

Army Black Knights Football

Saturday, December 13, 2025
West Point, New York, USA

Coach Jeff Monken

Press Conference



Navy 17, Army 16

JEFF MONKEN: It's a little difficult to put into words, the pain of that loss. I felt terrible for our team, our players, our seniors. Such a hard-fought game by both teams. Both teams really fought hard and played hard. We made some good plays. They made more.

Unfortunately we had a chance to make some plays that were out there and we didn't, and might have affected the game, turned the game. And that's the name of the game. Got to make the plays. And they did.

This is a game that the competitors... I think the guys that are out there playing want to win this game more than anybody that competes in anything wants to win a competition, a contest.

I mean, it is so hard-fought. So much pride, so much put into it. It's a 365-day-a-year rivalry, and it all culminates on one day. You just give it everything you've got. I think our guys gave it everything they got. Just didn't make enough plays, and I feel terrible for them. For all of us. We put a lot into it. Congratulations to the other team. I don't know what else to say.

Q. First half the offense seemed to be moving the ball really well, especially on your first drive, obviously. I know you don't want to come away with field goal on next drive, but did move the ball well. And then in the second half, offense kind of completely shut down. What do you think the biggest difference was there?

JEFF MONKEN: Certainly in the first half I was sorely disappointed we didn't get seven points out of that second drive. We got down there inside the five-yard line, and we had to settle for three. In this game, we talked about it, about the importance of getting seven points and not settling for three. Just disappointing.

I thought Cody called a really good game the first half. Our guys were blocking them and made some plays. We had

the ball three times. The last drive, to get a field goal at the end, that was -- at the end of the first half, that was huge to get that play.

The second half just, they beat blocks. We didn't sustain the blocks we needed to. We tried to run the ball. Threw some passes. Unfortunately on that second down play, we didn't step up. And we got behind them, and he just got a little antsy -- I'm not sure why -- and he flushed out, and then really wasn't a very well-thought-out throw. Kid's trying to make a play, and that turned into their last touchdown.

We didn't do anything in the second half offensively to move the football and put ourselves in position, and that was disappointing. We got the three points. The field goal in the second half, again, you get down there, you got to find a way to get seven.

We got it off a turnover. Unfortunately the guy's knee was on the ground. It would have been nice to get that one, but his knee was clearly on the ground. And then we couldn't do anything with it. Kicked a field goal. Still gave us a nice lead. And the rest of the afternoon, we didn't do a good job of moving the football.

I can't speak to why. We need to block and sustain blocks. I think we gave up a sack, the ball came out, and we ended up recovering it. But just pretty poor second half.

Q. On the touchdown on fourth and eight that Navy had, was there any thought to double cover right there in case you did something wrong? Looked like you had good coverage, but we thought maybe it should have Black Knights double on him.

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, hindsight's 20/20. Tried to bring pressure, and Casey's a good player. That kid's a good player. That Heidenreich kid's a really good player. Nate called a play that he thought was going to be best at the time, tried to bring pressure on him, and good throw and a good catch.

Q. Cale's throw for the interception, there was almost -- not déjà vu, but a similar situation happened in the

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Tulsa game. Did he have some room to not throw the ball and make a decision not to throw and run or maybe throw it out of bounds, anything but what he did?

JEFF MONKEN: He was well protected, and he really needed to just step up in the pocket and throw it to Brady. Brady got behind him. Brady was open. And he just, for whatever reason, got antsy, flushed himself out of the pocket. At that point, he's got to run it out of bounds or throw it out of bounds, not toss it up there.

Like I said, he was just trying to make a play. It was an errant throw. And I wish he wouldn't have thrown it, but he did. It's not -- he's heartbroken, I can tell you.

Q. The defense played their tails off today. I thought they played their best game of the year against the high-powered Navy offense, held them to 17 points, did what they had to do. Can you talk about what they were able to do to slow down Navy today?

JEFF MONKEN: They hit some jump plays, they hit some runs and some passes that hit some good yardage. But just the plays in between, we were doing a pretty good job of keeping them in positions where they -- they got in third down, some fourth downs.

I thought we did a good job of getting pressure on them a couple of times. We got some sacks. They had themselves in scoring position a couple of times, held them to a field goal.

The series of events where we threw the interception, they drive it down there to the 1. The ball comes out. We try to pick it up. They knock it out. They recover it. Fourth down they had Heidenreich.

That series of events just -- and any one of those plays, maybe we punt, we throw the ball out of bounds and we punt. We fall on the ball. Maybe we can finish it out, end it.

But all those guys were trying to make plays. Didn't make them. I assure you that they were playing hard and trying their very best to win.

Q. Coach, I know you're disappointed. Looking at the rushing game, you got 120 yards rushing. 100 of that was from Cale Hellums. Everybody else got about 20 yards. Was there something Navy did to try to hold the rushing game down? You couldn't really get outside. Seemed like you were depending on Cale for most of the game.

JEFF MONKEN: We tried to get it on the perimeter some. Tried to get it out there to Noah. Ran the option a couple of times. Cale ended up having to run it both times.

