

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Utah State vs Georgia State

Saturday, December 23, 2023

Boise, Idaho, USA

Albertsons Stadium

Georgia State Panthers

Shawn Elliott

Darren Grainger

Freddie Brock

Press Conference



I thought our quarterback played pretty damn good. He was a great leader for us out there. Our defense made stops, fourth-down stops. Everything fell into place.

Going into this game, I told them last night, Loosen up, go play 60 minutes of the best damn time of your life. First touchdown, I awarded the goal post dunk, he took care of that.

What a great way to end it. What a great way to end it with a great team. I mean, just truly great men. The things that y'all don't get to see behind closed doors is probably some of the best things that we have going for us. It's all about the heart and the minds of the individuals that prepare and come to work every single day. I can't thank them enough.

We as coaches sometimes get in their way. We owe all the credit to this win to these players right here, these two men and every man in that locker room that went out there and prepared hard.

It's a great win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Freddie, coming into the game, two attempts was the season high for you. You toted the rock 24 times today. Tell me about what kind of motivated you out there in the cold weather taking big hits?

FREDDIE BROCK: I mean, I just took advantage of the moment. Hadn't played that much this season. Trusted the scheme, trusted what Elliott did for everybody on the team. Just took advantage of the moment.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: And what a moment you did.

Q. Coach, what did it feel like to walk away from a football field with a win?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: When you win, I guess this is our third bowl win in a row, is that correct? When you win the last one, that's very important. You can have a sour taste in your mouth when you lose the last one all season.

Georgia State 45, Utah State 22

THE MODERATOR: Joining me today Georgia State, head coach Shawn Elliott, student-athletes Darren Grainger and Freddie Brock.

Coach, we'll start with an opening statement.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Thank you. I really didn't know what to expect going into this game. There was a lot of unknowns, to be honest with you. A lot of new guys having to step up and take control, be the guys. Sometimes they weren't the guys early on, but they had to step in here today. Really didn't have any idea what to expect.

I thought we practiced well. I thought we had done a lot of good things. I thought there were great attitudes. I thought they would give everything they had today, the new guys stepping up.

It was incredible to watch them play. To get this bowl win and to see how we actually prepared and got this bowl win. I think we had three new offensive line starters at various positions, three new defensive starters, a new running back starting for us.

Hey, there wasn't a single person blinking an eye. They went out there and executed and got the job done. Did they get the job done? They did it. They did an exceptional job, exceptional job.

Sometimes it's very hard in life to wait your turn, so to speak, to be behind someone. When it was your time to shine, and the way these guys performed today, I mean, it's incredible.



This was just a fantastic day for us, fantastic week. The bowl committee, everyone around here, made this a special week for us. I wanted our guys to enjoy it. This is what the bowls are about: enjoying yourself, rewarding yourself for a tough season.

143 days. We started August 1st. Today was our 143rd day in this season. God, we look like we started day one. Did you see the energy and effort out there tonight? Looked like we just walked on the field for the first time. Now we get to end it with a bowl championship, take that back and celebrate it till next August 1st.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the unknowns with the offensive line. Did getting those first couple of chunk runs maybe settle things down?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: We practice every single day. It was just like Freddie: it was their turn to step in there and play. It was just next man up. That's why you have a first team, a second team and third team. When this guy goes down, you got to step in.

But I think they felt they could move the line of scrimmage. Once they get that feeling in them, if you're an offensive lineman and you know you can move the line of scrimmage, watch out, because you just build confidence. Confidence in a strong offensive line is critical in the support of our football team and especially offensively, the success.

Q. Darren, as far as your senior year, you had a super senior year, been able to finish up. COVID was horrible for everybody. Talk about ending like this for you, getting an extra year of football.

DARREN GRAINGER: It was just a great feeling for me to go out with a bang like that, with the guys, coaches, everybody who's involved. I feel like the extra year helped me a lot just going into development, being a better quarterback, just focusing on the things I need to work on.

I feel like I showed that this year, the improvement.

Q. Freddie, school rushing record today. What does that mean to you?

FREDDIE BROCK: Honestly, you want my honest opinion? It really don't mean nothing to me, man. Just want to keep going. I wasn't even worried about no record, I just came to play.

