

# Army Black Knights Football

Friday, August 29, 2025

West Point, New York, USA

## Coach Jeff Monken

### Press Conference



Tarleton State 30, Army 27 (2OT)

JEFF MONKEN: Congratulations to Tarleton State and Coach Whitten. They completely outplayed us. They were the better football team tonight. Unfortunately we just didn't do the things that it takes to win a football game, starting with turning the ball over. We turned the ball over three times. They didn't turn over any. We didn't sustain blocks. They got off blocks and made plays. We allowed them to get some big plays. They sustained their blocks. We weren't doing a great job getting off the blocks. We had some really nice returns in the kicking game, and then we tackled a guy right in front of the returner, returned the ball maybe to the 35-yard line, had a great scoring opportunity there, and we ended up turning it over on downs following that.

We had missed tackles, missed assignments, and just has nothing to do with them. If you go out there on the perimeter and you're supposed to block a guy and you pass him up for a different guy, he just has a free run to the guy catching the pitch, hard to have a positive play.

We turned the ball over, got the ball punched out, turned the tight end scot-free for a touchdown, dropped a pick-six opportunity. They caught theirs, we didn't catch ours.

That's my responsibility. It's the responsibility of our staff to have our guys ready to go and to play better and play fundamentally sound and execute their assignments, and we didn't do it. Missed two field goals, they hit all theirs.

That's the story. They outplayed us, and it's certainly disappointing.

#### Q. (On turnovers.)

JEFF MONKEN: Turnovers killed us. There's a huge advantage for the team that gets at least one more takeaway than their opponent. They had three more takeaways than us. We had none. They had three.

It's hard to win a football game when you do that. That stat alone.

It was disappointing. We were in the red zone, and we practiced that route a good bit in preparation for the game, and he didn't see the corner. The tight end saw the corner.

The tight end is trying to figure out if he should go underneath or over the top, and he didn't see the corner and floated it up there and the kid picked it off. We got a drag route runner wide open.

He knows. We talked about it. If he hits that guy, maybe it's a different story. But he's trying to make a play. Dewayne is trying to make a play. Like I said, he didn't see the corner, and the tight end crossed the safety's face, and he tried to throw it to him, and unfortunately they ended up with the ball and we didn't.

I thought Dewayne played hard. He played really well at times. Played really hard. Played hurt. He got his ankle rolled up and got back out there. I was proud of him for the effort he put in. I was proud of Cale Hellums for coming in off the bench and making some plays. He took us on that last drive and gave us a chance to kick what would have been a game-winning field goal. Again, it's our responsibility. We've got to make sure we've got those guys prepared and coached up to not make those errors.

#### Q. We were talking to Kalib earlier; it seemed like your defense played well tonight.

JEFF MONKEN: They did. They answered the bell on more than one location. We gave up some big plays. That was disappointing. On defense we gave up some big run plays. Got a good running back, he busted out of there a couple times. He's really fast. Got around the edge on us a couple times. We missed some tackles. Tackling up high and he was strong enough to run some of those and gained some extra yards. So we've got to do a better job with that.

But the defense played hard. They played really well at times, and they did, we put them in some jams, and they got out of it. But just a couple times we relented and allowed them to score.

We've just got to play better overall. It's everything. It's offense, defense, kicking game, coaching, everything. We've got to do it better. If we don't do it better, that team next week will beat us like nobody has beat us in a long time around here. We're going to have to play better, coach better.

**Q. What do you think was causing the lack of production on 1st down?**

JEFF MONKEN: They were kicking our ass up front. They were getting off of blocks and we couldn't run our fullback, we couldn't run our quarterback like we have done, and they were running through us, for zero yards, one yard, minus yards. We got the ball on the perimeter a couple times, counter play wouldn't go. They were running through us on the counter play. We should be able to get some guys pulled and get around there, but they outplayed us. They just did a better job of playing blocks than we could block them.

**Q. Dewayne getting his ankle rolled up there, how is it looking? Is it possible he'll play next week?**

JEFF MONKEN: I think he'll be ready to go for next week. It wasn't so serious that I think that's in jeopardy, at least immediately. But he was hobbled. He wasn't full speed. Just felt like a full-speed Cale Hellums at the moment was probably going to be better.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JEFF MONKEN: We're going to evaluate everything, all of it. He's done a good job here on the spot, and I know nobody is more disappointed than him.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, obviously we're a team that runs the ball more often than we throw it for sure. You get some reaction when there's action one way, you get linebackers to move, you get secondary guys to move, people to support, and it creates some opportunities in the pass game, and it's something that we prepared for.

Like I said, he just threw it to the wrong guy, and he thought he was open, he didn't see the corner, but really if you throw it back to the weak side and he throws it to the drag, the underneath route, there was nobody on it. Maybe he doesn't walk in, but we're going to complete the pass, we're going to still be in the red zone, and if we don't score a touchdown, we've still got a chance to kick a field goal and get the three points. I think at that point we were up seven points, so it would have put us up two scores.

He's disappointed. I am too. We all are. But he was trying to make a play and didn't make the right one.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, he's been really accurate to this point. Obviously we hadn't played any games, but we put him in those situations and let him make kicks, and he's done a good job. Unfortunately, he missed that first one, and hopefully he was able to flush it and just line up and kick that second one. But you never know what's in their head. Hopefully it didn't affect the next one.

But you can't allow a missed kick to affect the next time he goes out there and kicks. He's got a good leg. He's accurate. He's just got to line up and make it. The first one he just pushed it. You could see that when it came off of his foot. Probably opened up a little bit too much. I didn't see replay on the second one. But that one we were in the middle, I'd hope we would have been able to knock that one through. They did. When they had their shot, they did.

