

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

Saturday, December 17, 2022
Los Angeles, California, USA
SoFi Stadium

Fresno State Bulldogs Coach Jeff Tedford Devo Bridges Jordan Mims Press Conference

Fresno State - 29, Washington State - 6

Q. With this win, what do you feel is the legacy of this senior class?

COACH TEDFORD: I think the legacy is a group of guys who overcame adversity, who believed in one another, who stayed really close and was totally committed to the goals that we set for ourselves and never gave up. Just took it one week at a time. A really tight-knit group of guys.

The coaches did a phenomenal job of creating an environment of belief every single day. And then really it was just one link on the chain every week. And that's kind of what we focus on. Didn't look at the big picture. Just kept going one week at a time.

And to end it off like this, I've been told that first time in history someone's gone 1-4 to 10 wins, and that's really cool for these kids. It's a memory they'll take away for the rest of their lives, and that's always something that's very special for the young men that can impact their lives like that.

Q. How happy are you for Jordan with the fact he's had to wait his turn and the game he had tonight?

COACH TEDFORD: Jordan has been here a long, long time. He's made a huge impact on this program. I haven't seen the stats. But looked like he had a great game. And he's a young man who never says anything. Doesn't complain about anything. He just comes to work every



single day, committed to the team and the program.

It's great to see him have a breakout game tonight he's been over a thousand yard rusher for him already this season, but that was an exciting game for him.

Q. Last time you were in L.A., Southern California, didn't end well. Jake got injured and a couple of key injuries in that game. Could you have imagined back then the year ending like it would here?

COACH TEDFORD: Well, at that time it was pretty devastating for sure because I think within those two weeks we had 12 guys injured -- and obviously to have your two captains hurt in the same game within probably seven minutes of one another.

But that's exactly my point is that the belief and the togetherness of the whole team, people had to rise above. We had a lot of young guys play at that time which I think over the stretch of the season kind of helped us because it created some depth for us. But at that time we were disappointed but we weren't discouraged. It was a situation we just kept plugging away.

Q. Just talk about Jake's performance this season and today?

COACH TEDFORD: Like I said, I haven't seen any of the stats. But Jake brings so much more to our team than just his arm talent and him throwing the football. It's his leadership, his knowledge about what's going on, his input on the sideline and how we communicate.

Coach Moore does a great job with him and with our whole offense. And so Jake's another coach on the field. And I love him. We have a great personality, as I love Jordan Mims.

And the guys -- we've been close for a long, long time with these kids. And so a lot of special times, like we talked about. There was a little bit of adversity early on. But when you have kids like Jake and like Jordan that provide leadership for our team, that goes a long way.



Q. As you end this bowl game, what were Washington State's strengths that you prepared your team for?

COACH TEDFORD: Coming into this game?

Q. Coming into this game what was Washington State's strengths that you prepared for?

COACH TEDFORD: They play really hard. They had a really good year. They lost a couple of really close games to some great teams, Utah and one other team that was really good. They barely lost those games.

They play very hard. They're well-coached. They can be explosive on offense. Thankfully we kind of limited the big play today, which was a good thing. But they're a well-coached team. Played really hard and we have a lot of respect for them.

Q. With the return of David Perales and highlight players like Devo, what were some of the defensive standouts you saw in this game to limit them to only one touchdown?

COACH TEDFORD: I thought the whole defense played excellent. The people on the back end did as well. I thought Carlton Johnson played a really good game. Cam played a good game. Our linebackers played really well.

I thought Coach Coyle, our defensive coordinator, did a really nice job mixing up pressure and coming off the edge, and pressure and mixing up coverage with pressure.

I thought we tackled really well -- all the bubble screens outside and things like that. They make a lot of big plays by throwing those bubble screens and people miss tackles and they make big plays out of it. I thought the whole defense tackled really really well tonight.

But again Coach Coyle and the defensive staff I thought did a great job of game planning and being prepared for the game.

Q. It looks to me a little emotional now. Business-like all year long, you let the emotions out a little bit. Are you kind of appreciating the senior class and guys like Jake and Jordan and just how long you spent together?

COACH TEDFORD: Yeah, I think that's been for the last couple of weeks really every time we leave the practice field, you know, the last -- especially the last couple of days of -- kind of trying to not get too emotional because we had a game to play. But to know that we're kind of winding down and our time together.

But they are relationships I'll never forget the rest of my life. I don't typically take a whole lot of time to reflect on things, but when you have guys like this who overcame so much and meant so much to the program -- Jordan Mims has been here since I was here a long time ago and recruited him his very first year.

And that's the other really cool thing about it. I don't think there was any talk about people not playing in this game. There's a lot of teams who people opt out of games. I didn't hear any talk about that because of the commitment, I think, to our players who have commitment to each other and want to do something special. And I think that's a real tribute to the guys on our team.

And we have a lot of young guys on our team, but these guys who are leaving this year, I'm going to miss them a lot. But there are relationships I'll have with them the rest of their life.

