

# CFP Quarterfinal at the Capital One Orange Bowl: Oregon vs Texas Tech

Wednesday, December 31, 2025

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

## Coach Joey McGuire Coach Dan Lanning

Coaches Press Conference

**THE MODERATOR:** A very pleasant good morning to everyone. Happy New Year, or happy New Year's Eve, and welcome to the head coaches' press conference for the 2026 College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the CapitalOne Orange Bowl. I'm Don Jackson, and it's my privilege to serve as your moderator for today's coaches' press conference.

We will first welcome Texas Tech head coach Joey McGuire to say a few opening remarks and then we will hear from Oregon head coach Dan Lanning. Coach McGuire?

**JOEY McGUIRE:** Thank you. Man, we're really excited and honored to be here. I'm kind of one of those guys that can fan boy really easy over great coaches, and I'm a huge fan of Dan's. I watch a lot of his stuff that he puts out on social media or anytime there's a press conference. I don't have a lot of hobbies, but that's one. I pay attention to a lot of coaches around the nation, especially guys that are doing it right.

We're really honored to play against such a great team like Oregon. I think it's going to be the best game, without a doubt, in these quarterfinals. You've got two great teams.

We were talking earlier, it's like looking in the mirror. You've got great defenses. You've got explosive offenses. I think both of our offenses probably produced the most explosive plays in college football this year.

It's going to be a lot of fun tomorrow. We're excited to be here, and we've got a big day today. It's our Fast Friday on a Wednesday, and then we'll be ready to go tomorrow.

Just thank you for letting us be a part of this. I promise you we'll be ready to go.



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**DAN LANNING:** Certainly honored to be here. First want to thank the Orange Bowl. The hospitality has been first notch. Really honored to get the opportunity to share a stage with Coach McGuire. Both of us started off as high school coaches. I'm sure he's very similar to me in the sense that we pinch ourselves every day to get to do what we do and who we do it with.

Obviously Texas Tech has an unbelievable team. And he's right, when you watch it, something we've talked about since we arrived here is our ability to create explosive plays and eliminate explosive plays. When you look at both these teams, they're two of the best in the nation at doing that, creating explosive plays, and certainly two of the best in the nation at eliminating that.

This will be an exciting game, certainly an exciting opportunity for us. A lot of these last few weeks for us has been about creating that rhythm that you have as a team, and you heard Coach just say it's Fast Friday. I had somebody text me this morning about it being Wednesday; I said, what are you talking about? It's Friday.

Your clock is off a little bit as a coach, but our players have prepped really, really hard, and there's a ton of respect for Texas Tech and what they've been able to create this year. The team, the way they play, I think that's a true indication of the way Coach McGuire coaches.

But our guys are really excited about this opportunity to share a field, and it's an awesome venue to get to be a part of.

**THE MODERATOR:** Now we'll open it up for questions for both coaches.

**Q. Coaches, what is the best advice you've received to bringing your team and preparing them to be at a new venue in this type of atmosphere?**

**DAN LANNING:** Yeah, ultimately, both of us get the opportunity to travel on the road, and I think we've really been prepared for moments like that. We've traveled across the country several times this year, something that's

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prepared you.

The football field is the same length, same width. You get an opportunity to go out there and compete with your teammates, and I think we both are hoping for a great crowd from both sides, so there's not a lot that's different. Even though there's distractions that exist as you go out to games like this, there's some pomp and circumstance, there's some fanfare, ultimately the game is the same and the guys got to go out there and play the game.

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, I would totally agree. The people that I've talked to say, man, just stay -- and Dan talked about it, stay in rhythm.

Again, today, they probably know it's Wednesday, but it's Fast Friday for us. Don't change anything. You're here for a reason, and what you've done all year long has worked, so stick with that.

We were lucky enough, and I know they were, too, we were able to go over to Hard Rock. We didn't go on the field, but just seeing the venue, our guys are really honored and excited to play in that stadium.