**Q. I'm sure one of the things that gets under your skin here was five (indiscernible) really close.**

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, the ones that hurt, when we had the good return on the punt return and we tackled the guy right in front of the returner, that one hurts. The false start where we had the short yardage play and we were going to go for it on 4th down, 4th and 1 or 2, and they make a move call and they slide their front, and we prepared for that. We practice it all the time, guys making loud calls and moving in front of us, and we flinched. So we ended up kicking a field goal there.

It would have been nice to take a crack at it at 4th and 1 or whatever it was and try to see if we could get seven points.

We had a long pass completion and we had an illegal man downfield. It was an RPO. Those RPOs, the linemen often will block like it's a run play and the ball has got to come out quick, so we scrambled, and when we scrambled on an RPO, you almost have to run the ball. You can't throw it down the field. That wasn't Jeffcoat's fault. He was trying to block the play that was called.

We had some opportunities to throw to some open receivers. We had some pressures. They did a good job with some pressures. We had one there late in the game we were trying to throw hot out there to Noah and just couldn't get it over the guy's head quick enough. There are so many things. It's just disappointing.

As well as they played and as poorly as we played against them, we still had a chance to win at the end, and credit them. They found a way and we didn't.

**Q. The rebuilt offensive line, I know you give a lot of credit to Tarleton, but did you expect the offensive line to have this kind of trouble?**

JEFF MONKEN: No, I did not anticipate that. I thought we'd do a lot better job blocking them, and obviously we didn't. That's a very telling stat because we ended up in a lot of 3rd and longs, and we were lucky. A couple times we got pass interference calls against the other team and we were able to salvage a drive, but that's not where we want to be. We want to be in 3rd and short and get ourselves into 4th and manageable, and we weren't close to that today.

**Q. Last year you often rolled the dice on 4th down not even giving it a second thought. What was your decision making on 4th down tonight?**

JEFF MONKEN: All based on the analytics. Every one of the 4th downs a year ago were based on the analytics, and every 4th down tonight was based on the analytics. We have a number. It's a go for it at 4th and 2, and sometimes the book will say the number is 2, recommended 3. It might be go for it at 10, recommended 11. All of those numbers are based on our success in the past and how we've fared in those certain positions on the field, what the expected outcome of the game is, the point of the game, what's the point differential, how much time is left in the game. All that goes into the determination on what the number is at that time.

If we're going to play the analytics game, then you've got to play it. You can't just dabble in it in my opinion. You can't say, this time I'm going to go with the analytics and this time I'm going to go with my gut. It's all built so that the one 4th down call plays into the next 4th down call, and if you make it, you make it. If you don't, you don't. But it's all built on the overall game, the expected outcome, like I said, where we're at in the game, what the point differential is at that moment. It makes our play calling and our decisions easier that we don't just get to 4th down and say, let's try and go for it here. We know going into that new set of downs what our number is and we try to get ourselves to that position so we can go for it on fourth.

**Q. Was the book a little "safer" this year because it's unknown this early in the season?**

JEFF MONKEN: No, I don't think so. Last year when we started the season, we didn't know either in the first game or the second game. There weren't a bunch of games with

the offense we were running, and Bryson had been a quarterback before, but we were a different team. Kanye Udoh wasn't the running back two years ago either.

The analytics are built off of what they best can take from what we've done, our success rate, and they build the book off of that. We've got to trust it, and I do. It's been good for us. It's helped us win a lot of football games.

That's how we do it. Not everybody does it that way. Not everybody has a book. Not everybody believes in analytics, but I do. I think we're kind of built for that.

**Q. (Indiscernible).**

JEFF MONKEN: I thought our guys played hard. I don't think it was a lack of effort. I think they were trying to play physical and play tough. We made some plays. We played some good plays. We got some stops. We missed some 4th down stops. We hit some big plays. We hit some pitch plays. We hit some pass plays. Had some good returns in the kicking game. There were some good things. Not all of it was bad. We still had a chance to win at the end. As poorly as we played overall, still gave ourselves a chance. There's positives to find. It's just really hard to focus in on oh, we did this great and we did this great and we did this great. No, we'll just go out and win next week.

There's so many things that we did poorly that it's hard not to look at those and figure out how do we do these better so this doesn't happen again. Like I said, the team next week, they're going to be more talented and bigger and better than the team we just faced, and that's no knock on Tarleton, but it's Kansas State.

**Q. Compared to last year, I know this is a different team, but it seems like on offense, you lose 21 pounds of quarterback, almost 60 percent of your offensive line. What specific things are you looking for in terms of trying to improve going into next week and the rest of the season given those losses and how Tarleton was able to suppress the offense tonight, especially when it came to the inside run game, quarterback and fullback?**

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, we've got to block better, and it doesn't matter that the quarterback is 20 pounds lighter or it's a different running back. Bryson Daily and Kanye Udoh would have had a rough time running the football against those guys tonight. If we just took the quarterback and running back that we had in there and put those two guys in there, we'd have had similar issues tonight.

They whipped us up front. We didn't block them. We



missed assignments. There were times where we should have been a combo block on a guy and didn't do it for whatever reason. They had a little different front than maybe we anticipated, but things -- enough that we practice that that shouldn't have been a problem. Times on the counter where people are really beating you up inside and you try to get the ball on the perimeter and on the backside they run through a gap and we don't get them cut off.

Really, it's our job to get our players to block better and to sustain blocks better, and we didn't do a very good job of that tonight. Like I said, we had some perimeter opportunities, and we went haywire a couple times on the perimeter, didn't block the right guy. Just passed up the guy we should have been blocking, and it's a matter of the option count for us, so we've got to do a better job of having our guys ready and prepared.

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