

# Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Utah State vs Georgia State

Friday, December 22, 2023

Boise, Idaho, USA

Albertsons Stadium

**Georgia State Panthers**

**Shawn Elliott**

**Darren Grainger**

**Jordan Veneziale**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Coach, what is it about the Utah State passing attack that makes them dangerous?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Well, they complete a lot of their passes (smiling).

They have a tempo-oriented offense. They're going to go fast. Anytime you have that in the passing game, aligning and assigning. I talked about it so much, just about the alignment and the assignment. Once you get the call, you have to be ready.

I used the term the other day like Minutemen. We have to be fast, really efficient defensively. We can't overpower our thinking with a bunch of concepts in defending them. They're a good football team. Well-organized. I think they're a very efficient offensive line. They're going to present some problems, make some plays.

Hopefully we're going to make enough plays to slow 'em down a bit.

**Q. Darren and Jordan, having lost five games the end of the season, selected to play in this bowl game, how has that given you a chance to refocus and end the season on a positive note?**

DARREN GRAINGER: This has been great just to be down here in Idaho, just enjoy the time with the guys. But I feel like how the season ended, us being able to be selected in this bowl game, gave us some new juice, some new level of juice. Practice has been competitive. Everybody is just enjoying themselves. We're feeling good right now and ready to go play.

JORDAN VENEZIALE: Like Darren said, we didn't finish the season the way we wanted to, losing five. I feel like this team's energy the last couple weeks has started to gain momentum. Hard to stop a freight train once it starts gaining momentum. I think that is what we have been doing the last couple weeks of practice.

Everyone has enjoyed their trip. We're all starting to dial in

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl press conference. We're here with Georgia State represented by head coach Shawn Elliott, Darren Grainger and Jordan Veneziale. We're going to start with a statement from Coach Elliott.

Coach Elliott.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: First of all, I'd like to say thank you to everyone associated with the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl. Just to have an opportunity to bring our football team and our fans and our administration out here to Boise, Idaho, has been a great trip thus far.

We've got to experience a lot of different things that normally our team, especially us from the southeast, we don't get a chance to do. That's to travel west. I think roughly probably 99.9% of our team has never been out here. So the experience was fantastic.

I know the events, especially the snow tubing, is something that our guys just loved. You talk about how do things change during the course of the season, but I saw our team right there, we've had fun all season, but when we went snow tubing, you just saw the kids come out of all of us and do things to really enjoy ourselves, just kind of let it loose. It was a great way to bond. You see guys just interacting.

I just think the entire experience has been fantastic. Thank you guys so much for the hospitality. We look forward to a great contest tomorrow with Utah State. Looking for a little sunshine to come out. It's going to be nice. I've seen the forecast. We're looking to play a great ballgame and end this thing the right way.

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and lock in for that last game of the season.

**Q. Coach, how would you explain Georgia State's style of play to the fans here?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: I'll tell you one thing, you're going to see a team very, very committed to one another. We play very well for one another. Our football team, you will face some highs, face some lows, but we're very, very consistent. We have a very, very even manner. When I say that, nothing really takes us too high, nothing takes us too low. We'll fight till the finish.

We're fighters to be honest with you. We are truly fighters. We developed that during the course of our off-season, throughout our fall camp and into this season, of course. But you're going to see a well-coached football team, a disciplined football team, you're going to see an exciting football team.

**Q. You're not completely unfamiliar with Blake Anderson and his coaching style. How has that played into your preparation?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Whose coaching style?

**Q. Blake Anderson.**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Excuse me (smiling).

Coach Anderson and I, we've squared off a few times at Arkansas State, of course. We've been on the wins and on the losses, both sides of it. I think Blake is a tremendous coach. He does it the right way. A tremendous man. Have the utmost respect for him.

You know, I think anytime you have someone like him and myself, two competitive men, two competitive football teams that are going to fight to the finish. That's what you want in sports today. You want hungry athletes to go out there and play the game the right way that are very disciplined and under control. Just enjoy the game for what it is.

Like I said, I respect them, Utah State, and I respect our football team.

**Q. Shawn, you got two guys that have been around for a little while. You have a couple other seniors. The business aspect is you hope these guys are going to be leaders for you and help the underclassmen to play as good as they possibly can. What are some of the traits that you see in either Darren or Jordan and some of the others, their last game with Georgia State, this is one thing I would love for them to be carry with them**

**for the rest of their lives?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: I think Darren, first off, he's real similar to me. We very rarely have bad days. We've always got a smile on our face. Really doesn't matter what circumstance comes at us, we just have a really, really great attitude.