Q. Question about the red wave, 12th fan for you. How impressive is what they do?

COACH TEDFORD: The red wave is so awesome. It always is. Every time we come down to Southern California or bowl games, you know, they really support us really well.

I'll tell you the truth, during the game I didn't pay much attention because I was focused on the game. But after the game, looking up there to see how many people were really there, that's awesome. It's a great experience for them.

And you know, we talk about who we represented in this game. We represented our conference as the champions. We represented the valley. So there was a lot of people we represented and a lot of them are the people in the valley and the people who are here tonight.

Q. I know the players had a lot of fun this week getting to meet Jimmy Kimmel and everything. How enjoyable was it for you this week to take part in this bowl game and everything that went on all week?

COACH TEDFORD: I thought the bowl staff and the people who ran the bowl did a phenomenal job. Typically we try to make sure that we balance having fun and work. And that's another thing that our kids did this week really, really well is they had fun when it was time to have fun, but they focused when it was time to practice.

And the people here who ran this game, who gave us tours around here, first class. She was awesome. (Laughter).



This place is a big place. And we were kind of lost a couple times. If it wasn't for these people to show us a great time -- and everything they did was first class. I can tell you that.

The people here are so hospitable. So nice. They have so much to be proud of here. This is a phenomenal place. But it was a first-class bowl game all the way. I want to say thank you to all the people who played a role in that. Thank you, again, very much.

Q. You said you don't do much reflecting but coming back into the program you wanted to bring back the pride and tradition of Bulldog football. And now the program has won four straight bowl games. Can you speak to where Fresno State is?

COACH TEDFORD: I think the pride and tradition of bulldog football has been here for a long, long time. And there might have been a down year here or there. But since I've been back in 2017, I think it's been very, very strong. Our kids have done a phenomenal job of representing our program, not just on the football field.

Our kids do a phenomenal job in the classroom. They represent the community well. They're quality people. And the growth and development that goes on between 17 and 24 years old is part of our job.

And I couldn't be prouder of how these kids have grown and the way they represent our university, our football team and one another and their families.

And so it's not just the football piece. It's everything that goes along with it. And the trust level that we have in our building amongst one another I think is pretty special.

Q. Jordan, great performance. Just what's your thoughts just on the finish to your college career here with 205 yards, a career high for yourself?

JORDAN MIMS: It's been surreal. Starting off 2017, as Coach Tedford said, he recruited me here and having ups and downs, whether it's injuries, getting the most opportunity that I could when I can. And it just felt surreal that we started out how we did and we won nine games in a row. So it feels good.

Q. Wazzu is a team that hangs its hat on having a good defense. You carved right through it. What does that say about your guys' offense and how well you operate?

JORDAN MIMS: We had the time to prepare for these guys. We knew they had a few guys missing, but we took

advantage of every opportunity. Our line did a phenomenal job today blocking. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have had what I had tonight.

Q. Devo, I know you've (indiscernible) other quarterbacks before. Cam Ward, what challenges did he bring and how hard was it to game plan for a guy like that?

DEVO BRIDGES: As you say, we've seen mobile quarterbacks before, so we weren't too nervous. But he's a great player, so we were focused on keeping him contained.

We faced great quarterbacks like him earlier in the season so it's something we prepared before. We've got great pass rushers around us. It was a challenge but I feel like we met the challenge.

Q. Jordan, they were out a couple starting linebackers. How do you feel that impacted their ability to defend the run?

JORDAN MIMS: I'm not really too sure. I just know you have to have that next-guy-up, just like we had earlier in the season when Jake went down, next guy up. But we took advantage of the run and our line, once again, did a phenomenal job.

Q. You're wearing a very unique trophy around your waste. When you get presented with a belt and realize that that's actually the trophy for this game, what was your initial thoughts being up there with Jimmy Kimmel?

JORDAN MIMS: It felt surreal. I didn't think -- I knew I had a pretty solid game. Our line did their thing and I followed them. But it just feels good to leave a mark like this on a 10-win season.

DEVO BRIDGES: Such a blessing, it was the biggest moment of my life to be up there and get that MVP belt. But I feel like I didn't do it alone. Everyone else playing around me and the coaches putting me in position to make plays. So it really is a team effort for sure.

Q. How would you rate the experience this week and how does it feel coming in with a nine-game win streak, to beat Pac-12 team as they said that has a great defense? How would you rate this experience all week and how does it feel to be able to win at SoFi and beat a Pac-12 team that has a great defense?

DEVO BRIDGES: It's a 10 out of 10. One of the newest stadiums in the country, playing a great team and

dominated, did what we had to do. It was a blessing to have a 10-win season.

JORDAN MIMS: Like he said, we played on this huge stage and we get the opportunity to display our talent. And I think the Bulldogs, we did that today.

Q. You guys started 1-4 and came back to win nine straight games. Can you talk about the resiliency of your team, just kind of you guys go through this remarkable comeback?