Q. Did you know you were close?

FREDDIE BROCK: Nah, I did not know I was close till last

couple runs I had. But, nah, I did not know I was close.

Q. Were you aware he was close?

DARREN GRAINGER: Yes, yes. Before the last drive, I told the whole O-line, We need 16 more yards. We need to go get this record right now.

The O-line did a good job, blocked really well, and he was able to break some big runs on that last drive.

Q. How satisfying is it to end your career like this?

DARREN GRAINGER: This is a great way. I feel like the whole team went out there and played an excellent game. We showed what we did early on in the year.

What a way to go out. Continue to build, create memories as the game went along, create these memories that I'll hold onto for the rest of my life. It was just a great way to go out.

Q. Will you be able to collect some money and buy Coach Elliott something with long sleeves?

DARREN GRAINGER: I don't think he'll ever wear anything with long sleeves (smiling).

Q. You spoke earlier about next man up. Cadarius, talk about the day he had.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: I can't say enough about 'em all. I mean, I really can't. I can't say enough about every man that went out there and executed today. It's awesome.

CT, just another guy. Just a journeyman-type guy. To have the game that he had... It's an awesome feeling that when you put in the time and you work so hard, and it doesn't come to you right away, and then it just happens, it just happens.

I'm telling, I don't want to speak for Freddie, because he sat there and waited and waited and waited all year, I mean, all year, that's a frustrating thing to do, and then just to see what he did tonight. It's unbelievable. All those guys.

Q. What do you think helped the defense settle in after the first couple of scores given up?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Well, I'm going to tell you what helps a defense: an offense. Controlling the tempo. I mean, if you give them confidence, if they can hold, break 'em, one drive. We were clicking offensively. Once you get up by 10 or 14, you just gain more confidence.



But our defense played incredible. If you would have seen our practice on Friday, you would have thought we were playing a shorter game. We went out there on Friday good versus good, two different segments. Our defense was flying around there. Everybody came up there, I said, That may have been the best Friday practice I've ever seen.

We were fast. Defense was running. We about had a fight on Friday. About had a fight yesterday with the offensive, defensive (indiscernible). John Brown... About went to blows yesterday in practice.

That's awesome. That's when I knew it might be a good day.

Q. How about Ronald Cooper getting that interception?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Wow, anytime you create turnovers, it's very, very critical in the game. We should have put it in offensively, probably would have been a little bit more of a landslide right there.

Those turnovers are so, so critical. It's the name of the game. If you turn that ball over, especially in the red zone, you give up a score, those are hard to come back from. We were generating some pass-rush, doing some good things up front, which I'm very proud of.

But it's awesome for him to get that interception.

Q. Coach, you mentioned high-energy practices this week. What do you credit that to?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: We got great high-energy players. They just bring it. They just bring it. I said it in our press conference earlier in the week, that Darren never has a bad day. It's always energy. He never has a bad day. Big smile on his face. I try to set that example. I don't have a bad day.

I mean, I want great energy, great enthusiasm. I just want it generated. Our team has it. That doesn't mean you go win every game, but it means you can come back from some adversity at times and build off of it.

But it's the men in that locker room that have that energy. They have that stuff to 'em.

Q. Bowl wins are getting to be a common theme.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Would you say that again (smiling)?

Q. Where does that put the program overall? What

can you do to take the next step?

SHAWN ELLIOTT: That's a hell of a lot better than losing a bowl game, I can tell you that.

Just to have the opportunity to play here on national TV. Our brand went out to a lot of people today. Georgia State University football. There's a lot of people watched us.

I promise you, they're kids that may not have known about Georgia State today. Gosh, Freddie Brock rushed for 271 yards, Darren Grainger was the MVP, rushed for a hundred something. That offense was up and down. That defense was lights out. Did you see how much fun they were having? That big old Panther on the side of that helmet with Georgia State on the front of that in white.

It went in a lot of households, a lot of households. So you can't put a price on what it did for us. You cannot put a price on it. I hope everybody understands that. For whatever reason, people think these bowl games are not mattering. They matter. They matter to me. They matter to everyone in that locker room. They matter to our administration. They matter to our president. It's going to pay dividends for us.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

SHAWN ELLIOTT: Happy holidays. Merry Christmas. Y'all have a wonderful time. I hope y'all get a chance to take a day off. I'm going to take about...

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