

# Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Eastern Michigan vs San Jose State

Tuesday, December 20, 2022

Boise, Idaho, USA

Albertsons Stadium

**San Jose State Spartans**

**Brent Brennan**

**Chevan Cordeiro**

**Kyle Harmon**

Press Conference

Eastern Michigan - 41, San Jose State - 27

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl press conference. We have players from San Jose State here.

**Q. Chev, if you could talk a little bit about today. What were they able to do with you guys -- you obviously started out hot, but then what kind of changes were they making that kind of stopped you guys offensively?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: I mean, they weren't really making any changes. We were just hurting ourselves. That's about it.

**Q. Kyle, it's a disappointing end to your career at SJSU, but how do you balance a game like this with the bowl experience in general?**

KYLE HARMON: I think you have to be just locked in from the start. Obviously there's like a lot of things that go into a bowl game, the activities, you're in a whole different town, there's a lot more people traveling. There's just a lot that goes into the bowl game.

So you just need to be locked in throughout the entirety of the trip, keep the main thing the main thing. Just got to go out and execute.

It was a hard one today, but I love these guys. I'd do anything for them. Just thankful that I got to play at San Jose State.



**Q. Kyle, you outscored Eastern Michigan in the second half and held them to 11 points. What adjustments did you make at halftime?**

KYLE HARMON: I think we just changed up some of the looks, some of the -- we were in a little bit more as far as scheme, different types of pressures.

We just got out of our own way really. We weren't shooting ourselves in the foot too much in the second half, and we just came out and gave it our best in that second half.

**Q. Kyle, did Eastern Michigan do anything offensively that surprised you or that you didn't see on film?**

KYLE HARMON: No. We knew they were a really good team. We knew they were physical up front. We knew that they wouldn't beat themselves. But, yeah, tip your hat to them. They're a lot of talent on that team, and they're very well coached.

A play here or there can kind of play a different game. Play to their strength, play to our strength. Some plays went their way and kind of gave them some momentum, and we couldn't get that back until the second half.

**Q. Chev, can you talk a little bit about you had a couple of fourth down plays that were really the difference in the game. You convert those, the one on the goal line, and you had another one where you seemed to have a chance to get back in the game and were stopped in that. Can you talk about those plays and kind of what went on, as far as how that affected you guys at the time?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: I mean, they won the fourth down battle. We had chances to score and get first downs, and we didn't do it. That's why I said we hurt ourselves.

Just give props to them. They played a good game, and they're a great team.

**Q. Did either of you guys feel there would be this huge swing after the blocked extra point was taken back for two? You guys were up 13-0, extra point gets blocked,**



**Eastern Michigan takes it back all the way. Did either of you guys feel there would be this huge swing in momentum?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: Not really. It was only two points. So it wasn't really a big deal. It happened at San Diego State, and we kind of just put a mindset in just saying that we've got to keep on going and not let anything swing our momentum. I mean, that didn't really do anything to us.

**Q. Kyle, your first year, you guys were 1-11. You won a Mountain West title in 2020, and you end your career, not maybe the way you want it, but at least going to a bowl game. For a program that wasn't all that used to going to a lot of bowl games, how do you feel about leaving the program in better hands than when you got there? What's that mean to you?**

KYLE HARMON: I mean, everything. I was just talking to Cade about that on the field. We were just hugging each other, and I was like, man, back in freshman year we would have died to be in a bowl game. We would have done anything to lose in a bowl game.

Just to see the way that Coach shaped this program, the talent he's brought in. It's like no one thought this would happen at San Jose State. Like no one ever thought we would bounce back from where we were.

We seen what it was like when we first got here and how you got to turn it around, man, it felt like forever until we made that swing. We just made that turn, and you see the talent we have in the locker room now, man, the sky is the limit honestly. The sky is the limit for this program and the coaches in there believe in them all.

We got a new facility going up, so that's just going to bring it up. This place is on the rise for sure. I'm just so blessed and happy I got to be a part of it.

**Q. Chev, I talked to you a couple days ago and you said you were planning on coming back next year and using your COVID season. You confirmed that. You'll be back next year?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: Yeah, I'm definitely coming back.

**Q. You need 27 touchdown passes, you got 3 today, to become the all time touchdown pass leader in the history of the Mountain West Conference. What does that mean to you if you're able to get that done in a Spartan uniform and pass some pretty big names on that list?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: Obviously it would mean a lot for

all my hard work, but I'm not looking forward to that. I want to win the Mountain West Championship next year. I just want to start working already, gather the team, come back next year and get to work because we got a special year next year.

**Q. Chev, three touchdown passes today, big passes, and also a couple of interceptions. What were the looks they were throwing at you? What were you able to exploit? And what gave you trouble?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: My first interception, the linebacker kind of played me, made a good play. Then the second interception, I was just trying to make something, squeeze something in.

