

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

Tuesday, December 20, 2022

Boise, Idaho, USA

Albertsons Stadium

**Eastern Michigan Eagles**

**Chris Creighton**

**Taylor Powell**

**Josh Scott**

Press Conference

Eastern Michigan - 41, San Jose State - 27.

THE MODERATOR: We now welcome the 2022 Famous Idaho Potato Bowl champions, Eastern Michigan State. We'll hear an opening statement from Coach.

CHRIS CREIGHTON: That sounds pretty good, Famous Idaho Potato Bowl champions. Ended my ninth year here and never heard that.

Really, really again want to thank you all for the invitation to be a part of this bowl. Your reputation precedes you. Everybody who's been here has just said it's a fantastic experience. They weren't stretching the truth.

And I'm talking about prior to the game,

I'm just saying that we had first class treatment, really, really, really enjoyed being here. For a lot of our guys just never being in the mountains, that was a really neat experience.

I just got to listen to the end of Coach Brennan, and our first conversation was at the community service event. It didn't take me long to figure out that he's just first class. Then just listening to him talk right now, our profession needs men like that, I promise you. So just excited about getting to know him better and what a great season. Obviously had a great team, and we're fortunate to get this one.

I'm super proud of our guys. I really am. It's part of who we are. The E Tough, when you look back on the game and we're down and it didn't look good at all, and that's just



who we are. Our guys have a resolve and a resiliency, and they do not break, and they just continue to fight, and they believe, and they love and care about each other. I mean it.

So when it all comes together like that, it's a pretty special moment.

**Q. Last year I was at the Lending Tree Bowl, and you and I had a short conversation on the elevator after the game. Obviously you weren't happy. Now just over a year later, what's the change obviously of winning your first bowl game since 1987?**

CHRIS CREIGHTON: Yeah, Malik Willis was really good. I've said that a lot in the last year.

Our ultimate goal is to be the best that we can be. We believe that winning is a by-product of that. So underneath that, we do have goals, and we want to win a MAC championship, so we failed our primary goal. While at the same time, we did some things this year that haven't been done in a long time.

Winning the Michigan MAC trophy was a big deal for us. Having a share of the west side of the MAC with Toledo, but we lost to them head to head, so they played for the MAC Championship. Now getting to a bowl and winning it, those are three really big things.

But we didn't win our primary goal, but we certainly feel as though we've lived our theme of stack 'em. Our senior class came up with that, like I told you, back in January.

I just know -- I've been doing this for 26 years as a head coach, and when we live our theme, it ends up being a special season. So we just called us bowl champions.

I'm here with two great, unbelievable human beings, who are talented and passionate at football and in the locker room there are guys who love and care about each other and got to realize what we've been talking about for a long time. It feels a little bit different than last year.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the momentum shift**

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**that happened with the blocked extra point? It doesn't seem like a lot in the scheme of things, but they were about to go up 14-0, and all of a sudden it's 13-2 and you get the ball back, and you end up rattling off four straight touchdowns on four straight possessions. Can you talk about was it a big deal, or was it you guys just kind of settled in? What happened with that sequence?**

CHRIS CREIGHTON: It's a really good question. I do honestly think it was a combination of both. We didn't feel great. In fact, we were down two touchdowns, but blocking it and making a play, getting two points, knew that the game was going to end up being close, so every point matters.

So there was a little bit of -- I don't know if I could call it momentum, but it was something positive, right, after two monster negatives. I talked about turnovers, takeaways, and special teams. You saw early on that that was not going our way.

So, yeah, that was the start of it, but I can't tell you that the sidelines was like on fire after that and that's the reason why we were able to roll off some production.

**Q. Taylor, in that second quarter, it just seemed like you were so comfortable and throwing the ball all over the place and hitting Darius downfield. What was your confidence like in the second quarter? When you can kind of just keep building upon drives, how much did that help your success today?**

TAYLOR POWELL: Well, I don't think I -- I think my confidence has always been there. I don't think that the second quarter was like, oh, I have confidence now.

But, yeah, Darius did a great job. You know who really did well is the O-line. Those guys at San Jose State present a lot of looks up front, and the secondary, No. 1 and 22, I talked to them after the game. I was like you guys made my life very tough because they would show certain coverages and then bail out and play something totally different. I had to watch a lot of tape this week.

