

# Boca Raton Bowl: Liberty vs Toledo

Tuesday, December 20, 2022

Boca Raton, Florida, USA

FAU Stadium

## Toledo Rockets

## Coach Josh Candle

## DaQuan Finn

### Press Conference



play at the west, they have an aura about them and a confidence about them. They expect to win at all times and that type of energy and that type of attitude is infectious.

#### Q. What does it say -- (inaudible)?

JOSH CANDLE: His maturity and his toughness continues to shine through. I think that that position is the most scrutinized position in sport for a reason. I didn't choose to play quarterback; he did, you know. So he knows that the good -- the good comes with the bad and vice versa.

So, you know, he got off the mat and continued to fight again. Wanted to be in there with his teammates, and it's kind of been, again, like I said, a little bit of a small picture of what it's been all year for us. He's a fighter and I love him.

#### Q. DeQuan, what was the difference --

DEQUAN FINN: Just really the offensive line, the push, every single play, you just see it and they face it. They was hungry. They was ready to punch them in the mouth every single play. Huge credit for them. If it wasn't for them. Then we wouldn't be in this spot right now.

#### Q. (Inaudible.)

JOSH CANDLE: Well, a couple formations and a couple sets we are not usually in. We don't play a lot in 13-personnel. We have worked on those and we feel like we are confident in our three tight ends to be in the football game. And I thought those guys did a really good job as I mentioned earlier setting the edges and providing a little bit of fresh legs to the front there, and Jac got some tough yards.

They wanted to close it out with the ball in their hands, and I think that's the a sign of an efficient offense. And really the tale of the game is the third downs in the second half. I had a feeling at halftime, it wasn't very good and 10-17 is pretty good for the whole football game. So I'm sure it was a really high number in the second half.

Toledo Rockets 21, Liberty Flames 19.

JOSH CANDLE: First of all, hats off to Liberty. Quality opponent. Very talented football team. I know what their head coach is going through here the last few weeks getting that team prepared and ready to play. They played a very competitive football game, competitive start to finish. We're super proud of our seniors. Proud of the guys sitting here to my right. Their perseverance not only tonight but throughout the course of the season.

I thought the game tonight kind of mimicked our season in the sense that some ups, some downs, but at the end of the day finding a way. And I think in life, you know, finding a way is really -- you know, that's the key to get it done, to get over the hump, and get the ultimate goal.

And this group I think is the first group since 2001 that's won a Bowl game and a MAC championship in the same season and I'm proud of that. What this group was able to accomplish, they took the words off the wall and turned them into reality with. That's really tough to do sometimes. With that being said, I'll take questions.

#### Q. I want you to talk about his play on that last drive, because really brought it home to seal the win?

JOSH CANDLE: Grinded it out, tough, offensive yards, not the biggest guy on the football field. Certainly can't be judged by his size. You can see the toughness, the effort, the heart that he ran the football with and throughout the fourth quarter. Credit to our offensive line and those guys on the edge, those guys setting the edge.

And the guy to my right is always a threat to run it as well. Keeps the defense honest on the back side of it. Really proud of Jac. Jac came to us as a guy from Miami North High School down here in south Florida. The guys that



**Q. How do you explain --**

JOSH CANDLE: Yeah, I think guys made some big plays. This guy made a couple really clutch throws, DeMeer and Jerjuan made a couple really good plays. Jamal Turner got a little sticker out there on third down and got some tough yards. And then the whole fourth quarter, some of those ones running the ball.

Team offense, 4-4 in the red zone. Got the two-point conversion when we needed it, which turned out to be a pretty big play. And obviously getting those tough third downs, that's the sign of good team offense, not necessarily just one player.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

NATE GIVHAN: Honestly, we just came together as a defense, as a unit, and we came out and just wanted to win. Like we wanted it more than they did. So we just came out and played ball.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

NATE GIVHAN: Honestly, they tried to get the ball because all week Coach Vince Kehres talked about how the quarterback was bad with the ball, so I just went for the ball and it came up.

**Q. In the second half -- to get that score, couple big-time passes, what's it like (inaudible)?**

JOSH CANDLE: I would point back to the last drive in the second quarter. We got the ball across mid-field and it's pouring down rain at that time. We take a negative yardage play and we punt the ball, and that is not in my DNA. It pains me to do that.

But knowing we had the football coming out in third quarter in the first possession, I knew that we had to have a pretty good plan at halftime on how we were going to gain some yards and at least flip the field position, if not get a score. So to get a score, and again, a couple key drives in that drive. One that sticks out is the flap to Jamal Turner, flipped it out to him right there in front of me in the high red zone. I thought that was a huge play. And to be able to close it out there, I thought was really, really good.

**Q. In the fourth quarter, you guys scored, and you had a choice to kick it or go for two. What made you guys want to go for two and how confident were you for that successful play?**

DEQUAN FINN: It was really a momentum boost for us. Just, what was it, 19 points. If they would have scored,

they would have had 19, which they did, and have 19 points, later on down the quarter.

