

Jimmy Kimmel LA Bowl Presented By Stifel: Washington State vs Fresno State

Saturday, December 17, 2022

Los Angeles, California, USA

SoFi Stadium

Washington State Cougars

Coach Jake Dickert

Brennan Jackson

Cameron Ward

Press Conference

Fresno State - 29, Washington State - 6

Q. (Inaudible)?

COACH DICKERT: It isn't about one outcome. That's the biggest thing. I told the team after the game I'm really proud of them. I'm proud more importantly those 13 seniors that you never know you're going to put the pads back on.

And those guys, we took over a program that we had to establish a foundation. And I'm proud of the foundation that they have started because it's something you can build on, you can build a championship team around.

And I'm just really proud of those guys, the effort, through all the challenges and adversity, not just today, but throughout the season there's times we could have quit and given up.

There's never those mindsets or moments in this team. We kept pushing and just didn't get the outcome we wanted.

Q. Cam, coming from UIW, how do you feel like with your first season at this level?

CAMERON WARD: I feel it's a good season overall the offense being a first year offense here. I feel like the biggest thing I learned as a quarterback at the Power Five level that every position matters. You can't have bad plays in certain situations. So just taking that, keeping that on to



next year, that's what I'm excited for.

Q. Jake, what (indiscernible) to execute offensively today?

COACH DICKERT: Variety of reasons. I give credit to Fresno State, a team that came in giving up just 20 points a game. They're physical, they're tough. That's what they were as we went throughout the game. It was a rhythm thing.

I don't think we ever got in a rhythm. We never established running the football which is a key piece to what we always want to do. Those are some things as we watch the tape that we'll kind of hopefully lean into and learn.

And I think kind of going back to the first question, there's a lot of learn from this season. We can play 60 minutes of football. The margins of victory in our league are small. And winning is hard. So I think we've learned what it takes to do that.

And now we need to put together 60-minute football games. And we just haven't quite got to that point in this season and today was one of those days.

Q. How much did you sense kind of the effects of what you guys had been dealing with, the short week without the coordinator and things like that with the offense inconsistency?

COACH DICKERT: To be honest, my mind doesn't even slip there. I thought I chased paths a little bit too much, calling some plays early and we got gassed in the run game. Those plays were on me, not the defense.

I thought the effort level was there. And I thought the execution was pretty solid. They just had some things that got us. So those are things that we'll never look to excuses. And I thought operationally we were pretty good. We just needed to get in a little bit more rhythm and establish some toughness this this game we just weren't able to do.

Q. B.J., how would you kind of gauge the defensive



effort today and holding them there and how tough is it to sustain that when you're on the field quite a bit?

BRENNAN JACKSON: I would say they had a really good game plan coming in. One thing we noticed early on is they were using our aggressiveness against us. That really opened up holes in the run game. But overall I'm proud of how the boys finished out in that last drive. Could have easily given up there, like we have in the past. But we were stout.

And I just really appreciate what the seniors have done for this program and kind of the foundation they've set because, like I said, on that last drive there was no wavering in what we were going to do. We're going to shut them down and not let them score against us.

Q. How much did Mims take over for them in the second half in terms of -- kind of wear you down?

COACH DICKERT: I think you went into thinking he was a very physical player. You could see that on tape. I thought sometimes when you don't play for three weeks, tackling can be an issue. And I thought he made us miss more than I anticipated him doing.

So I thought his lateral quickness was really good and I think he's an elite tailback that broke some tackles today. And I thought he played extremely hard and played really well.

Q. Jake, I know you said you're not going to make any excuses for who you guys didn't have out there, but what are some of the things you're going to prioritize when it comes to looking for an OC and the DC next?

COACH DICKERT: Well, this is a unique situation. And I'm definitely not going to call it a restart. Right? But we've got to redefine, not only schematically but what we want to do in our football program. I think there's benefits that can be had when you get some new people in here, new coaches. And you kind of take forward advances in our schematics.

