

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl: Northern Illinois vs Fresno State

Sunday, December 22, 2024

Boise, Idaho, USA

Albertsons Stadium

Fresno State Bulldogs

Tim Skipper

Mose Vavao

Devo Bridges

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the press conference for Fresno State. Joining me is Fresno State interim head coach Tim Skipper, as well as offensive lineman Mose Vavao and defensive lineman Devo Bridges.

We'll start an opening statement from coach and then follow with questions.

TIM SKIPPER: Yeah, first thing I want to say, it's been a great experience being out here in Boise. The Famous Idaho Potato Bowl has been awesome. Danielle has done a great job, her staff. It's just been first class. I just want to make sure she knows we appreciate all she's done.

It's been kind of a whirlwind for us the last three weeks. We are here. We have 62 guys on scholarship that are ready to roll. Lost some guys to the portal. That's college football.

We're ready to embrace this opportunity. This is the one last time we're all together, get to play a game. We have meetings tonight, play the game, see where our futures go.

Football is a special sport. You can't forget the competition piece of it. We're here to play and hopefully we do enough to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Coach, a lot has happened since we talked to you last. Can you share insight about what the last few weeks have been like for you and the team.

TIM SKIPPER: Definitely. Kind of go back all the way to



signing day, right? Signing day, rolling through that. All of a sudden I find out I'm not going to be the coach anymore. Guys start hitting the portal, it gets all crazy. You have to deal with all that, right?

We kind of took some days off, let the portal settle down. We had a team meeting. The main message in that whole meeting was: 'Want to'. You have to want to be a part of the team, have to want to practice, have to want to go play a game and win the game. Everybody from that moment on has bought in. It's been great. It's been awesome.

We've had to practice totally different. We didn't have enough guys for scout team, so we changed up how we do things.

I actually think we're fresher doing it the way we're doing it. There are going to be some new guys playing in positions. I'm excited to see that. We'll come together one last time and come out there and give our best effort.

Q. Some players that have impressed you in their new roles?

TIM SKIPPER: It's one of the those things where everybody is playing during training camp, then you start getting ready to game plan for games each week. So you kind of about forget guys.

I don't want to individualize anybody, but I think the future is very bright. There's a lot of young guys that will be very good players, that will be very good Bulldogs. It will be good to see them in the future.

Q. For the players, what has this been like for you guys, everything that's transpired, getting ready for the game at the same time?

MOSE VAVAO: Yeah, it's definitely been crazy these past couple weeks just dealing with how college football has been working. But I think it's a little different because we're seniors right now.

At the end of the day we have our last game in college football. Why not make the best of it.



DEVO BRIDGES: It definitely has been crazy, seeing a lot of guys - I've been here for years - in the portal, doing what is best for them, their careers. I support them in their decision.

Coaching thing, things like that don't really affect me. I got a job to get done, get this last win. That's all I'm focused on.

Q. Can you talk about the matchup with NIU and some things you've seen on tape going into this one.

TIM SKIPPER: Coach Hammock does a great job. This is a good football team. Everybody knows they beat Notre Dame. They played their style of ball and kind of took it to 'em.

We're going to have to win in the trenches. That's going to be the big thing. O-line and D-line is huge. They're going to try to run the ball. We're going to have to stop all their counters and powers and zone scheme stuff.

On defense, first and second down, they're base and neutral. Third down, it gets really freaky. We're going to have to stay out of the third-and-long type situations and make sure we dictate the action a little bit.

It will be one of those games where you'll know who's winning by what's happening up front.

MOSE VAVAO: I completely agree. This is going to be a trench warfare type of game. Really the best games are won in the trenches.

They do really good on defense. Bring a lot of movement, some pressure and stuff like that. Just make sure the whole O-line can have full communication with each other and make sure we play for each other, trust everyone next to us.

DEVO BRIDGES: To piggyback off them. Definitely it's a game won in the trenches. That's the why I like it. They have a pretty good O-line. They work well together.

Telling the guys we've been playing with each other for a long time, run the ball pretty well, but I'm excited for the challenge ahead.

Q. Can you talk about obviously two seniors in this group what it's like going through all this last ride with this group, what the emotions are for this game.

DEVO BRIDGES: Just kind of surreal. Bittersweet. I've been here for a long time, longer than most guys, six

years. It's been a blessing being here for so long. It's crazy it's coming to an end. People tell me it's going to fly by. It was. I got extra time. I'm grateful for my time here and excited for the future.

MOSE VAVAO: I only have five years (smiling).

It's a crazy experience. Emotions are high. At the end of the day we have a job to get done. The best way to pay tribute to this program and the culture, what it's brought to us, is to go out there and play football, play Bulldog football.

Q. (Question about the quarterback.)

TIM SKIPPER: Both guys will play. It's not so much who's going to take the first snap, it's going to be who's playing the best, who will continue on into the second half.

Both those guys are excited to get their opportunity, shot. We'll alternate series. When we get to the second half, we'll see who has the hot hand and roll with it.

Q. Do you approach this game any differently with a nothing-to-lose attitude on a fourth down here and there?

TIM SKIPPER: Pretty much the same. I'm coaching to win. That's the way I see it. We'll go through the situations and play the situations that we get because every game comes down to situations.

I'm an aggressive person by nature, but I'm not stupid by nature (smiling). I'm going to try to be aggressive when we need to be, make smart decisions and go play. I'm here for these guys and I want the best opportunity to win.

Q. What was your favorite part about the bowl activities so as far?

DEVO BRIDGES: It was definitely the tubing. I've never been tubing before. I'm a California kid. In all the bowl games I've been to, that's the funnest activity I've had. Definitely tubing.

MOSE VAVAO: It's hard to say that's not the funnest experience we had on this bowl game. Just seeing the whole team together, taking a step away from football and the game itself, but coming together as a team, enjoying the moment, some of the last moments with each other. It was pretty fun.

TIM SKIPPER: I'd say kind of going off what Mose is saying, seeing the guys smile, have fun, a lot of laughter. It's been an up-and-down season. To see these guys get

bowl eligible, get here to Boise, have a good time, man, that's been a thrill for me.

Q. Anything in terms of having conversations with Coach Entz?

TIM SKIPPER: Haven't had much interaction. Only thing, he texted me if he could watch us practice. I told him he could. That's basically it. I haven't met him face to face or anything like that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone. Good luck tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports