 4-4, and he just comes in just playing some music and with a smile on his face in the meetings and just never flinches. Just somebody that I can count on.

Just freaking love him to death, and just so proud of him and thankful for him. The way that he has led me and led this offense and led this QB room, that's what's made the difference in my opinion.

Q. What does it say about Will Shipley on that kick return after he didn't have the best day, and he comes up with something big?

CADE KLUBNIK: Yeah, that's Will. I mean, he'll just go out there and shock the world when you need him to. Just so proud of him. Praying for him that he's all right. I think he had, like, 130-something all-purpose yards, which is awesome. That's what we needed. That sparked something.

Then Johnny Weitz hit the field goal, and that was huge on that same drive. Obviously we want a touchdown there, but just so proud of him. Yeah.

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