



Wasabi Fenway Bowl Media Day
Interim Head Coach Kerry Coombs, QB Evan Prater, LB Wilson Huber
Dec. 16, 2022

Coach Coombs Opening Statement

"First of all, we'd like to thank Wasabi Technologies for sponsoring the game. It's very exciting for us to be in Boston. For many of the kids on our team, it's their first trip. It's my first trip to Boston, first time in Fenway Park. Such a great and historic venue for a game. It was really a great event the other night. Our kids got a real good feel for the Green Monster, and all the things that go with Fenway. I mostly want to tell you that our team has worked incredibly hard for this opportunity. It is a fantastic group of young people. It's a weird game, you've got two coaches who weren't the head coaches of this game, and it's certainly different and unique. But our kids have handled this transition in a fantastic manner. They've prepared diligently and with energy and passion, and I'm excited to watch them play. We play a great opponent. We're going to have to play our best game to have an opportunity to win. The fact that it's a team that's 100 miles away from us, a rivalry game that our players haven't experienced, but I certainly did as a coach the first time around at Cincinnati. I know what the Keg of Nails means. We're excited to have all of those parts involved in this game. It's not just a regular old ball game. There's a lot of interesting facets to it, but we're really excited to be here. Thank you all."

Evan on the Keg of Nails

"Well, I'm a Cincinnati kid. Growing up a UC fan, I remember hearing about it. And then I remember when I first got to college, I saw like a little gif of Teddy Bridgewater in front of the UC student section, throwing up the UC for the game. So that's kind of like what sparked my interest in it. Just being a Cincinnati kid, growing up hearing about the Keg of Nails, and then finally getting the opportunity to play in that, I'm just extremely excited and never thought it would be in Fenway Park."

Wil on the Keg of Nails

"Going off what Evan said, I'm a legacy kid. My dad played at UC and so he played Louisville all five years he was here. So, it was something that I watched growing up. I was able to watch the games with my dad. It's something that's kind of been ingrained in me and my family since I've been born. I'm super excited to be able to play this rivalry game here in this great city of Boston."

Wil on UC players deciding to not opt-out

"No, not necessarily. I think guys at the end of the day, they have to do what's best for them, or what they think is best for them. We've always prided ourselves on the family atmosphere, the family feel that we have in Cincinnati. Coach Coombs hits on it all the time. It's more than who sits at the end of the hall. It's really about the brotherhood, and all kind of what we've developed in the last six years that I've been here. It's more than coaches leaving, coaching hires, it's really about the guys in the locker room, because at the end of the day, those are the guys that are going to go out. It's going to be determined the winner also the game."

Coach Coombs on the last 10 days

"It's not one bit difficult. It's one of the greatest honors and privileges of my life to spend these two weeks with these guys. It's an incredible group of young people. When adversity hits and things are tough, you find out really what you're made of. These kids have demonstrated, regardless of the outcome of the game Saturday, and how they play, they have demonstrated to themselves and their teammates, what true toughness looks like. It's hard to have transitions and to lose your friends... to have people leave you that you love and care about. That's hard for anybody, right? We understand that; we experienced that. But at the same time, when the window of opportunity opens, you don't pull the shade down, you go run right through it. And that's what our kids are doing, and they've embraced it and I'm excited for them. Mainly because of the kind of men they've been able to demonstrate that they are to our city and our town. We talk about guys not leaving; they don't because they care about each other, and it's been really cool experience for me."

Evan on the last 10 days

"It seemed a little tough at first, for a lot of people. A lot of scrambling, trying to figure out what you want to do. But I think Coach Coombs has done a phenomenal job of just grappling everybody and getting a hold on everybody. Our players [are] just putting their heads down and continuing to work. Coach Coombs said, 'Adversity is going to hit and you can't just fold up and shy away, you got to take advantage of these moments.' I think our team has done a great job with continuing to move forward and not focusing on who's sitting at the end of the hall like Coach Coombs and Wil we're talking about. It's a lot about the players, and the things that we do and that we need to get done. So, just making the most of these opportunities and going out and putting our head down and just working."

Wil on the last 10 days

"I feel like the guys over here probably felt the same thing, the football field fixes everything. The couple of days that we're all sitting at home, unsure what was going on, those were definitely the toughest days. But as soon as we were able to kind of figure out where we're going to play this bowl, and got back on the field, everything felt normal again, because ultimately, that's what we love to do. That's the reason we're here today and football is what it is. The business of it is not great, but football is the sport that everybody loves. That kind of fixes everything. I'm just excited to be here with you guys. I can't thank Coach Coombs enough for what he's done the last two weeks as well as the other coaches. They've done an absolutely incredible job. I'm really excited to play this game tomorrow."

Evan on representing Cincinnati

"Being a Cincinnati guy, meeting with Coach Coombs all week, one of our meetings we were sitting there. I wasn't the starting quarterback at the beginning of season. He wasn't the head coach at the beginning of the season. Cincinnati guys stepping into this role, and kind of leading this team into this bowl game. The Keg of Nails rivalry, it's a very special opportunity for the both of us. And we just thought, what an opportunity for two Cincinnati guys, who didn't start in this position at the beginning of the year to get this opportunity. [We] want to represent our city the best way that we can. I'm excited to be here and can't wait to get out on the field tomorrow."

Evan on future Power 5 opportunities

"Not really focusing on the new coach and moving to that conference yet. We have one more game this year with the guys that we have right now. The relationships that I've built with these guys over these past years and seniors like Wilson Huber. I know we're missing some guys, some of those seniors, but I know a lot of these guys that are given an opportunity, they're gonna step up. They've been waiting for this moment all year. They've been preparing, we've been preparing. I just can't wait to come out and get this second start under my belt."

Wil on playing at Fenway Park

"It's definitely really neat. You grow up watching baseball, and I'm not a huge baseball fan, but I've heard of Fenway as a sports fan in general. Being down there on the field and seeing that Green Monster, it's really something special. Definitely looks way bigger in person than it does on TV. But to be able to play in a place like that, with all the history, is something that I think a lot of these guys are going to remember for the rest of their lives."

Evan on Coach Coombs joining Scott Satterfield's staff

"It was huge. Talking to Coach Coombs, he sat down and said, 'Where I'm at in life, I have options and my option is you guys. I'm choosing you over those other options.' It says a lot about who he is as a person, being a Cincinnati guy and believing in us and what we've been doing here. I know everybody on the team was ecstatic when they heard the news that he was coming back and the whole city. You were probably at Fifth Third when they announced that he was coming back and the whole stadium erupted. Having a guy like this in our corner, we know we're going to get his all every day no matter what. I'm excited to play for this guy right here."