



Baylor Postgame Video Conference

January 1, 2022



QUESTIONS FOR HEAD COACH DAVE ARANDA, TERREL BERNARD, AND ABRAM SMITH

COACH ARANDA: Just got done talking with the team, and just so humbled by our team. The two young men just here to my left are great representatives of the best of us.

I look at just all of the change that has happened with Baylor football. I think if you take a broad enough view, you see a bunch of wins from year to year, with maybe not so many wins in between, but you can see the wins.

But I think the closer you get, you just see so many names and faces come and go. You see just change, and you see people demanding beliefs and motivating people in different ways.

And then you see coaches that believe in this type of authority or maybe "do what I say, not what I do." Or maybe there's an old-school element to it. All of these things that are just difficult to address and difficult to talk about when you don't win games.

And so I think for us, the change from last year to this year was really kind of breaking all of that down and earning trust and believing in each other and being selfless.

And I think when you get to that, you get to a team. This was a great team win. We've had some team wins throughout the year, and so appreciative of the team. I'm a better person for it.

So I'm proud, man. I'm a little saddened because I know that this part is over, but I'm humbled and appreciative.

Q. Just when those final seconds are ticking down and you guys kind of realized that you guys are going to become Sugar Bowl champs, do you allow yourself to take it in? What is going through your head?

COACH ARANDA: I appreciate the question. Not really. I was wondering -- I didn't know what the ceremony was going to be, and so I was wondering if there was something I had to say or do. And I was figuring -- I was hoping that I wouldn't make a fool of myself during that time. So I was kind of thinking that. (chuckles)

Q. Dave, I just wonder how you feel like Gerry [Bohanon] played. Obviously the passing game wasn't really there. He leaned on the run game. But Gerry having been out all this time, what did you think about his approach and how he hung in there during this game?

COACH ARANDA: I appreciate that. I thought Gerry -- one of his strongest suits as a person is his resilience and his confidence and his belief in others. And so I think you saw all of that in this game. In the weeks leading up to this game, you just saw just great excitement and great energy. And when you are in it and then you are out of it, to have a chance to come back in it in a game like this, it just means everything. You could see the joy in him.



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When the game started and it was difficult to throw forward passes and all that and complete them, more specifically you could tell that he was challenged but found ways when stuff was covered up to run the ball; was encouraging his teammates; was carrying out his fakes with full speed so that we could buy a half a second so a running back could make a cut four yards down the line back inside.

Just all of the things that you would expect out of him. You think about the journey that dude has been through. The best is yet to come with him. All this adversity that he goes through just makes him stronger. And he was strong for us at the end.

Q. What went through your head when you saw Matt Corral go down?

COACH ARANDA: I meant to ask to see the extent of the injury. I was immediately thinking of how that would impact the remaining offensive attack. And so was it going to be more or less tempo? More kind of "check with me" plays? Was it going to be more leaning on the run game? Was it going to be more tight end in the corps, three receivers out and throw it up?

And I think there was some of all of that in the plays that followed. So you have an idea of those things, but you never really know. I think a lot of times the temperature of the game that you are in kind of tilts it one way or the other, but I hope that Matt's okay.

Q. Could you reflect on Terrel Bernard's impact on this game?

COACH ARANDA: I think Terrel had one of his best games. I think these last couple of games, Terrel has been more and more productive. I think the blitzing part of his game has really come on these last couple.

I think his confidence in run fits and where people are at and why something is called, why a defense is called for what reason; anticipating what play; the weakness of that particular defense; all of those things, I think Terrel is a dude that when he understands it and he has got a grasp of all of those things can really let loose and play free.

I think it's a great example for our younger players, for guys that, for sure, are going to have success. I look at next year, maybe in week one or week two, I imagine they will feel as if they have arrived.

And here's Terrel with all of this history and all of this accomplishment and all of this championship-level play, and he's still striving, man. He's still working out and grinding to get better, and I think that's the path right there. So way proud of him.

