



Cincinnati College Football Playoff Selection Quick Reaction Press Conference Quotes

Dec. 5, 2021

Head Coach Luke Fickell

On making the College Football Playoff

“To have this moment with the seniors and their families, I don’t think I can ask for anyone else I’d rather do it with. To be able to be with the seniors and their families, it makes it that much more special.”

On seeing his players’ reactions

“All the hard work and the things that they’ve done... A lot of people doubted us. I think that’s where the gratification comes. We don’t worry about what the outside says, don’t worry about style, we’ve just got to find a way to play our best ball at the end of the year. I told them that if we take care of business, things will take care of themselves.”

One how he felt prior to the announcement

“Everyone said we were going to be in, but as we know, this is not normal, things can happen. Nothing is for sure. Until it flashes onto the screen... it’s like the game last night. Until there was 10 seconds left, I don’t think I was ready to smile. It’s kind of the same way with this. But the opportunity is unbelievable.”

On what representing the Group of Five means for them

“Well, that’s what we didn’t want to carry. All year, we never really talked about it. We’re not carrying the flag for anyone outside of who we are. Our fans, our city, our community, our program. I didn’t want the weight of anything else on their backs, we just wanted to be us. In my mind, there’s still no difference. There’s a very small chance to get in a four-team playoff, and we’re one of them. We’re not carrying a flag for anyone but the UC Bearcats, our community, our campus, our university and our city.”

On changing the standard at Cincinnati

“When you talk about blind faith, as we grew the program, they started to see it, as opposed to being blind. A lot of these things that we do, we just have to believe in the things that we do.

We got the trust, respect and love in that locker room. For us and our program, we're now able to see it right there in front of you. Regardless of where you come from, it's just about what you do together. We say we want to play for championships, well, we have another opportunity to play for a championship."

On his thoughts about playing Alabama

"They're pretty good. I'm not going to worry about that a whole lot just yet, but whatever it is that they do, they do well. Obviously, they won yesterday and played well. I think the most important thing is that our guys recognize that they've done something and there's another opportunity ahead of them. It's about us, not what Alabama's done. That's not what it's going to be about for us. We'll continue to focus on us like we've done all year."

Director of Athletics John Cunningham

On his first reactions to seeing his team in the College Football Playoff

"My first reaction is similar to what Coach Fickell's was. It's so important to those young men that they had an opportunity to be able to play for a National Championship. They believed the whole time. As adults, we can get cynical about which way things are going to go, but because of Coach Fickell and the way he approached this entire year, those players believed that if they went out there and won every single game, they'd be able to play for a National Championship. It's so perfect that it is coming to fruition, especially after a really tough year with COVID-19 last year."

On how valuable this is for the entire university and athletics as a whole

"It's where we want to be. We want to win championships. We want to continue to grow, and this is part of that growth. I believe that we have the coaching staff and student-athletes to be able to do that. This is just another step along that path and when we're in the Big 12 in a few years, we've got to be ready from day one to be able to compete in that league."

On what it means that Coach Fickell stayed

"It speaks to him and his character. When he talks about the importance of the relationships in that locker room, he really means it, that's family. When you look at opportunities that he's had, he said that this family's more important right now than those other opportunities. We continue to talk about growth, and he knows that that's what I believe in, that we shouldn't take a back seat to anybody. It says a lot about his character."

On if this year's success will help in terms of fundraising and upgrading facilities

"Absolutely, it drives the brand of the university and the city. We have Cincinnati across our chest, and I think that means a lot to this city, those that have connections to UC or not. When you're getting the attention that we're getting, it absolutely helps with fundraising. We're going to utilize that and capitalize on that and make sure that we grow."

Quarterback Desmond Ridder

On when he realized they had a real shot at making the College Football Playoff

"I didn't even know Oklahoma State lost until I got home. I wasn't worried about that, I was just worried about the game. After we won, we had a pretty good feeling that hopefully we had a pretty good chance."

On his journey

"It's just wild and a blessing. I was just downstairs with Coach Gino (Guidugli, quarterback coach) and my family and I told them about last year, I was making the decision to come back and why. There was a checklist of things and this year I've basically checked all those boxes."

On if he thought the College Football Playoff was a possibility when he came back

"It was definitely in mind. Last year it was a New Year's Six Bowl, and now it's a playoff game, now it's to win it all."

On if he relishes playing the best of the best in Alabama

"Yeah, that's something that we want to do. We want to play the best teams. At the end of the day, football is football. Once that ball goes down, Alabama should be thinking that they'll be getting our best and we know we'll get Alabama's best."

Cornerback Coby Bryant

On what it feels like being in the Playoff

"Just from 2017 to now, the journey has been unbelievable. From the progression from season to season, it's been unreal. It's thanks to Coach Fickell and his plan and staying humble and hungry."

On resetting the goals after finally making the Playoff

"The job's not finished yet. You set goals at the beginning of the season and once you reach those goals, you set more. You never get complacent, and you always stay hungry. The sky's the limit."

On the decision to come back this season

"This was part of the reason for me to come back. Not just for opportunities like this, but to be a leader. When me and guys like Des (Desmond Ridder, quarterback) and Myjai (Myjai Sanders, defensive end) leave, we want to be remembered as great leaders."

On being the first Group of Five team to get in the Playoff

"It's a blessing. This is what you work for from day one since when you were a kid. Whenever you go out there, making the best of the opportunity."

On what it means for Coach Fickell to stay

“Coach Fickell’s a loyal guy, I knew he wasn’t going anywhere. He loves us, cares about us and we’re family.”

On if he feels the team’s No. 4 ranking is accurate

“We don’t let rankings define us. We have to have that dog mentality. Whoever we step up against, it’s football.”