But like I said, they played good today. I give them props. Yeah, they played better.

**Q. Chev, this game obviously, based on you guys, how you are in here, it seems like it really means something to you. It seems that guys aren't just happy to be in the bowl game. What do you think that says about the future of the program and where you guys are at and what your expectations are now?**

CHEVAN CORDEIRO: I mean, we wanted to win. Yeah, the activities was fun, but at the same time, we wanted to end the season, send the seniors off with a win, and we didn't to that. It was very disappointing.

Yeah, for all the guys returning, we've got to look at this and learn from all the things we did bad and all the things we did good and just get better.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you to the student-athletes from San Jose State. We'll welcome up Coach Brent Brennan.

Coach, we'll open up with a statement from you before moving on to questions.

BRENT BRENNAN: Congratulations to Eastern Michigan, Coach Creighton and the staff. They've got a really good football team. They obviously played better than we did today, and I give them credit for that.

It was fun talking to him a little bit during the course of the week. We feel like there's some similarities between what they've done. They're a few years ahead of us and what we're trying to do at San Jose.

But I give those guys a lot of credit. They played hard. They were well coached. They executed at a high level. They made the plays when they had to, and I think that's a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

little bit of the difference in the game for us.

I know you just talked to Chev and Kyle. For me, the disappointment for the game is significant, but really there's probably more sadness and disappointment with the players that are leaving us. Just an incredible group of men. I can't tell you what those locker rooms were like.

When you can't find a way to get a first down and you can't stop anybody, and what Cade has been or Fehoko or Kyle Harmon, Noah Wright, there's so many, Nehemiah, Sammy. It's just a really special group of guys. I'm so glad they chose us and believed in us when no one else did.

So I think that's the hardest part about today is we didn't send them out the way they deserve to be sent out considering what they -- the fight they fought.

**Q. Coach, the blocked extra point that returned for points for Eastern Michigan, do you think that was the momentum shifter in the game?**

BRENT BRENNAN: It definitely impacted the game. I don't think there's any doubt about that. The frustrating part is we didn't respond for a quarter. We came out in the second half, and it looked like football. It looked like us. Got a couple stops, moved the ball well, started to run a little bit, threw it well. I thought we had some really good play calls on both sides there.

But that play obviously had a big impact, right? Because we're up -- we go up 13-0 and we're feeling good, and then that play happens. So that was definitely a hard moment in the game, and it's one of those things that we have to learn from.

I think the hard part about that is that play is a tricky play. It seems so automatic. It just really does. But obviously it is not, and we found that out today. It's a hard thing to practice because you have 300-plus pound dudes knocking the crap out of each other and landing on each other's legs.

When you're as thin as we kind of got towards the end of the year, practicing that, you're like, well, do I really want to play this game without Cade Hall and Junior Fehoko because they got rolled up on in a PAT drill. But I've got to find a better way for us to rep that.

**Q. With how incredible the season has been, the journey of the team, your journey here as well, how hard is it for it to end this way and just kind of balance out the good in everything?**

BRENT BRENNAN: It's hard. That's a good question.

What I mentioned, the hardest part is just saying good-bye to these guys that have been with us for so long. A lot happens in those five years of a college athlete, right? Especially here. There's been some of the most insane times in the history of our country.

So there's not just a lot of football, there's a lot of life with those guys. And I think that's the hardest part is we just didn't finish it.

There was a lot of great moments too. So I'm sure at some point we'll look back fondly on that, but today we're hurting because we didn't send those guys out the right way.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the defense today. I mean, it's been one of your strengths all season long, and you had a stretch there where they scored four straight touchdowns. What was happening at that point? Were they doing something scheme-wise that was throwing you guys off or just making big plays?**

BRENT BRENNAN: They definitely made some big plays there. I think part of that was also our inability to sustain a drive or to add any points because we didn't score until the second half. So that second quarter was just -- if you're going to win against good people, when one side of the ball or one phase of your team is not going well, the other side has to respond. They have to answer, and in that quarter we didn't do that in either phase.

So we had the fourth down stop deep in the red zone, and obviously that hurt. Then that thing went 95. Like lots of times that decision for me is, oh, let's go for it, and they have to go 95 yards on our defense, and not a lot of people have done that, but then they did.

So like I said at the start, I give a lot of credit to Eastern Michigan because they kept us out and then they answered with a 96, 95-yard scoring drive.

**Q. Another thing too, you guys have been really good all year obviously, tops in the country as far as the turnover battle, and did not win that today. You haven't had any games in multiple turnovers even. What was happening there? Was there anything that kind of was spurring that on or that you could see?**

BRENT BRENNAN: No, I think one of those -- I heard Chevan say it. Their linebacker did a good job of kind of wrapping, reaching back inside on an RPO thing, and Chevan ripped it to him.

Then the interception late in the game was frustrating. I think he tried to fit a ball in a tight spot, which great players have to do sometimes, and we just missed it.



Then we threw the one pick on the reverse pass, and it just locked like -- I just saw it in realtime, but I think Elijah maybe thought that he was going to play Jackson Canaan, and then someone ran out underneath it late, and so then he tried to play it late to Charles Ross, and it kind of sat him down in the end zone because it was thrown late and then ends up being a 50-50 ball, and the guy from Eastern Michigan made a great play. Tip your hat to him.

**Q. Chevan said he's coming back next year.**

BRENT BRENNAN: Amen to that.

**Q. It's not easy taking a transfer quarterback just based on stats. There's so much more that comes into that position. You've had one full year with Chev, and you get another one next year. What did you learn this year about that kid that maybe you didn't know when you initially brought him in?**

BRENT BRENNAN: That kid is special, like he is so competitive. Did he talk about the picks today? Did he do that? It's the first thing he talked about, right? That's how he's wired. He's so competitive. He's such a hard worker, and it matters so much to him.

Even in times when he was getting -- you know, taking some hits or getting beat up throughout the course of the season, like he never came out of the game. He is extremely tough, and I don't think people know that about him.

But we're very fortunate that he believed in us and chose to come here. Then also for us, we've had a really good track record with transfer quarterbacks because before Chevan we had another All-Conference player Nick Starkel.

For us, I think you can find talented quarterbacks, high school, JC, portal, whatever, but they have to fit us for the thing to work, like they have to fit our culture. They have to care about people. They've got to want to play for someone else besides themselves. So far we've been lucky that way.

**Q. I'm not sure if you're aware, but he needs 27 touchdown passes to become the all time Mountain West leader in touchdown passes.**

BRENT BRENNAN: Let's do that.

**Q. Is that something that will be celebrated and sought out and maybe even marketed in the preseason going in? It's a pretty big deal, I think. It's sports radio topic for sure.**

BRENT BRENNAN: I think you've got to ask our marketing team about their plan for that. I do think Chevan Cordeiro is one of the best quarterbacks in the country, and I think that plays out when you have a guy that threw for that many touchdowns, ran for that many touchdowns, and threw that few interceptions.

I think any time those type of records or awards happen, knowing Chevan, that's going to be a team award. Even when he was talking to you guys a little while ago, I heard him say he wants to get back to work. I'm like, dude, Christmas is in three days, or whatever it is, five days.

But that's how he is and that's what makes him special is that he's so competitive and he wants to be great. That's what the best players do. That's how they're wired.

**Q. Can you speak to the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl and the work -- I didn't realize until coming. There's so much work that goes into putting all of this on. Can you speak to that?**

BRENT BRENNAN: This was an awesome, awesome experience for our team across the board. Everything basically except for the second quarter of the game.

Like Danielle, her team, the people here were so kind and generous, and the effort they put out for us to make it a first class experience, it was really, really special. All of our players are going to remember this the rest of your life because that's how it is with bowl games.

I went to the Alamo Bowl when I was at Oregon State ten years ago, and my kids still talk about it. These are special moments in the lifetime of a football player, and especially at our place because we haven't been to a lot of them. So to come here and have this first class treatment, the hotel, the events, the city. The city of Boise was great. So I'm just really grateful for that, and our team is too.

**Q. Coach, we all heard the emotion in your voice when you began. Can you talk a little bit about what you've tried to accomplish with this program? And you talked about people who believed in you when no one else did. Where are you trying to go forward?**

BRENT BRENNAN: When we started, we were just trying to get good, and I think the exciting thing is that the last four years we've been playing for the postseason in November, where in 2017 and '18, that was not even close to being real.

We were in the conference hunt until late in the season this year, and we were fortunate enough to get a bid to this



awesome bowl game here and get the extra practice and all that stuff.

Our goal is to always -- it has been, to build a consistent, sustainable, winning program at San Jose State that plays for conference championships. That's the football goal.

On top of that, our goal is to build quality young men who do things the right way and are prepared for life after football.

So those two things happen simultaneously for us, but I think they contribute to the product on the field also. I really think our Beyond Sparta program contributes to that. We're fortunate we have the support of a really great administration that believes in what we're doing there. We have a new football building being built, which we've never had like a first class football facility like that.

You know, like I've been here all week. I'm checking out their stuff like this stuff's nice. But in July of '23, we're moving into that, and I think it's going to be a game changer for us.

I think we can do that at San Jose State. I know we can because we already have. We won the conference. We got to the postseason. Can we do it back to back? Can we be in the hunt back to back? Can we win it again? That's where my sights are set, and that's where the sights of the players that are coming back are set.

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