That was just a huge play for us, just reading it, that was a defensive end read. Had to read the defensive end. He went outside, he contained me. Just opened up for Jacquez, opened up for him. That was really good.

JOSH CANDLE: Thanks for calling that play (Laughter).

**Q. You guys were able to hold it off and force the field goal. What does it say about the defense after -- to still find --**

NATE GIVHAN: Honestly, we just came together and we just said we're not going to let them score or get a field goal. Our guys on the defense, like, I love those guys. I don't know what I would do without those guys. Man, we just wanted it more than they did. Like we really did.

JOSH CANDLE: I'd add right there at that point in time in the football game, we got them to fourth and eight, and we choose to go back to third and 16 and whatever, and then they take a false start. And then with the field goal, hold them off the board with the field goal. That was a huge turning point in the football game.

**Q. Why did you not --**

JOSH CANDLE: I mean, you've giving them three right there. Try to push them out. There's a little bit of -- hopefully the weather clears and there's going to be a little bit of an element there and make it hard on them to make the field goal. And they did us a favor by getting the false start and kind of played into our hands.

**Q. Going into the second half -- the field goal -- how valuable --**

JOSH CANDLE: I mean, you can't put a price tag on that because I think -- like these two guys have played off each other all year long. There's days where -- there's been weeks in a season where they are both practicing and they are both at 65 percent and they are both going out there and they are not showing any weakness. They are just gritting their teeth and going.

You've got to continually ask them if they are doing okay because they won't give you an honest answer. They just want to play, and they want to be out there for their teammates because they love their teammates so much. You get to Saturday, sometimes it is possession-to-possession. They both can run the ball effectively, and they go in there, sometimes they take some hits. It's part of football and it's next man up. That

stuff sounds really good until you have to do it.

Watched some teams throughout the course of the last week and a half here play football with their backup quarterbacks and it's not been very pretty. Tucker has done a really good job for us, really proud of him for stepping up again in another big-time moment and answering the bell.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

JOSH CANDLE: Man, I think the connectiveness of our football team and the brotherhood. When the toughest moments happened, the brotherhood of this locker room shines through. Others would define that as luck, I guess. I would define that as tough times and effort that's working in the dark that has a chance to come to light and it came to light tonight.

**Q. Wrapping up this season, what you've done to grow, start to finish, talk about that.**

DEQUAN FINN: It's been a long journey. I would just say, it's not done yet. But I would say adversity, just dealing with a lot of adversity. Injuries, overcoming those injuries. You know, it takes a toll on you kind of mentally. But staying positive, having these players around, having Coach Candle around, staying positive at all times. Telling me, it's going to okay, we need you, it's going to be all right.

It takes a toll in the long run and I'm just thankful to have -- me and Coach Candle, we spent countless hours after practice or even in his office just going over defensive coverages. And just breaking it down to piece by piece just to get a better clarification from me so I could do better on the field as well, and you know, just be successful with the offense.

It's been rocky but as long as we stayed on course, Coach always said, the greatest struggles of man, what was it -- do what you say you're going to do. And we did what we say we were going to do. I'm thankful for that message and having Coach Candle and having the whole team around.

**Q. What will it be like getting on the plane tomorrow?**

JOSH CANDLE: Just hope it lands, first of all. Make sure we're on the ground and safe and back in snowy northwest Ohio, I'm sure.

But I would say that here is this -- to Doug sitting over here to our right, this is our second time being here at this Bowl game. This has been a first-class experience both times. I

think one time -- to do it once is one thing. But to replicate it, I think it's really difficult.

From the police escort everywhere you go to the hospitality to the hotel to how you're treated at the luncheon. You go to some of these places, and the luncheon is four hours long. It's a quick meal. There's a great message. Everything gets done to the T. They move, they shake, they do what they have to do to make a great experience for these players.

And really to be honest with you, at the end of the day, as long as these guys have a great time, that's all I really care about. So this senior class gets to go out, you know, with a bang, and last time they put a midnight blue and gold jersey on was a win.

They got a MAC Championship ring this year. I'm really proud of them and hope that we can have a couple more hours tonight, fly together one last time, and that will be the last time this 2022 Rocket football team will be together until five years from now when they come back and celebrate that MAC Championship ring in the Glass Bowl.

**Q. The way the season has ended -- what's next?**

JOSH CANDLE: Yeah, I mean, what's next? Tomorrow, I have got to wake up at 6:00 A.M. and make sure everybody sends in their stuff for signing day. Welcome to college football as we know it right now.

We lose some great pieces. We'll add some great ones tomorrow. We'll continue to build off the guys that are here. These guys, the man to my right is taking leadership lessons from the guy to the far right, and there's another ten examples of that in the locker room right now.

I think tonight's win, last week's win, or two weeks ago, whenever that was, those are culture-type wins. We define culture as this, it's really simple: It's really what you tolerate and what you celebrate. These guys didn't tolerate a bunch of B.S. all year long, and they celebrated the wins the right way. And hopefully our guys learn that from the senior class as we move forward. So if that happens I think we have got a lot of momentum going into the off-season, to directly answer your question.

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