



Weekly Press Conference Quotes
Head Coach Luke Fickell and Senior Quarterback Desmond Ridder
Nov. 9, 2021

Head Coach Luke Fickell

Opening statement

"Well, that was exciting, right? I know we're in the entertainment business, so you know, we want to entertain in any way possible. It's kind of hard right now to reflect, it's a shorter week. We're kind of a day ahead to reflect back from last week's game, so it's a little bit harder right now, but nonetheless it was quite a game. To finish the way it finished was almost surreal, so you can ask a lot of questions about it. I don't remember a whole lot about it, those last two and a half minutes felt like an eternity, but we found a way. I give them credit, it's a good football team that hasn't won a bunch of football games this year but really played well and battled us down to the very end. I think we learned some more from it, you know, I think our guys recognized the way that everyone plays them and the way they got to continue to push and fight. Whatever it takes, we're going to have to keep fighting. We've won more games like that probably in year 2 or year 3 that came down to the wire where you had to make some really big plays. Last year, this year, maybe not as many, so sometimes it gets a little bit frustrating but that's another character builder and a way we got to continue to grow. The hard thing is then you try and celebrate a little bit, and then you've got to go real quick and get back into things. With a Friday game, you kind of start back over really fast but you try and remind them there's a guaranteed three weeks left in the season. November is for contenders, and you'll see it all across college football. The teams that are getting better, the teams that can take November and really use it in a positive way wherever they are as a football team. Whether they're 9-0 like us or you know, South Florida who hasn't won a bunch of games, but you can really look at them and say they're getting better. Obviously last week was one of those against Houston that you kind of recognized this football team, from where they were in week 1, 2 and 3, to where they are in the last two weeks. To me, it's a completely different football team. That's what we have to get prepared for, that's what we have to be ready for and in a little bit quicker way. Traveling in a short week makes it even more difficult so, you know, wasn't a whole lot of time to, I don't want to say celebrate the victory because you know, you got to enjoy those things. Wasn't a whole of time to even reflect. You've got to find the ways to grow from it and move forward. Quick week, we'll load up on Thursday and get ready for our Friday night game."

On Jerome Ford's status

"I don't know. Today is a big day for practice. I think I've told this to the guys on Sunday, every team has injuries, especially in week 10 and 11. Every team does. Every team has guys that are dinged up. Every team has guys that might not practice a ton during a week in week 11. Week 1, 2, 3 and 4, that really worries you. Not that you don't want your guys out there at practice but there's a lot of things in week 11 you kind of got to take care of some guys. You know, Darrian Beavers (Graduate Linebacker, #0) is a guy that's played a lot of football and Bryan Cook (Senior Safety, #6) and guys on defense that have played a lot of football and you do your normal Tuesday, Wednesday practice where you're out there and it's a grind and a bloody Tuesday and you're doing an inside drill, and we've got to be a little smarter in week 11 with some of these guys that have played 600 snaps of football already this year. Jerome (Ford, Junior Running Back, #24) is one of those, so I'm not overly concerned. The big deal is, are they mature enough to really do the things they need to do, to handle the things mentally based on can they go full-go in every rep on a Tuesday or Wednesday practice?"

On if he was surprised by how much Tulsa ran the ball despite being down multiple scores

"No. I think that they stuck with their plan. In some ways, we allowed them to do that. On both sides of the ball, we allowed them to get some of those runs that felt like they were continuing to keep the momentum. Then, we allowed them to continue to do that by, maybe not in some ways, putting them away. You get up 16 points in the start of the second half and you don't find a way to put someone away. As you look back at it, it was the right move for them. In our minds, sometimes we're looking at it like 'they're gonna throw it, they're gonna throw it, they're gonna throw it,' and they didn't. It was a good plan for them on their side but when it came down to it, we found a way to stop the run, especially on the goal line."

On UC's last two defensive drives

"A lot of those situations in the last eight snaps were things that you weren't, you know, have done a whole lot of. All last year we had zero snaps of goal-line defense. Going into this game, I think we've had one snap of goal-line defense. We ended up in seven snaps. Over the last five years we've averaged eight snaps of goal-line in the whole season and in that game, we had seven. You can imagine how much we practice it. It's not a whole lot. It's a Sunday thing and it's a line up on a Thursday thing. You're never going to be able to give them everything, you know, 'Hey this is what you're gonna see, this is what you're gonna get,' because you only got four or five snaps that you're really going to work on. What it showed was they had the ability to be not overly worried about what was going to happen, not worried about being perfect when you get down there inside that two, three-yard line. Now it becomes who can win the one-on-one battles. Who can make a play when it comes their way and to me, that's what they did... That's when I think they're best and that's what they showed on Saturday."

