

# Bad Boy Mowers Pinstripe Bowl: Penn State vs Clemson

Saturday, December 27, 2025

Bronx, New York, USA

Yankee Stadium

**Penn State Nittany Lions**

**Coach Terry M. Smith**

**Dani Dennis-Sutton**

**Trebor Peña**

**Press Conference**



We had a few drops on him. The stats would have been better. But he continues to play great, and just super proud of these two guys.

Questions?

**Q. Terry, you mentioned the defense. Could you discuss a little bit more the job that Dex did taking over for Jim? And do you know what Dex's future holds?**

TERRY M. SMITH: Yeah, you know, Coach Poindexter did an amazing job getting these guys ready. He limited the pass game, completely shut down the run game. He's a great leader. He's a great leader of men. He's a great human being.

He's one of the locker room favorites, when you look at staff, players, anyone unanimously in the building is going to vote for Coach Poindexter as that guy.

I'm super happy for him. Right now as far as his future, we're just going to relish in this trophy right here. We get to add to the Penn State history trophy case, and whatever is next for Coach Poindexter, he'll announce that at a time for him.

**Q. Terry, how did this experience as interim head coach change your perspective on coaching, and what can you take with you to being the associate head coach and whatever position coach you are next?**

TERRY M. SMITH: Yeah, I thought it was a big job when I was an assistant, then I got in this seat and I realize this is an even bigger job.

There's just decisions everywhere. It's can our guys wear black visors, like just any decision. The food, like what are we going to eat tonight, what's the meal on the bus tonight, things like that that nobody cares about, but they're a question that has to be answered because we have 11 busses going back and we have to take care of everyone.

It's just a big job.

Penn State 22, Clemson 10

TERRY M. SMITH: Opening statement, 22-10 victory. It was a tremendous effort, team effort, special teams, offense, defense, all played major factors in it. Just some highlights from the game: Trebor Peña, 73-yard touchdown reception was a career long for him. He had five receptions for 100 yards, which was big for us.

Quinton Martin, 101 yards, his first career 100-yard game. We really leaned on him in the second half, and he answered the call. He was downhill running all night, and he was big time for us.

Dani Dennis-Sutton had two sacks. He's holding the trophy there. Dani told me after the Rutgers game, he said, Coach, I'm going to play in this game, and I'm going to be the MVP in it, is what he told me. I know Trebor got the MVP, but Dani is my MVP because this guy didn't have to play today.

Guys of his caliber and magnitude, a lot of them walk away and just chase the next journey, and that's okay. There's nothing negative in that statement. But he chose to come back, and what an outstanding performance.

With the two sacks, he passes Matt Millen and Abdul Carter for career sacks at Penn State, into sixth all time with 23 and a half sacks for Penn State. That's awesome.

Our defense was outstanding. Coach Poindexter led us today. We gave up 236 total yards, 1.7 yards per carry. Outstanding. Critical 4th down at the very end.

Ethan Grunkemeyer was 23 for 35, 262 yards. He just continues to get better.



Me personally, it's very rewarding that I know and understand that I can handle this seat. It was a great ride. I'm ready for the next chapter. I'm ready to pass the torch on to Coach Campbell. He's an amazing individual and leader and Penn State is in great hands, and I'm ready to help him achieve greatness.

**Q. For Dani and Trebor, how much did Terry Smith play into your decision to play in this game, and what have these last seven games been like for you guys with him in charge?**

DANI DENNIS-SUTTON: Well, yeah, like Coach Terry said, I told Coach Terry a couple weeks ago, if we get in a bowl game, I'm playing. I made a dedication to this through this program, Coach T, Coach Franklin, all them guys that I'm going to play through this whole season.

This program gave me a million opportunities, so playing in the game, this is nothing, man. I love football. I love playing football. I love this program.

It was sort of a no-brainer for me. I don't really comprehend not playing in a game. It's an opportunity to go out there with my boys one last time, and it was a privilege. We worked hard to get into the bowl game. Things didn't go our way in the beginning, but we worked hard to get in this position, so I was just going to go out there and take advantage of it.

