

Boca Raton Bowl: James Madison vs Western Kentucky

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Boca Raton, Florida, USA

FAU Stadium

Western Kentucky Hilltoppers

Coach Tyson Helton

Kisean Johnson

Keyshawn Swanson

Press Conference

James Madison 27, Western Kentucky 17

TYSON HELTON: Congratulations to James Madison. Played a good game. We had our opportunities, but we didn't capitalize on them. Hats off to them.

Appreciate the bowl for another great bowl. Our guys really enjoyed it, and hopefully we can make it back here again. We'll take questions.

Q. Three turnovers; do you feel that was the overall difference in this game?

TYSON HELTON: Yeah, the turnovers, and then we had a dropped pass or two that was critical. We had a touchdown that was called back on a pick that was controversial, but that's football. When you have those plays, you're not going to win.

Q. The freshman quarterback Evans, they played him more than they have all season. What challenges did he present?

TYSON HELTON: I thought he played a solid game. He managed to do all things well. The other quarterback, I thought he ran the ball well. Defensively I thought for the most part we kept things in check, and the defense gave us opportunities on offense to try to go score, we just weren't able to capitalize for what I talked about earlier.

Q. Kisean Johnson, this was your lone year with Western Kentucky. Obviously you would have liked to end it with a win, but summarize your year.

KISEAN JOHNSON: Man, it's been a blessing. That's all I really can say. Coach Helton, Coach Mizell, Coach JB



Coach Justin Brown, Coach Travis Taylor. I thank them for giving me an opportunity. It was a season of ups and downs but I learned a lot by myself. I'm just looking forward to the next step in my life, the next step in my journey, next step in my career.

I'm blessed, man. Regardless, I'm going out with a smile because I'm blessed to be here, blessed to have this opportunity. It's a credit to the Lord, he keeps blessing me with even more opportunity.

Q. Kisean, coming into this game you had 45 (indiscernible) and you got 70 on the night so that puts you in elite company for all-time Western Kentucky receivers. What does that mean to you?

KISEAN JOHNSON: That was one of my goals coming here. That's one of the reasons I signed with Western Kentucky because it's a rich history of big time receivers, and I wanted to be next. So like I say, this is the beginning. Just the start.

Q. I thought this was kind of a typical defensive game for you guys in that you bent a lot but didn't break that much. Do you feel like you guys could have done something differently to affect the outcome?

KEYSHAWN SWANSON: I mean, of course there was plays out there that we felt like we could have made, but overall I feel like our guys did the best they could, and I feel like everyone did everything they could to put their heart on the line.

There's no regrets on the defensive side. I love them boys to death. I wouldn't change anything in the world.

Q. Keyshawn Swanson, Coach mentioned they brought No. 12, a second quarterback running the football. What was challenging about defending him?

KEYSHAWN SWANSON: It was really just knowing when it was a trick play and when it wasn't and just honing in on our details and having good eyes, just like with the double pass, we alerted it once he lined up in the slot, but overall it's just regular defense, you've just got to have good eyes



and be disciplined.

Q. Coach, obviously a lot of the guys that were in the portal played in this game but not all of them. Was this representative of (indiscernible)?

TYSON HELTON: No, I thought we had good plays here, so one man is down, another man steps up. We got some guys that played for the first time tonight, especially on the defensive side of the ball, and thought they played really well.

So it was great to see those guys. I think back to last year's bowl game when some young guys got that opportunity and played well, so it showed the future, and I'm excited for the team and looking forward to next year.

Q. For the guys that come back next year, what's your message to them after tonight's game?

TYSON HELTON: I didn't have a message for next year. I was going to thank you guys for last year, for this season, and this was a very special team to me, a bunch of brave men that were very honorable, loved to compete, and I really enjoyed them.

Now we're going to get back in January, we'll get back to work. It's a new season, and we're constantly trying to win championships, so that'll be the goal for next year.

Q. You're going to lose a lot of guys, just eligibility runs out. Think about a guy like Dalvin Smith who helped you win three bowls and helped get you to four. Talk about what it looks like going forward, a little bit of uncertainty.

TYSON HELTON: Yeah, I can't say that about Dalvin. He's been here since I've been here for six seasons. He's a special guy, special player, so I will definitely miss him. We do graduate a lot of seniors, but it's our job to put together a good football team for next season, and we'll get ready to go recruiting.

Tomorrow we have four straight days of recruiting, so I have a bunch of guys coming in and we'll start building next year's team.

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