On outside noise not stealing the joy from his team

"Well, when you try and live up to the expectation that someone else has for you, no matter whether you're a coach, you're a player or you're a team, nobody can live up to what other people want them to be. This team is programmed and pride ourselves on doing things

together, playing together and knowing we're all in the same boat. Everyone's got different pressures, different pulls at them, but when it comes down to it, there's one objective and it's win a football game. I'm as bad as anybody else at letting the outside, not the outside but the expectations within our own heart, mind of how you should look, to override the ultimate goal of winning the game. There is a balance there that we all got to have that fuels you to get better, but you can't allow our own minds to steal the joy of what really comes along with it. I said it to the guys in the locker room after the game, I mean, as a player, looking back the thing I miss more than anything, even those last 20-25 minutes after a game just sitting at the locker with your buddies and the guys you just fought with, win or loss at times. You know darn well those are the guys that are in the same things you're in. Those are the things to me that you forget, and you really miss when it's all said and done. There's a lot of things you won't miss obviously, just thinking about the games, but just to reflect back on how the locker room is so special and the energy and those things you do together are so special. I don't want anyone to steal that from our players or our coaches as well.

Senior quarterback Desmond Ridder

On his hope for teammate Jerome Ford to play Friday

"I'm hoping he plays, you know, as much as everyone else does because he's a great running back, he provides a lot for us, for the team, but like I said Saturday, you know, I trust in every single one of those guys that are behind him. They've put in just the same amount of time working that he has to be out there on the field and show what they can do, so I'm excited to see how they step up if he's not able to play, and see what they can do with their opportunity."

On watching his defense at the end of the game

"You know, obviously, I went back and told them that that whole situation was on me, so I thanked them, obviously, from the bottom of my heart. But no, that's one thing we pride ourselves on, is, you know, red zone on both offense and defense being able to stop the ball in the red zone, being able to score the ball in the red zone, so that's one thing that we've worked on all season, throughout spring ball, throughout camp, you know, it just showed on film. There's only going to be certain situations throughout the course of the year, whether that's a Hail Mary play, whether that's a two-minute drive to win the game, it just so happened that this one was a red zone and you know, just like what Coach Fick was telling us, if somehow they did score, they were going to go out and stop it before the two-point play."

On if time of possession affects him as a quarterback

"That just means like it shouldn't change it, but obviously, that just means that we have to execute on every single drive and every single possession we have. We can't have any three and outs, which I feel like sometimes we go out there and I feel like you more so see it in the second and fourth quarter where we start fast, start fast in that first and second half, and then in that second and fourth quarter, it's like there's just a wall. Whether, you know, it was the defense have a long drive, that they were on the field for a long time, or whatever it may be,

but being able to go out there and execute on every single drive we have, every single play, and all 11 guys doing their jobs.”

On how to stay mentally locked in

“Yeah, you know I feel like it obviously starts with me, you know I might have my five seconds right there on the sidelines, where I get my words out on this and that and then I go right down along the bench and make sure that everyone else is locked in and that they know the job that we have to get done, and what we have to do. Like I said, usually, that’s right after a three and out. Take for instance, right before the half, we had an opportunity at a two-minute drive and then we go three and out, to just know that we got to keep it going and keep the foot on the gas, we can’t let up and we keep playing our ball.”

On if the rankings affect him, add any pressure and if he pays attention to them

“Yeah, I would say it’s fun, it’s cool to see our name, as the University of Cincinnati and our program up there. I wouldn’t say that it’s added pressure or anything, you know, like Coach Fick has always said, you know, all we care about is winning the Conference Championship and once we do that, everything is going to take care of itself. So you know, we’re just taking it game by game, but it is a blessing and opportunity to be able to be, you know, involved in and be able to be a part of that, and bring the city and community along with us.”

On if he’ll be watching the rankings revealing tonight

“No, I have a little daughter at home who I like to watch and watch what she does, so no, I don’t spend too much time watching that, because of course you know I can get on Twitter and all of you guys are going to post it anyways.”