Q. Terrel, could you give us your thoughts on the way the game progressed tonight? And why you were able to be as effective as you were?

TERREL BERNARD: Yes, we were definitely disappointed for their quarterback (Matt Corral) going down. I hate to see that for him.



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But we expected tempo. We got a little bit of that throughout the first half. Definitely towards the end of the game, the running game, our fits were solid. It could have been cleaned up a little bit towards the middle, towards the end of the game.

And then our pass rush and the pressures that Coach [Ron] Roberts was calling, a lot of them were getting home. I think causing havoc and obviously the interceptions and stuff that we got played a big part in the game.

But just the D-line causing havoc, the corners and safeties doing their part, locking up receivers, and linebackers running around and making plays because the D-line is taking on multiple blockers. I think it all kind of came full circle towards the end. I think we had one of our best games this year.

Q. Abram, I was just wondering -- to see Monaray [Baldwin] come out and score that touchdown, not a likely hero. What was running through your mind on the offensive side during that play?

ABRAM SMITH: I mean, I was excited when I seen him. When I got done with my fake, I looked over and I see someone really small running full speed. I'm like -- I see it in practice. He's been working on that a bunch, so just seeing him do that.

I was so happy for him, his first actual collegiate touchdown. I remember running full speed to the end zone just to go celebrate with him.

Q. Abram, you set the school record, the single-season record, 1,600 yards rushing. What do you say about that accomplishment?

ABRAM SMITH: I mean, all the credit goes to the men up front. Without them, I can't really do anything. I'm just thankful for them and Coach [Jeff] Grimes and Coach [Eric] Mateos offering me the opportunity just to be back in the backfield. So I give all the credit to everybody up front, because without them, I couldn't have done it.

Q. And Abram, you kept banging away. They delivered a pretty tough defensive effort tonight. What was that like for you having to grind out that yardage?

ABRAM SMITH: Well, in our running back room, one thing that we establish is bully ball. And so we kind of just live by that. It is going to be a grind. But those four yards, six yards, they eventually are going to pop for 20, maybe 40. So for us, we just had that instilled in us from the beginning that everything is not going to be perfect, and you've got to grind it out.

Q. This question is for all three of you. When you guys came to New Orleans for this game, you said that you guys felt like you had a point to prove in this game. What point do you feel like this win proves from y'all's perspective about your team?



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COACH ARANDA: I will start. I appreciate the question. I would not put it as necessarily as a point to prove. I would say it as more of an identity to show. So not even really like a -- just to take the stage and to take the lights and the crowd and all of that and to be us all the way, man. Like, the "us" that we've worked on since January.

These guys academically set the highest GPA for football that Baylor has ever had, in both spring and fall semester back to back, right? And so it was like a 3.2, I think, in spring. And then in fall, it was over 3, 3.03, I think. And so guys that are doing it off the field and then getting this 12th win that Baylor has never done. So a bunch of never-dones at Baylor.

All of that is with personal choices and doing little things right and adhering to a standard over feelings. And just way proud. And it's just something when you see that, you want other people to see it. I'm appreciative that we had the opportunity, and we took advantage of it.

TERREL BERNARD: I would say, I feel like it shows the growth of the team. Since the day we got to New Orleans, I think everybody had front-side focus on keeping the main thing the main thing, and coming here and winning this game.

Like Coach [Dave] Aranda said, doing something that Baylor has never done before, winning 12 games, I couldn't be more proud of the guys.

I feel like these past two and a half, three weeks of preparing for this game, we've had some of our best practices, and put together a really good plan. And just really excited to see how we executed and came out here and did what we were supposed to do.

ABRAM SMITH: To kind of piggyback off of that, it's more of, like, not really a point. I think for us, it's just playing for one another. We look at the man to the left and right of us, and we want to give it our all for each other.

So every time we stepped on the field, that was kind of our thing to go to. And we talked about it every time at halftime. So you could see us all firing each other up on the sideline. Like Terrel [Bernard] said, these past couple of weeks at practice have been the best weeks that I feel as well that we've had.