They're not going to be drastic changes. We're going to find people that really operate in the framework of what we do.

And wanting to be at Washington State is going to be really important. It's going to be big time. Because these guys need consistency. I'm excited about being here for the long term. And building around two core pieces of it that are to my left and right right now, leaders that put the stake in the ground and are excited about what we're building in the future.

It's recruiting. It's staff. It's everything as we continue to go and grow in our program and refuse to take steps backwards, only steps forward. That's where we're at right now. We're excited about building on a successful season.

Q. Cameron, how difficult (indiscernible) was Fresno compared to some of the teams you played all season?

CAMERON WARD: They're a really good team, Mountain West champs. They gave us troubles with their blitz looks. But what it came down to was us not executing. They made good plays batting the ball down on that fourth down, but we didn't execute as an offense. It wasn't the play calling; it was us as players. We controlled everything on the field. We didn't do that part. That part is on us.

Q. B.J. and Cam, I know it may be a little bit challenging but disregard today's result, what will you all take away from this season?

CAMERON WARD: You've got to close out tough games. The Utah game; Oregon State, a two-possession game; USC game, we were in the game. It's really hard to close out tough games and that's biggest thing I'm trying to take away. When it gets tough during those games you've got to have something inside you that wants to make you go get some more.

BRENNAN JACKSON: I think we're right there. I feel we're really close to getting over that hump. That's really going to make an elite defense, speaking from the defensive side of the game.

There's been a lot of games we've been lights out in the first half and as Cam said, then had trouble closing out. There's a few things we can improve on. It's going to be all bought in from us as players and coaching staff.

That's one thing I took away from this season. It's a hard thing to take away from which is being right there. We're so close. I'm excited what we'll do next year.

Q. As you guys head into the offseason, what will you do to ensure that your team is prepared next season in closing out games?

BRENNAN JACKSON: I just think it's going to be no fun and games this offseason. There's a lot of work that needs to be done. I think our mentality going into this offseason, we need to get the work done and be those guys that come in every single day ready to work -- no fun and games.

Q. Cam, what would you say was the biggest lesson

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**you took away from your first year as Pac-12
quarterback?**

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

CAMERON WARD: As I said earlier, just maintaining possessions and knowing that every possession matters. You can't BS a possession no matter what it is. Fourth down, gotta go get it. Really having that dog in you. That's for the whole offense. This offseason we'll get healthy, train, starting January 8th, so we're ready to go get it.

**Q. I know you're pretty depleted at the linebacker
position coming into this game. How would you
assess their play?**

COACH DICKERT: Why was proud of K.T. and Ben. And Ben's a senior, I've seen him work for a long time. Sometimes the hardest role on a team is being backup. You prepare every week just in case your number's called.

He was a great special teams player throughout his career here at Washington State.

K.T. was a calming influence. I thought he commanded the defense really well. Set and closed it. I'll have to watch the tape to see some performances but to the naked eye I thought they did a really good job and they competed their tail off and that's all we can ask.

**Q. Coach, I know you guys had the stickers to honor
Mike Leach. We noticed the (indiscernible) flag as
well. How were you able to honor him in the game and
what all did you do and what did that mean to you
guys?**

COACH DICKERT: I think there were some guys in the locker room that were recruited by Coach Leach. I'm sure B.J. is one of them. Just hearing the stories as this week has gone on -- the positives, the quirky, the fun, the smart, the impact that I think he's had on a lot of people -- and just talking from our standpoint here at Washington State, just the impact he's had on our program.

I said it the other day. He came to Washington State not just to reenergize his career, but he reenergized the whole Cougar football program. And he laid a foundation to letting Cougs know we can win again. And he started a bowl streak that we have continued and we're excited to do that.

He'll always be an integral part of Washington State and I think he'll be a Cougar for life. And so I think it was very warranted and just prayers out to him and obviously his family and everyone that's going through a tough time. But he's got a lasting impact on this game.