Every day I promise you, every day when he walks by that office of mine, I look out, he looks in, he comes in to get some candy, there's a huge smile on his face.

In life, this day and age, you got to enjoy it. I see him enjoying every single day. It doesn't matter what comes at him. Tough losses, they can get you down, but it doesn't keep him down. I think he's going to just relay that to the underclassmen, make sure they understand that every day can be a great day.

Veneziale right here, wow (smiling). I always pick on him. He's not the fastest. Definitely not the smartest (laughter). But, man, he's got great passion. He's got great passion, great energy. He practices the right way. He prepares the right way. He's a strong leader in everything that he does: classroom, weight room, practice field, game field. He has a sense of pride about him that he stands tall in everything that he does.

When I watch these two guys, especially these two sitting up here beside me, if I was a young man and I'd walked into Georgia State and I said, I may be a little immature at this time, but who am I going to focus on, watch, try to mimic in my next three or four years at Georgia State? These would be the two men that I would go for. I would say Venzie and DG. Sky's the limit for me because that's who I'm going to be, I want to be just like those guys.

**Q. Not being specific, but let's say you were in charge of the NCAA for a day, anything about the transfer portal, how that has changed bowl games? Anything specific that you would like to see either adjusted or modified to make the game better?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Oh, Lord, how long do we have here (smiling)? Dial in some lunch, sit here and talk for hours.

There's a lot of things I really love about the game of football and the NCAA. There's a lot of things that I really dislike about the NCAA and the game of football in this day and age.

It's sad to see you can pour so much into something and just walk away from it. I don't know what that teaches us. I don't really want to get into specifics with you. I think that's for another day and time.



I'm just happy to have the guys that are here with us right now. Those are the guys that I want to be here regardless of the NCAA, regardless of anything else. Those are the guys that matter.

**Q. Looking at the offensive line, new faces there. How is that prepping going? With the run defense that the ones showed this year, is that helpful for them?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Yeah, our offensive line, we've had of course some guys that have left, some other casualties in that front five. But we've got some energetic guys coming in. They've watched, they've been at practice, been in the meeting rooms. They prepared all season for this thing.

If you were to ask me, I think having these guys step into these roles in this type of situation may be the greatest thing. Going against our defense, having the ability to prepare that way against a pretty good run defense that we have, that's going to help them.

But these guys right here, you know about bowl games, it's all about who wants to be there, who wants to make the most of the bowl trip. Some people think it's a bowl game, we're just going to a bowl game. These guys are fixing to step in, some of them their first start a, lot of them their first start. They are so fired up about it. They got butterflies laying in that hotel right now.

There's a lot of teams out there that don't have those butterflies, this anxiety running through them. Those young offensive linemen that we're going to try out there tomorrow, I guarantee they're going to make mistakes, but they're going to play their butts off.

**Q. Darren and Jordan, do you have any words you can say to those guys making their first start?**

DARREN GRAINGER: I mean, I just feel like for those guys, you always play football for your whole life, since you've been young. Just go out there and play your game you always played when you were younger.

Everybody is going to make mistakes. I still make mistakes at the quarterback position. Just move on for the next play, make the next play your best play.

JORDAN VENEZIALE: Yeah, just go out there and have fun. You've been doing this your whole life. Now is your time. Make the most of it. Don't play nervous. I always say, like, I get butterflies till I get hit for the first time. Once I get hit, it's a hundred miles an hour from there, man. Just play your game and everything else will fall into place.

**Q. Coach, James Madison was a common opponent for you and Utah State this year. Is that a game you went back and looked at?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Not really. That was a long, long time ago. We're two totally different football teams now. Of course, we did take a look at the game, but nothing specific really came out of it.

**Q. Favorite version of the potato?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: I love a baked potato.

DARREN GRAINGER: French fry.

JORDAN VENEZIALE: Probably hash browns.

**Q. Have you given any thought to the fries bath the winning coach is going to get if they win the game?**

SHAWN ELLIOTT: I'll be more than happy to take that bath numerous times tomorrow (smiling).

But, no, I really haven't thought about it. That's the goal. That's the goal. I promise you, if I'm getting the bath, there's going to be some other getting a bath along with me.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys.

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