



Postgame Press Conference Quotes
Head Coach Luke Fickell and Senior Quarterback Desmond Ridder
Nov. 20, 2021

Head Coach Luke Fickell

Opening Statement

“We’ve been trying to play that complete game and I think tonight, in all three phases of the game, we played a complete game. I am always going to complain about something...the late scores. The reality is that we challenge these guys, and obviously, earlier in the game we challenged them at halftime, and they stepped up and performed. From the guys up front, they tried to make it a physical game and on both sides of the ball they did a hell of a job and just made sure their presence is felt. You have to go back and look at stats, but I really felt the presence of our offensive and defensive line was the difference. Obviously, senior night is really emotional. I told the guys in the locker room, that I wasn’t going to talk too much. In pre-game, before we left the hotel, I caught eyes with Coby Bryant, something I never do, and I completely lost my train of thought, and I could feel the emotions in me. It hits you about all they done. And even in the locker room afterwards, I said, ‘this isn’t over,’ and I appreciate what those guys have meant to the team and the locker room, and it’s really hard. You guys that have been here for a while know what we mean, the struggles we had in the first year. It was an incredible night for those guys to go out there with the emotion and families and then come back 17 minutes later and play. Obviously, that is a credit to them, but a credit to the fans as well. It makes it a hell of a lot easier to focus and lock-in after an emotional senior day when you walk back out there and see the crowd and the student section the way it is. The energy flowing through the stadium...it was awesome tonight.

On the senior class

“The beautiful thing is, and with the younger guys, we talked about blind faith and believing in something you couldn’t see. Those guys did. Even after year one, they believed in something we couldn’t see...they didn’t bear the fruits of their labor. Now it’s not quite the same, it is not as much blind faith for these young guys. To have those guys in there, look them in the eyes after a game like that, a night like that, an emotional night. I don’t reflect a whole lot, but I think my wife will make me reflect on tonight as a group and all they have done.

On if this was the best the defense has played all year

"I do think so. For a team that was coming in rolling, they had thrown the ball well, they had run the ball well. That was the balance that they had taken the next step as an offense. You know, based on the end of the game last week, they accepted the challenge. I was as proud of anything about how they came out in the second half because we had some pretty good starts but fell off at times. Those guys didn't. They knew what it was about and knew where they wanted to go."

On if this game sent a message to the College Football Playoff Committee

"I'd like to have zero on the end of that one. I think, all in all, is it a complementary team? Can they play in all three phases of the ball? Cause in order to be great, you have to. The days of playing a (Nick) Saban Alabama team that is going to give up three or six points is few and far between. The ability to score points, move the ball, control the clock as much as you can and play really, really aggressive defense is the only way to win a championship and play late in the season."

On playing a complete game as a team

"Obviously, that was been my mission the past three or four weeks. Beating myself up about it. I try to say to them after, I don't know what the difference was. Sometimes understanding and recognizing the challenges in front of you. Obviously, every game is a challenge and different. Coming into this one, not because they were 8-2 or how they had played this year, but I did sense more urgency, not just on Saturday, but the entire week. I don't know if that is what you want every week, but we are always striving to get those guys to lock-in on the things we continue to preach and it's not the easiest thing in the world."

On if he is tired of hearing talk about the team

"You know, I think if they were tired of that, they would have two or three weeks ago. The challenge that was ahead of them was a big deal. You can't sell short what senior day means, and the seniors played great. And a lot of guys that weren't seniors played really well tonight because they knew what it meant to those guys. If they weren't here and didn't understand what it was like when those guys built this thing, then they heard it a lot this week and grabbed their attention much more."

Senior quarterback Desmond Ridder

On Senior Night emotions and having his daughter with him:

"Obviously, I tried to keep it [together] the best I could, but you know that was an experience that she won't remember, but looking back on photos and from memory I'll remember and it's something to just keep with me forever... Coach Fickell talked about all this week, being able to handle our emotions because we have a lot of seniors and a lot of guys who have played a lot of football on this team. Guys who have impacted this team and program tremendously, so it was definitely tough at the beginning of the game."

On the opening play from the line of scrimmage touchdown to Tyler Scott

"We had scripted that because we knew what they were going to come out with in our 12 personnel... All I saw was Tyler running wide open, so I just put him a ball that he could go handle and let him do the rest."

On catching first receiving touchdown:

"We've had that play for 4-5 years now, and I let coaches know that my hands are certified every time we bring that up... I couldn't have asked for it better to be on senior night from another senior in Jordan Jones, and I'm glad they called it because sometimes we have special plays and Coach D (Mike Denbrock, Offensive Coordinator) and Coach Gino (Gino Guidugli, Quarterbacks coach) they might not call it... For it to get called and for us to execute it the way we did, it was huge."

On performance of the defense:

"The field position battle was a huge part of this game, and for our defense to be able to get the stops that they did and our offense to be able to come out and execute... There were times in the second quarter when we missed a couple field goals and got the ball down to the 25-yard line in the red zone but weren't able to execute on two or three drives. That really disappointed us as an offense and that's something we can come in and get better at, and we look forward to next week."

On upcoming game versus ECU:

"It just seems like every team we play, there is a history with. And ECU is definitely a hostile environment... It might not be a sold-out stadium but trust me, you'll hear the fans, and there's been some times where their players have chirped back and it's thrown us off our game. So for us to be locked in and be able to execute and play the game that we play, it's going to take some practice."