So I think for us, I'm just way proud of this whole team and what we have accomplished.

Q. Y'all played that defensive motto of "take three." How big was that to get the three picks tonight? And then Al's [Walcott] interception return, how big was that for the defense?

TERREL BERNARD: Yes, it's huge. It's something we've preached all year. We were able to do it tonight.



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And then taking one back for a touchdown, definitely a momentum swing in the game. I think JT's [Woods] two interceptions also broke the seal on some things and was able to open some things up for us on the offensive side.

I think it was a huge accomplishment for us to go out there and get that done.

Q. You talked about a legacy. What legacy do you feel like you leave here at Baylor?

TERREL BERNARD: I think it goes back to what Coach [Dave] Aranda said, just doing things the way they are supposed to be done, not necessarily what you say, but how you do it. I think you can pick out 30 or 40 guys on this team that just do things the right way. There are probably more that aren't being seen yet but will be seen later on down the road.

I think that's the cool thing about it. You just keep putting one foot in front of the other, doing what you are supposed to do, day in and day out. Eventually your time will come. And it's just crazy to see the growth and everything that's happened to get to this point.

Q. Coach Aranda, did you guys change the defensive approach at all after Matt Corral's injury? And if so, in what ways did you change that?

COACH ARANDA: I appreciate the question. We did not. I think a lot of it was, is it going to be -- is he going to be entrusted to make quick reads? Or is it going to be looks that maybe he's not getting a ton of reps in practice? So is it going to be slowed down more now?

The way the game was going, there was a slow-down pace to it anyway. Not a lot of points being put up. Are the coaches on the sideline or in the booth on their side of it going to take more of a stronger hand of getting people in and out of good plays? So is that going to be the case? And if so, let's be really clean and concise with our plan with lookovers.

Or the run game? Terrel [Bernard] mentioned it. There was a drive where we had some pressures called, and guys were getting out of their 1/11th and were trying to do too much and getting out of gaps. That transferred over to when they were throwing the ball and pass rush contained opposite the side the pressure was coming. So I think the ability to hone in on the run game when they are trying to be real concise, precise, on when they are throwing it and what they are throwing.

And the other phase of it was just the tight end staying in the corps and some shot plays down the field. I think just being aware of those things and just having a real detailed plan and letting it rip from that point, I think, is really what the thing was.

Q. Abram, can you take me through the emotions of that big-time play when it's one-on-one, you and the corner on the sideline, and you just run over him and set yourself up for a goal line play?



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ABRAM SMITH: Well, I kind of saw whenever he dropped back into coverage that I was going to get the ball, because he was playing for Tyquan [Thornton] in that little bag route. I had to look back, look fast. And as soon as I got it on me, it was out there in front of me. I don't really put on a lot of moves, but I gave it a little shake, and I do what I always do and load my pass.

I went vertical, and then kind of the rest speaks for itself. It slung off me, and I just kept fighting for yards, and then they set up the goal-line play.

Q. Terrel, just in terms of kind of knowing the journey that you have gone through here at Baylor, now that you are a Big 12 champ, a Sugar Bowl champ, has it kind of sunk in yet? And secondly, what inspired the Tom Brady moment with the trophy afterwards?

TERREL BERNARD: Yeah, I think just after the game, I kind of sat down and took a minute to really just appreciate the moment and kind of look back on everything that I have been through with my teammates and the journey that we've all had.

And it's been amazing, man. I couldn't say enough good things about Baylor, about the people here. I think that's what truly makes this place special, is the people.

Just after the game, I was just looking out at everybody standing in front of me, and just thinking about everybody's story and everybody's journey to get to this point. I couldn't be more proud of those guys, man. I'm so excited for everything that's come their way, and everybody finally getting the opportunity to be seen, like Coach [Dave] Aranda has been saying all week. I'm just happy for everybody to finally be in that moment.