But I think the biggest thing is just keep doing what we do.

**Q. For Dan Lanning, how would you describe the process you've had with your outgoing staff? Obviously they've got a lot of responsibilities with their next programs, and also just from the head coach's standpoint, are there positives to having two guys off your staff that got head coaching jobs this year?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I talk about it a lot. I set goals personally for myself, and my number one goal is to help people reach their dreams and goals. And when you see a guy like Tosh Lupoi that I've got to work with for a long time and Will Stein, who I've gotten to work with the last three years, work their tails off to earn opportunities, you're really excited.

I tell every recruit that walks in our office, look, I can't promise you who will be here as your coaches because I want to help create their dreams, as well, but I can promise you I'll be here as your head coach. That's a piece that won't change.

I'll say both those guys have had unbelievable focus on our team. I think they both recognize they'd never had the opportunities they have if it wasn't for the players at Oregon and the place of Oregon, and I think they feel a term of endearment. They feel like they owe it to our players to give their absolute best on the way out.

I remember -- this is kind of sentimental for me. Leaving Georgia, I went through kind of the same process. The hotel we're staying in this week, I remember hiring my strength coach, Wilson Love, in that hotel. I remember reaching out to coaches on staff and hiring them during this same process in the Orange Bowl when I was at Georgia, so it's kind of a full-circle moment to see them going through the same things.

But I'm very appreciative to the detail that they've put in, the work they've put in, and it's led to some long nights and not a lot of sleep, but I always tell our coaching staff, you can sleep when you die.

These guys have worked really hard. They've earned it. I'm excited about their opportunities, and I'm excited about the opportunity to grow through our teams. When there's transition, there's opportunities for new ideas. There's opportunities for us to continue to grow.

**Q. For Joey, on a similar note, your former offensive coordinator, Zach Kittley, is the head coach at FAU. I'm wondering if at any point during this buys week you've gotten a chance to visit with him and catch up and hear how the season has gone?**

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, I talked to him. Actually he's going to be at practice this morning because we're practicing at FAU. We changed our venue, and it was great to see a bunch of guys that were on staff with us yesterday. We had our walk-through, our Thursday walk-through yesterday, and there was a bunch of guys.

His head strength coach was our No. 2. His chief of staff was one of our assistant DFOs. So it was great to see those guys.

He did, man -- he was a couple plays away from being in a bowl game, and I know he's itching to recruit right now and bring some guys in, and he had a really good signing class.

Kitts, man, he's a stud. I'm really happy and excited for him that he had that opportunity.

**Q. Do you think he gets to share in some of this success and understand he's been part of the build to this game?**

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, without a doubt. He's a Red Raider. He was there on staff as a student, and then he was kind of Kliff's right-hand man growing up. His dad is probably the most decorated track coach in the country right now, so he's still got family out there. He was in Lubbock for Christmas.

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I know he's really excited. I know he's excited to see the guys. I told the guys he was coming to practice, he and Behren Morton, our quarterback, are really, really close, so I know he's excited to see him today.

**Q. Dan, to go back to the coaching changes and all that, on the outside we can sit here and look and say there's got to be a better way, and from where you sit, the portal is going to open, recruiting never stops. There probably is no better way. But would you rather see a process that might be a bit more streamlined and not allow at the biggest time of the year, the biggest games of the year for things to sort of seem so kind of topsy-turvy like they are at so many places right now?**

DAN LANNING: Well, I think there's clearly a better way, and I think it really starts with the season moving up and the playoffs not having -- how many days, Coach, is it for you between us and your last game?

JOEY McGUIRE: We played December 6, and I'm 100 percent with him about moving the --

DAN LANNING: Yeah, ultimately in my mind the vision for this should be every playoff game should be played every single weekend until you finish the season. Ideally the season, even if it means we start week zero, or you eliminate a bye, the season ends January 1st. This should be the last game. This should be the championship game. Then the portal opens, and then coaches that have to move on to their next opportunities get the opportunity to move to their next opportunities.

Certainly there's some conversation about when high school signing days should be. I think that could go either way because most of us now try to get guys in as mid-year players, and you want them to be able to join your program at semester, which is a challenge.

But I think the first really clear indicator of a place that we can make this better is to wrap the season up. Our National Championship game this year is January 19th, and that's really hard to envision as a coach that's going out and trying to join a new program and start a staff. It's hard for players to understand what continuity looks like and where are they going to be at and to manage that with visits, the portal, everything else that exists.

I think the clear indicator and the clear way to do that is to bump the season up and make sure these playoff games happen a lot faster.

I've got a ton of respect for the NFL, but we're a prep league for the NFL. We do a lot of favors for the NFL. We're the minor league in a lot of ways. But there's no

money paid from the NFL to take care of college football.

In that sense, we've given up some of our days to the NFL. We said, you guys get to have this day, you get to have this day, you get to have this day. Saturdays should be sacred for college football, and every Saturday through the month of December should belong to college football in my opinion.

**Q. Dan, the nature of retention in recruiting has gotten a lot more transactional. In some ways that comes across as being a little derogatory, but it's sort of the nature of the beast. This is still college football; how do you balance the relationship piece, more of what you would consider the traditional recruiting, dealing with young men, while also understanding that there is a transactional piece to this?**

JOEY McGUIRE: Well, I'm lucky; I think I have the best general manager in the country in James Blanchard and his staff, and we have a personnel staff. I'm never in any meeting whenever it comes to money. I try the best I can to keep the coach/player relationship as traditional as it has been whenever I was coached by Harris Brownlee and Tom McCohen and the relationships I had with those guys. I'm also a very emotional person, so it's better for me to not be in these meetings. James keeps it very black and white, and as you said, it is very transactional.

But I also think there's a lot of things that are still going on at Oregon and Texas Tech that are incredible for young people, that we're creating better men. I have 33 college graduates that will take the field tomorrow. We hold every GPA record in the 100-year history at Texas Tech, but we just broke the record, and my team has a 3.23 GPA, so all the people saying that they came for money and we paid this and this and this, man, turn on the tape and see how hard we play, and then, guess what, my guys went to class and excelled in the classroom.

I think that's still such a huge part of what we're doing, and I think whenever people come into your building and they feel that and they see that, they want to come to places like Oregon and Texas Tech because it is about the money, there's no doubt about that, but it's also about we can help them reach their goals and their dreams and be better people.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, venues like this are a great example of the value that players have for organizations. We don't get to coach if there aren't players. As much as the game has changed, a lot of it still has stayed the same. We're in year four here at Oregon, and we've never lost a starter to the transfer portal. I think retention is the biggest piece. I think that's really important, and that's twofold.

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It always starts for me, what can I control, the relationships. I want to make sure we have great strong relationships with our players. A lot of times guys are going to choose to stay for less, but we also want them to be treated fair, and if they have the opportunity to have success, we want to make sure we're able to maximize that opportunity.

That's not just what a school can give a player, it's the recognition a school can create, it's the story that a school can tell. I think Oregon and Texas Tech have both been elite at that.

Then it starts at high school recruiting. It's development. Our team has a lot of freshmen that are contributing this year, a lot of guys that have been able to make an impact, and I always say, if you're good enough, you're old enough.

When you make an impact, I think stepping out into that water of, okay, I'm going to try this again somewhere else, when you know the known. We know it exists at Oregon. You know if you work your tail off, you're going to get an opportunity. I think that can be scary. Even if the dollar or the price tag might be somewhere else, the known of being in a program like Oregon, getting the opportunities that you get, that's something you want to take advantage of. Then that's where you hope the relationship matters.

We've had some really mature kids. These guys had to make really mature decisions that I don't know that I could make when I was their age. I know I'd probably screw it up and I'd probably have a dorm room full of Natural Ice if I was 19 years old, but it's changed.

These guys handle really, really tough decisions and they lean on people, and you hope they get really sound advice. But what warms your heart is the text message you get from a mom about what you've done for my son, from a high school coach of how you've created confidence in this kid, and you hope all those things pay off and they're able to make mature decisions that are big-boy decisions that a lot of these guys don't get faced with.

Sometimes that means making a sacrifice and maybe not making as much as you might somewhere else or being able to maximize your value where they're at, and I think we have a lot of guys that have been able to maximize their value here.

**Q. Joey, you're in the same situation as Dan was last year in terms of being the team that does have the longer layoff, and in last year's playoffs didn't work out for the teams that did have the longer layoffs, so I'm wondering if you've asked questions to some of the**

**coaches that were in a similar situation as you are this year and how you get your team ready to face a team that's already played?**

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, one thing, we've got an old team. We've got a lot of snaps in college football, and I ask them, man, please make me right because the one thing that we did do, we needed the bye.

Now, everybody that played December 6, seven days later they would have played. We just would have been football banged up. But the guys that I talked to, I talked to Kenny Perry, my special teams coordinator. I talked to Sonny Dykes whenever they played Michigan that year, some of the stuff that they would have done maybe different. Talked to Kenny. He had the bye last year with Arizona State and some of the stuff they did.

What we tried to do was add some time where the players were together more, more events as a team because we weren't in school and we weren't on a normal schedule. So we had some more downtime.

Then the biggest thing what we try to do is we do good-on-good but we added periods, or there would be sudden changes in practice. Howard Sampson saw he was blocking David Bailey or trying to block him from the standpoint of just the speed of the game because you're not seeing that, that we're going to have to see tomorrow and try to deal with. We try to do stuff like that to try to stay in rhythm.

We needed a little bit of rest, though, too, especially our quarterback. I think he feels really good, and hopefully it shows up tomorrow.

**Q. You've called Dante Moore "special," but what about him makes him different from other opposing quarterbacks?**

JOEY McGUIRE: Well, no disrespect to any quarterback that we've faced, but he's the best quarterback we've played all year long. He extends plays with his feet. You see that.

But whenever you turn on the tape, he's as accurate as anybody that we've played or really more accurate whenever he throws the deep ball. He's got great skill around him, but he throws a great deep ball.

I just love his story. So you know he's a mature person and he's really grown because there's not a lot of people in this day and age that would sit behind -- especially at the quarterback position, sit behind people. I'm really lucky my quarterback has been here from day one. He was born in

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Lubbock, and he's got a Texas Tech degree. There's not a lot of people that do that. They don't want to sit; they want to play right now. He redshirted and grew as a quarterback.

I just think he's dynamic. Whenever you see him, he just continues to make plays. Whenever it's time to make a play with his feet, he makes a play with his feet, makes a play with his arm. He's tough, and just watching what they do offensively schematically, he also has a high football IQ because he can really digest what they do and play at a really high level.

**Q. Joey, Behren is one of four quarterbacks in the CFP field that's still with the school he signed with, and he's easily the most experienced of them. When you look at his journey and where he's been to get to this point, do you appreciate the fact that perhaps we're not going to have so many Behren Mortons and guys like him down the line?**

JOEY MCGUIRE: Yeah, I hope I have another one in Will Hammond. He's dealing with an ACL. But Behren, I just have not been around -- I've done this 31 years - here in a few weeks it'll be 32 because I started in January - and he's the toughest player I've ever been around. There's a lot of things that he's dealt with over his career that a lot of quarterbacks around the nation didn't play, and he played.

He has such a respect in that locker room and he's got such a big voice. I feel like one thing about this team, putting this team together, this is as healthy of a locker room as I've ever been a part of. The care factor in that locker room is so high, and he's been such a -- he's been the force behind it.

I asked him to really step out and cross over to the other side of the ball and bring Lee Hunter into what it means to be a Red Raider. David Bailey, Romello Height, he was the leader in bringing this team so close together.

I'm going to miss him. It was really cool in the Big 12 Championship, his dad sent me a text and said, hey, look, I want a Big 12 Championship and I want a picture of you two walking out of the stadium together, and it was really cool we got to do that. We made a point, both of us, because we had talked about it in January, in January the year before, of making that happen, and we walked out together, and there's some really cool pictures of us coming out of that game together.

**Q. Dan, you've talked about strength in numbers with this team, and at the running back position in particular, you've really been able to have some depth. Why do you think that group has been able to excel**

**when it comes to readiness, both Jordon and Dierre being ready to go early in their careers but also within the flow of a game whenever your number gets called being able to step up and perform?**

DAN LANNING: It starts probably with the leadership in that room. Coach Samples done an unbelievable job. But we have a veteran in there with Noah Whittington, and he's worn a lot of hats. He's been injured and came back from injury, but he demands -- it's like having another coach at the position there, and he demands that these guys do it the right way.

Then the young guys being able to throw -- handle whatever we throw on their plate. You give them a bite, and take advantage of short yardage. You give them a play, and they take advantage of it, and you're like, okay, let's give them more.

Those guys have done an unbelievable job of the more that you can give them, the more they can handle, and they've created something that can be really dynamic for us. Once you start talking about the variety of formations and plays that we can run with multiple personnel groups, the fact you can make sure there's a fresh player in there, and then strength in numbers has really just been a mantra for our team this entire year. If we've got to be a 12 personnel team to win, we'll do it. If we've got to be an 11 personnel team, if we've got to play 21, if it's going to be a two-minute drive or if it's a tight defensive ballgame, we can play in a variety of ways. I think that shows up in moments where you have to lean on your depth and lean on players that have to be ready for their opportunity. We've had a lot of guys that have been ready for their opportunity when their number was called.

**Q. Following on an earlier question about the January calendar, in less than 48 hours when the portal opens, for the winner that's going to be particularly difficult logically and practically. Presuming you win, how will you plan to manage that with the academic calendar and the road that creates at Oregon?**

DAN LANNING: More than anything, just being honest. Be honest with your players. The one thing I expect from anybody that enters the portal from our team is communication. The University of Oregon has given you an opportunity. We've coached you really hard. We've built relationships. We expect you to be able to communicate with us on what that looks like. Similar to Coach McGuire, we've talked about you come in here and win this game, you're going to send other people on the road in your organization than normal to help do some of the recruiting for you, and that's why it's important to have a really strong personnel department that can help you with

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that because if you continue to prepare for games and there's opportunities to recruit, you want to make sure you're able to take advantage of those, too. Then you hope you've built a strong enough roster that they can manage and handle some of the distractions that exist in college football.

But these guys are used to it. They're tough. They're resilient. They've dealt with it before. I think every one of them recognize how special it is to be a part -- there's only eight teams left right now, and after this game there will be four teams left. To be a part of something like that doesn't happen a lot in anybody's lifetime. I hope they recognize the importance of that, the opportunity for that. Then the academic calendar is something we all have plans for, and we'll be ready to adjust and adapt as we go. But that's college football over the last four years that I've been a part of it as a head coach is adapt, and you have to be to adapt and adjust, and there will be some learning lessons this year, this off-season that we learn, just like there were last season that we'll continue to adapt to.

**Q. Coach Lanning, almost 24 hours away from kickoff; where is this team's mentality at maybe compared to where it was last year?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, you know, you always try to overanalyze that as a coach. You walk in and guys are laughing and you're like, wait a minute, are we too loose. You walk in the room and everybody is quiet and you're like, okay, are we too tight. I really like where our team is at, their temperament. When they step on the field, it's business. They enjoy spending time with each other. They've had a really clear focus throughout the week, and the result is going to be the result.

We've got two really good teams going against each other head-to-head, talent on both sides, good coaches on both sides. So ultimately you want the players to go out there and take the opportunity to go win the game on their own, and I like where our guys are at. I think they've been really focused.

I think, again, the repetition of us, the rhythm for us has been a factor that will contribute in this game for us to be able to keep the sequence as much as possible, similar for our players.

But I really like where their head is at, I really like their focus, and it's hard to maintain focus at that age for as long as you have to maintain focus in college football right now, so excited to see that result.

**Q. Coach McGuire, you talked about Coach Morton and what that moment meant for you. I know you're**

worried about your team, but have you given any thought what this would mean to all of the planes full of Red Raider fans, the guys driving cross country and documenting that, what this moment will mean for the Texas Tech fan base as a whole if you guys can follow through and get a win tomorrow?

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, it's going to be incredible. One of the coolest things throughout this journey is after the Big 12 game how many letters and emails I've received from Texas Tech fans and guys that played -- some lettermen saying how proud they are and they've been waiting for however long for a team like this.

It's going to mean a lot, but we have focused every single week on being in the moment and being where our feet are. This is a game that's a huge game, but our guys know what's at stake.

But I do carry that and feel that and am excited that there's been a lot of cool moments this year that Red Raiders have been excited about. I know they're really excited.

We've got a big group coming out, and it's going to be -- I think Red Raiders always show up, and we'll have a good crowd.

We're going to do everything we can to play really well tomorrow.

**Q. Coach McGuire, most people in America today are waiting for that ball to drop for 2026. Talk about your focus, mindset and trying to keep all the noise out as the ball drops for you guys in about 24 and a half hours for the biggest game in Red Raider history.**

JOEY McGUIRE: Yeah, we're going to be on our normal Friday schedule. We'll have this Fast Friday today and then we'll have all our meetings and we'll eat as a team, and then we're going to go watch a movie and be back for our team meeting and be in the hotel room.

I think Cody Campbell and John Sellers are having a big New Year's Eve party tonight and I'm sure my wife is going, but I won't be thinking much about -- I imagine I'm going to be up, but it's only because Dan is going to keep me up because I'm going to be worried about the Oregon Ducks. It's not going to be because I'm trying to bring in the new year. I'll probably be looking at the ceiling and thinking about tomorrow and making sure I've checked all the boxes to make sure that my guys are ready to roll.

Exciting, and man, it's so cool. I did look up -- and Bob Stoops is a good friend of mine, so of course he commented that he's coached in this game and won it, and

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I did look up. Man, it's really cool, the different guys, the who's-who have coached in the Orange Bowl. Foe Joey McGuire, an ol' high school coach, to be able to coach in this game and bring the Red Raiders in the College Football Playoffs, it's pretty cool. We're really excited about it.

**Q. Dan, you've already talked about getting reps for your guys. This is the third straight January 1st bowl game you guys have played. How can the last two years, the experiences and the distractions and dealing with all that help you for this week?**

DAN LANNING: Playing football makes you better at football, and playing in big moments makes you better at playing in big moments. Our team certainly has played in a lot of big moments.

It's funny, you don't sit back and really think about what you've been able to accomplish because you're always worried about what's next. But this is the winningest group in Oregon history over their four years. There's some new faces in there, too, some guys that weren't necessarily there for the entire ride, but there's been a standard created and an expectation created for this group, and now it's about taking the next step.

Really excited. We want these guys to lean on their experience and what they've been able to do. Again, they've prepped really well, and obviously you're playing a great team. At this point, there aren't any bad teams. You're playing great teams from here on out. Really excited about seeing our guys go out there and execute.

THE MODERATOR: Well, thank you, both coaches. We know you have a very busy schedule. At this time we'll ask that you take your place over in front of the CapitalOne Orange Bowl trophy for a photo opportunity.

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