Credit to those guys. They played their ass off. I'm just super thankful to be able to play in a great bowl like this.

**Q. Taylor yesterday you had mentioned how during your college search for this final year, you wanted to find a place where you could make history. Both of you made lots of plays today to actually make that happen. What's going through your head as you know history's been made and you guys both had strong parts in that?**

JOSH SCOTT: I'm just thankful for the opportunity. That's like half of it right now. I'm just thankful to be able to play on this stage in a game like this. So that's really how I'm feeling.

TAYLOR POWELL: For me, my college career has been a journey. I've had two coaches fired. I've had to find different homes. But there's one head coach in this country that is, if I could be half the man, I'd want to be him.

It's hard to talk about him. His belief in me, his unwavering, and I love him.

**Q. Coach, Neal Neathery, his retirement was announced right before kickoff. You guys have worked for 20 years together, six or seven here at Eastern. Can you talk about that? What's it been like working alongside him? And what's it been like bringing him back to Eastern and having the final six or seven years together?**

CHRIS CREIGHTON: Last night Greg and Alex asked me for a quote, which I totally understand, but ask me for a quote to try to capture 26 years of 18-hour days together, what, five kids born, one marriage. Coached together at Ottawa from day one. Coached together for those four years. All seven years at Wabash, where I got married and had our three kids. Then two years at Drake and then the last seven here at Eastern Michigan.

You know, it's super competitive, and I just -- there's so many different ways I can answer that, but I've never, never had to doubt whether he had my back. Never. That's a lot of seasons, right?

There's times when things aren't going well. When the defense is great and the offense is not. I just trust him implicitly. He's got awesome integrity, and his loyalty is unmatched.

So I just find myself saying, because I've had to answer this a couple times now, I love him and his family. Really we are family with them. My kids call him Uncle Neal and Aunt Becca. I just do too. I told the guys last night, I guess, I hope that everybody on this earth ends up having a friend like Neal Neathery has been to me.

I know we're coaching football and we're at a press conference, he's the best football coach that I've ever worked with. I sat in the defensive team meeting yesterday, I think it is, and there's not one of those -- again, I've been doing it 26 years -- where I don't come out of it saying, he's just so good at that. He makes me want to be



better.

I'm going to miss him, working with him. It's not like our relationship is going bye-bye, but yeah, I just think in today's world in college sports, it's pretty rare to have somebody like that.

**Q. Speaking of defense, Josh, you had a big breakup in the fourth quarter in the end zone, and then you had the interception when Elijah Cooks ran out and threw it. You were standing right at home. It looked like you went out and bought the end zones today. With the interception in the end zone, was that something you saw on film? Were you anticipating that?**

JOSH SCOTT: I knew that No. 4 has ran -- he has thrown a trick play, a pass play. Then when my receiver released, I knew that it was a fake pass, it was a fake jet pass. I just stayed on my man and just played my technique, and then I looked back and the ball came, and I made the play.

**Q. One other question about the defense. San Jose State got two quick touchdowns. It looked like you were in man quite a bit, and you stuck with it. What was going through your mind with your pass coverage?**

CHRIS CREIGHTON: Well, after a Buffalo game about four games in, our defense really made a commitment to play in man, and it has come through for us every single week. We do have some variations off that. We'll play some zone. We had a variation of playing some cover two, which we have not been doing today to try to keep them off balance.

So we weren't going to abandon playing man. We believe in our guys. We knew that they were really talented and really good and that we had to limit explosives and just keep playing, and I'm glad we did.

We weren't expecting for that quarterback and those receivers to not have any success. So we're not surprised by how good they were or anything like that, but we believed in our plan. We believe in our guys, and they came through.

**Q. Chris, did your players know you can juggle like that? When you got on stage, was that just impromptu? That was pretty awesome?**

CHRIS CREIGHTON: Oh, I don't know. I don't know what they know. I can beat most of them in ping pong, I know that.

TAYLOR POWELL: That's a lie (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you to the coaches and players of the Potato Bowl Champions Eastern Michigan.

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