TREBOR PEÑA: I feel the same way. Having another chance to play a game, like, that's special. You've got to take advantage of it. Like Dani said, it was a no-brainer for me to play in this game and finish it out the right way with everybody else.

It's been amazing. Terry is somebody that you want to play for. He's such a good leader. You can tell why everybody rallies around him.

He instills that toughness in us and makes us play for something bigger than ourselves. I really respect him and thank him for everything.

**Q. Terry, you mentioned Quinton, 100-yard game. What did he show you in the buildup to this game? What did he show you today that gives you confidence for him and his future?**

TERRY M. SMITH: Yeah, Q is an extremely talented young man. He's a tall, lean guy and a slasher. Today's game required downhill running. He displayed that, displayed tough running.

He showed a side that he could be a slasher and a

physical back all in one game. I'm super proud of him. We didn't have the two running backs that have run for all the yards we've had, and he stepped right in and we didn't miss a beat.

I think we had 41 rushes, which I told you guys, we're going to continue to run the football. We just took an old-school approach, and he stepped to the challenge.

**Q. Dani, with as many players, your peers that did opt out, did it feel a little awkward? Were a lot of people asking you why you are going to play? And what are you guys having for dinner on the way home?**

DANI DENNIS-SUTTON: The dinner part, that's a question for Coach T. I'm not quite sure. People did ask me and I told them before even the last game, yeah, I plan on playing in the game.

Like I say, I love football. I love playing for this program. I have fun when I'm out there, so there was really no question. I don't really understand not playing in the game.

But as far as my peers, I know people have different situations, whether it's injuries or whatever it may be, so I can't speak on why they did or didn't, but I know for me it was a no-brainer. I love Coach T. He gives me everything, so I decided I'm going to give everything for this program, and yeah, that's the only way I could.

**Q. Terry, the offensive line looked a lot different today than it did at the start of the year. What did you learn -- I think you knew what Anthony Donkoh could do, but what did you learn about guys like Rulli and Boyer and Shanahan and Cousins and as the game went on it looked like they got better?**

TERRY M. SMITH: Yeah, we used the phrase earlier in the season getting callused up, and as the game went on they got callused up and got better and better. A game like today where it's very cold outside and every hit hurts to the core of your body, our guys wore them down, and eventually they succumbed to it.

Cooper Cousins is one of my favorites. I love the guy to death. He loves football. He loves inflicting pain on his opponents. Dominic Rulli, you just go down the list of guys, Boyer, T.J., all those guys stepped their games up and really delivered a big-time victory for us.

**Q. For all you guys had to go through this year to come through to this point, the last five to seven minutes as you're hearing the crowd chant Terry's name, what were the emotions like for you guys on the sideline and on the field?**



TREBOR PEÑA: I think it's just a testament to him and what he means to the program. You see the fans react that way, it's because that's how they feel. I feel like the players feel the same way. We're just so thankful to have him as our coach right now.

**Q. Coach, two guys it seemed like you always knew what you were going to get game in and game out, Ryan Barker for the whole season and Ethan Grunkemeyer for your seven games as a coach. What did those two guys mean not just today but to the season overall?**

TERRY M. SMITH: Stability. When you're coaching that's the greatest challenge is to know what you're getting from every guy and what to expect. Ethan Grunkemeyer, every game he got better. This was his best game. Again, we talked about the Rutgers two-minute situation. We had a two-minute situation today.

He was lights out. He delivered time and time again, critical 3rd down throws. Down the stretch when we need drives and we need plays, we knew this was the kind of game in the fourth quarter we were going to need to score every possession, and he delivered.

To talk about Barker and his kicks, I think we went up 9-3 -- I don't know the exact distance, 48 yards or something like that, and he drilled it. It was easy. It was natural.

Sometimes you take for granted something that's so difficult because they make it look so easy, and it's not easy. But man, he's been so reliable and dependable that we just count those three when he goes on to the field.

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