There's one that he probably could have pitched it late. I think that was on the field goal drive in the second half. But they do take the perimeter away. The first half, we really did a pretty good job running the ball inside with the quarterback follow and we're handing off to the running back some.

In the second half, we just give them credit. It wasn't a new scheme. Neither was ours. They just did a better job defending us and beating blocks.

Q. It seemed like your defense really played hard. There was a lot of hard tackles. Andon Thomas, 11 tackles, Casey Larkin, 10. But Jack Bousum had a sack and a half, one of the sacks that forced a punt. Do you feel like your defense played effectively today?

JEFF MONKEN: I do. I felt like they played well, played hard, gave us a chance to win.

I was disappointed at really that series when we threw the pick and the ball was midfield and we let them drive it down there, got to the 1-yard line.

And that's -- I wish we could have got a stop right there, made them punt it to us on a short field, and that would have been nice. But Navy's got a good offense. They executed well and got it to the 1-yard line. And even so, we had a chance to get the ball back, and we didn't. On fourth down they made the play.

For as many plays as we made, there's some left out there that I wish we would have made that we didn't, and that might have changed the football game.

Q. Coach, Navy put in Braxton Woodson on a couple of plays, specifically on the end of ground, and it seemed that kind of was part of a momentum changer. What was your preparation in terms of when Woodson was on the field, and was that a surprise call to end in your opinion?

JEFF MONKEN: They had done that some this year, lined him up as a slot and he's the back on the jet sweep, whether they're handing off to him or they're running power read to the quarterback. He's a good athlete. He's fast.

He had the one there in the fourth quarter on the bench, went for ten yards. Defending that with him isn't different than defending it with someone else. It's what we kind of anticipated they would do. I guess it gives them a chance

to use it as a halfback pass or something like that.

But we practiced it and anticipated that maybe that would be an option. And I know Nate Woody, our defensive coordinator, said they're going to play Woodson, they're going to use him in the game some. And we knew they would, so...

Q. Jack Bousum had a really good game. One and a half sacks, one and a half tackles. Can you talk about his season, in particular today, and how it's come together?

JEFF MONKEN: He's had a really good season. He's a first-year starter for us this year, and I'm really proud of him. He's really developed. He's a guy that has grown physically and just matured as a player, improved in his fundamentals.

He had an injury that kept him out all last year. And so for him to come back and have the season he's had is great to see. And thought he played a really good football game tonight. Played hard. Made a couple big plays. I'm proud of him. I'm glad he's going to come back.

Q. Second question, emotions were high at the end of the game. What did you see with the two teams there meeting at the middle of the field?

JEFF MONKEN: You know, this is the hardest-fought game that there is. It's hard. Both teams just at the end, when they know it's over and they had it won, things are being said and hand gestures are being made and, you know, everybody gets pissed off, and they're pissed. We're pissed. It just happens.

It's hard when you have all that emotion. You put so much into the game. It's hard. I don't think anything came of it. Just high emotion. That's what it's going to be. It's the hardest-fought game there is. Nobody wants to win the game, a game, any game more than the guys on the field today want to win that game.

Q. In the second half, there was a sequence on third down where you had to burn a time-out, and after that there was a false start penalty. Can you talk about that? Was there a miscommunication of any sorts or relaying the play?

JEFF MONKEN: We lined up incorrectly, so we had a formation called. And we had a receiver lined up on the wrong side, and it would have squashed the play. We needed him to be in position where we called it, and I hate to waste a time-out, especially in the second half.

And then it was just on the false start. They slid their line, which they do a lot. We have a cadence and they moved, and our guy moved. Just unfortunate that he did and put us in a long-yardage situation. So, it was a mistake.

Q. Obviously today is still fresh, but you guys have been to a bowl game nine out of ten years I think it is.

JEFF MONKEN: I can't hear you.

Q. Sorry. I know tonight is still fresh, but you guys have gone to a bowl game nine of ten years I think. Won 12 games a year ago, maybe won 10 games two years in a row. What does it say about this rivalry and also these two schools and their ability to compete in this era of college football that is so different? Really polar opposite to the way the service academies do operate.

JEFF MONKEN: I think it speaks to the competitiveness of the young men that play at these schools. Certainly there's some talented players on that field. I don't know if collectively their team's more talented than other teams they play. We never claim to be. But we're tough, we're competitive, and they develop and they stay in the program.

We got juniors and seniors for the most part playing out there, and when you grow up in the program and in the system, you become better at it, more efficient, and they play together and they play for each other. I think those things can make a difference.

I worked for an old coach and he said physical superiority cancels all theory. Probably true. When guys are really, really talented and they play well, they play well together, they're hard to beat. But tough teams that execute, players that care, they can beat a more talented team just by doing the things that they can control.

So we try to do that as well as we can. We didn't do that this year as well as we did a year ago, but hopefully we'll find a way to continue to do that. Navy did a really good job of that this year.

Q. What coach gave you that advice?

JEFF MONKEN: Paul Johnson.

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