JORDAN MIMS: We were resilient and I think we persevered. 1-4, not starting off too hot, knowing the talent that we have in our room. It was kind of tough.

And you go through those moments and we kind of just stuck with it because we knew our goals were still at hand, we still had a chance to win a championship, we still had a chance to go to a bowl game. And we accomplished that.

DEVO BRIDGES: It was a rough start, for sure. But we had guys that have been in this program for six years, and they wasn't going to go out like that. So we really set a goal to turn our season around and that's exactly what we did.

Q. The offensive game plan, Jake passing (indiscernible) in the first half, and in the second half you took over and just wore them down?

JORDAN MIMS: We always want to stick with the run game and pound the ball first. We know we have a talented outside receiver. And it was good for us to make plays on the ground and we can dish out here and there and throw shots. I think it felt good.

Q. Jordan, is there something about bowl games, second straight MVP award?

JORDAN MIMS: I haven't thought about that too much. Now you said it, I'm remembering back to last year, New Mexico, that felt great to get that win. And being here in this final season, getting the tenth win, which is I think it's like made history or whatnot, from 10 wins, 1-4, it felt good to leave my mark on a big stage like this.

Q. Jordan, expanding on leaving your mark. I remember last year when you faced Nevada you also had a career high rushing yards. To do it again, over 200, when I asked you the first time you said, "The job's not done." Now that you have this career-ending SoFi big, glamorous ending, what do you feel is your mark and your legacy with Fresno State overall now thinking about it?

JORDAN MIMS: Like I was saying earlier, just the ups and downs I've been through and I persevered, whether it's injuries and stuff like that; and me coming back from another year to show what I can do, stay injury-free it feels good. I'm happy for the seniors. I'm happy for our team.

Q. The Mountain West has beaten the Pac-12 handily in both renditions of the LA Bowl, what does that say to the strength of your conference?

JORDAN MIMS: I think it says that we can play with anyone. We have the guys. We're tough guys. We're not just no pushover. I feel like we're always ready. Doesn't matter where we play or who we play, we're going to fight for sure.

Q. Coach Tedford talked about you being one of his first recruits. Speak to this program now winning four bowls since he came back in 2017, the state of Fresno State as you exit out?

JORDAN MIMS: It's surreal. He recruited me when I was a freshman; I didn't know much. I think after my first year, I learned a ton of football. And he's been great ever since then, and we have and always will have a great relationship and I wouldn't appreciate him enough.

Q. Jordan, how good does it feel despite all the on-field success, how does it feel to have the graduate patch on your shoulder? And for both of you, how good does this feel ending the season the way you did knowing you guys had to overcome COVID, short season?

JORDAN MIMS: Feels good to have this patch. I'm currently finishing my master's this week. It's cool to have undergrad and master's. It's surreal. I never thought I'd be getting two degrees during college. It feels good, though. My mom's proud.

Q. Did it feel like a home game?

JORDAN MIMS: Yeah, I feel like everywhere we go, the Red Wave shows up. You seen it on Twitter earlier in the week, people coming to the game asking questions. They're very involved and felt good to turn around and see the Red Wave cheering for us. Happy for us.

Q. How about the crowd?

DEVO BRIDGES: The Red Wave, we love them. They travel every time we come to so Cal. Turn an away game to a home game. We have a great fan base. Love them so much.

Q. What's your pitch for why you should be in the Top 25 at the end of the year?

DEVO BRIDGES: Nine-game win streak. We made history today. That's all I gotta say.

JORDAN MIMS: Like he said, nine-game win streak. We got our tenth win. And like we've shown in the past years, we can play with anybody. And I feel like the talent speaks for itself on our teams. And that's really it.

Q. You guys obviously have a lot of fans here. Did you have your family here as well? What does it mean to have them here?

JORDAN MIMS: It feels amazing. A lot of my family has been -- at least tried to make every home game this year. My mom, she hasn't missed a game all season. She traveled every away game and came to every home game I had. I had 20-plus family members here. It just felt surreal when it came to an end, and I can't be more excited.

Q. What's next for you after this?

JORDAN MIMS: Take my shot to go to the next level. I'm going to go train in January and stuff like that and we'll see from there.

Q. Coach Tedford talked about how nobody opted out for this game. It wasn't even a thought. Jordan, NFL future. A bunch of guys on this team can have an NFL future. What does that mean to know there's guys opting out all over the country but the whole group was showing up to play for your teammates?

JORDAN MIMS: We knew what it takes, how we started and how we wanted to finish. Being Mountain West champs and then coming here, playing our bowl game. We knew Washington State were going to be a tough team. And I think we all wanted to leave a mark, and I think that's really it. We wanted to leave a mark.

DEVO BRIDGES: It's been a lot of guys that have been together for three, four, five, six years, just storybook ending. That's what it was: Go out with a win with your brothers that you've been here with since day one.

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